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The Influence of Values on Entrepreneurial, Professional, and Career Motivations

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ABSTRACT:

Organizations increasingly expect people to move between roles which involve varying combinations of professional (vocational), leadership, and entrepreneurial responsibilities. While there has been much research into the relationship between values and leadership style, we know little about how values contribute to entrepreneurial, professional and leadership motivations. Correlations from a study of 272 undergraduate students suggest that universal and cultural values can distinguish between these motivations. Leadership and entrepreneurial motivation share a basis in achievement and stimulation values, while entrepreneurial motivation is distinguished by low emphasis on values of conformity and security. Professional motivation shares little in common with the other two types; it is characterized by hedonism and uncertainty avoidance.

Keywords: career development and management, values.

The careers field has always had a strong focus on the question of which jobs are most suited to which individuals. Vocational guidance has relied on tools for measuring various aptitudes, experiences, skills, values, personality traits and interests, with a view to matching these up against job attributes. Improving the fit between the person (typically assessed on a subset of these characteristics) and the job can lead to positive outcomes for the person and for job performance.

While the vocational fit approach has proved useful, it is less helpful when it comes to broader questions related to career choice. For example, within a specific vocation, many career avenues are possible. People who share a similar vocational fit with, for example, medicine, will nevertheless vary in their career aspirations. Some may seek to innovate, or to follow an entrepreneurial path; others will seek to assume greater leadership or managerial responsibility; and others might focus on developing greater skill levels in more specialized and demanding medical fields. Understanding what motivates people to follow these different career directions will provide a useful complement to the vocational fit approach. In this paper, we examine the extent to which individual values guide such career motivations.

Chan and Drasgow (2001) presented an influential model of motivation to lead (MTL). They demonstrated that people are motivated to lead for three broad reasons – they like leading and see it as part of their identity (affective/identity); they believe it is their duty, or is expected of them (socio-normative); and they are prepared to accept the responsibilities and costs of leading (noncalculative). This framework formed the basis for a subsequent extension into careers motivation, considering entrepreneurial and professional careers motivation, in addition to leadership (Chan et al., 2012).

Chan et al. (2012) suggest that entrepreneurial, professional, and leadership (EPL) career motivations can be understood as three dimensions of career space. Rather than being constrained to a single career track, individuals can alternate movement along different dimensions, or even combine dimensions. A nurse combines clinical work with unit leadership responsibilities, while an architect creates a new business around a design innovation. This conceptualization of careers is more aligned with the view of careers as taking place across multiple boundaries (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). It is also a more accurate representation of the workplace, where managers are encouraged to combine leadership and entrepreneurship (e.g., Teece, 2016), professions such as engineering (e.g., Rottmann, Sacks, & Reeve, 2014) and healthcare (e.g., Dickinson, Ham, Snelling, & Spurgeon, 2014; Mascia, Dello Russo, & Morandi, 2015) grapple with how to develop leadership, and entrepreneurship becomes a core competency for professionals (Reihlen & Werr, 2012).

While research has identified differential links between personality traits and motivation for entrepreneurial, professional, and leadership careers (Chan, Uy, Chernyshenko, Ho, & Sam, 2015), the role of values has not yet been studied. Values are important motivational constructs which could be expected to influence career preferences in EPL 'career space'.

Study Aim and Hypotheses

This study seeks to clarify the relationship between individual values and the EPL career motivations of university students as they prepare for transition into the workforce. We focus on two complementary conceptualizations of values – universal values and cultural values. The universal values

are those developed by Schwartz (1992), designed to capture values present to a greater or lesser extent in all cultures. While the Schwartz framework has been used to compare groups and societies across cultures, it is also used at the individual level, to understand the broad goals governing people's evaluations and behavior (Knafo, Roccas, & Sagiv, 2011). The second framework used in this study stems from research into values developed at the societal level, as popularized by Hofstede's pioneering work (1980).

Universal Values

The Schwartz Values Survey (SVS) is one of the most widely used frameworks for understanding values at both individual and national levels in international business studies (Knafo et al., 2011). Building on prior work, Schwartz conceived of values as being grounded in universal requirements of human existence – biological needs, group survival and welfare needs, and social coordination (Schwartz, 2012). These needs are relevant to all individuals and cultures, although relative importance will vary. Schwartz (pp. 5–7) groups his individual-level values into ten sub-dimensions, and summarises the defining goal of each as follows:

1. Self-Direction – independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring.
2. Stimulation – excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.
3. Hedonism – pleasure or sensuous gratification for oneself.
4. Achievement – personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.
5. Power – social status and prestige, control or dominance of people and resources.
6. Security – safety, harmony, and stability of society, or relationships, and of self.
7. Conformity – restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.
8. Tradition – respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that one's culture or religion provides.

9. Benevolence – preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact (the 'in-group').
10. Universalism – understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.

Behaviors consistent with one value may be consistent with, or in conflict with other values. For example, pursuit of personal success (achievement) may support attainment of status (power) while potentially going against the welfare of others (benevolence). Displaying the values in a circular pattern (Figure 1) allows these relationships to be made explicit, with values close to each other in the circle having greater congruence, and conflicting values appearing on the opposite side of the circle. Two higher-order dimensions are also shown in the circular diagram. One dimension moves from 'openness to change' (stimulation and self-direction) to 'conservation' (conformity, tradition, and security). The second dimension is self-transcendence (universalism and benevolence) to self-enhancement (power, achievement, and hedonism).

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INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

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The risk and uncertainty of entrepreneurial activities suggests that values associated with openness to change (rather than conservation) are likely to underpin entrepreneurial motivation. A number of studies support this view. Fagenson (1993), for example, used Rokeach's (1973) values framework to compare values of male and female managers and entrepreneurs. While she found no gender differences, entrepreneurs placed significantly more value than managers on self-respect, freedom, a sense of accomplishment, and an exciting life.

Voss (2001) compared values of administrators (managers in business organisations) with entrepreneurs (using the Schwartz framework). He found entrepreneurs to be higher on achievement and self-direction (though not stimulation). While he hypothesized that administrators would be higher on conformity, tradition, and hedonism than entrepreneurs, no significant differences were found. As with the

study by Fagenson (1993), Voss sought to differentiate the values of people currently in managerial and entrepreneurial roles. Neither study included professionals, nor did they consider motivation to become an entrepreneur versus other roles.

Kirkley (2016) also used the Schwartz values framework, but he asked his sample of entrepreneurs to identify the values which were most strongly associated with entrepreneurial behavior. He found that three of the top five ranked values contributed to the self-direction value sub-dimension, while the remaining two tapped stimulation and achievement.

Based on these studies, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Achievement, stimulation, and self-direction will be positively associated with entrepreneurial motivation.

Chan and Drasgow (2001) were the first to systematically explore motivation to engage in leadership roles, and identified values as a distal antecedent. While they used a different measure of values (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995), they concluded that affective motivation to lead was associated with values of competition and achievement (consistent with Schwartz's self-enhancement dimension). Socionormative motivation was associated with a sense of social duty and obligation, consistent with the self-transcendence dimension in Schwartz's framework. These two Schwartz dimensions capture a tension between "values that emphasize concern for the welfare and interests of others … and values that emphasize pursuit of one's own interests and relative success and dominance over others" (Schwartz, 2012, p. 8).

Further evidence for the importance of self-enhancement and self-transcendence comes from Clemmons and Fields (2011). While adopting Schwartz's conceptualization of these two dimensions, they used different scales to measure them. They found that both dimensions were positively associated with motivation to lead, and explained incremental variance over and above that explained by personality. We therefore hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2: Self-enhancement (comprising power, achievement, and hedonism) will be positively associated with leadership motivation.

Hypothesis 3: Self-transcendence (comprising universalism and benevolence) will be positively associated with leadership motivation.

Values are an integral part of being a professional, with values such as autonomy, public service, self-regulation being seen as definitional (Hinings, 2001). However, we are not aware of any research which has explored the extent to which values contribute to professional motivation. We therefore do not hypothesize any relationships between values and professional motivation.

Cultural Values

Commonly used measures of cultural values, such as those developed by Hofstede (1980) or the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004) operate at the societal level. While they serve to distinguish average levels of values across cultures, the scales do not exhibit acceptable psychometric properties when used to assess individual differences (Hanges & Dickson, 2004). In order to assess the influence of individual differences in values on career motivations, it is necessary to use measures designed for use at the individual level. Dorfman and Howell (1988) developed individual versions for four of the Hofstede dimensions – individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity. In this study, we use the first three values; we excluded masculinity/femininity because findings from the GLOBE project suggest it confounds several different values, including assertiveness, gender egalitarianism, and humane orientation (Emrich, Denmark, & Den Hartog, 2004).

Dorfman and Howell (1988, p. 129) define the three societal dimensions on which they based their scales as follows:

1. Power distance—defines the extent to which a society accepts unequal distribution of power in institutions and organizations.

2. Individualism/collectivism—individualism implies a loosely knit social framework in which people are supposed to take care of themselves; as opposed to collectivist cultures characterized by 'in-groups' which are expected to take care of their members.
3. Uncertainty avoidance—defines the extent to which people in a culture feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguous situations and try to avoid such situations.

There is little research to guide development of hypotheses regarding relationships between motivation to take up entrepreneurial, professional, or leadership roles, and the cultural values of power distance and individualism/collectivism. In the leadership context, for example, cultural values have been shown to influence the choice of leadership styles and their relative effectiveness in different cultures (see, for example, Brodbeck et al., 2000; den Hartog et al., 1999). While power distance influences use of directive versus participative styles, this knowledge provides little guidance as to whether this value influences the motivation to take on leadership roles in the first place. Similarly, collectivism has been shown to correlate positively with team-integrating and collaborative leader behaviors (Gelfand, Bhawuk, Nishii, & Bechtold, 2004), but it is unclear whether a person with higher collectivistic (or individualistic) values will be more or less likely to seek leadership roles.

Uncertainty avoidance, however, has been shown to be relevant to engagement in entrepreneurial activities. Hofstede (2001, p. 164) notes that low uncertainty avoidance "implies a greater willingness to enter into unknown ventures". Risk aversion, which is consistent with high levels of uncertainty avoidance, has been shown to relate positively to professional motivation, and negatively to both leadership and entrepreneurial motivation (Chan et al., 2015). Greater risk associated with leadership and entrepreneurial outcomes compared with more certain returns from application of professional skills suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Uncertainty avoidance is positively associated with professional motivation and negatively associated with both leadership and entrepreneurial motivation.

Method

Participants

Data were collected from students attending a large Singaporean university, enrolled in diverse disciplines including science, engineering, humanities, and business. The sample had 272 students; 53% were male, and the average age was 21.9 years (*sd*= 2.6). Students were invited to participate by email, and received S$10 compensation.

Measures of Cultural Values

Universal values were measured using Schwartz's (1992) 57 item SVS scale. Respondents used a 9-point scale (ranging from -1 (opposed to my values) through 0 (not important) to 7 (of supreme importance) to rate the importance of each item as a guiding principle in their life. Following Schwartz, each individual's mean score on all items was subtracted from individual item scores so as to eliminate the effect of differing response styles, and accurately reflect the relative importance of each value for each respondent. These adjusted item scores were used to calculate the ten sub-dimensions by averaging the relevant items. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients (calculated on raw scores) range from .62 (tradition) to .80 (universalism and benevolence). These values are in line with those obtained in studies across many countries; see, for example, Ralston et al. (2011).

Cultural values were measured using Dorfman and Howell's (1988) scales for individualism/ collectivism (6 items), uncertainty avoidance (5 items), and power distance (5 items), each measured on a 5-point scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Reliabilities (Cronbach alpha) were lower than desirable, ranging from .56 (uncertainty avoidance) to .62 (individualism/collectivism).

EPL motivations were measured using the 27-item scale from Chan et al. (2012). Participants used a 5-point scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) to indicate their motivation towards entrepreneurial, professional, or leadership careers. Sample items include: "I am the kind of person who likes influencing and managing people more than doing anything else" (leadership motivation); "I like to be highly

specialized and experienced in a specific area of expertise" (professional motivation); and "I like thinking about ways to create new products and services for the market" (entrepreneurial motivation). Cronbach alpha reliabilities ranged from .71 (leadership) to .81 (entrepreneurial).

Results

Scale descriptive statistics, inter-scale correlations, and reliabilities are summarized in Table 1 (EPL and universal values scales) and Table 2 (EPL and cultural values). The mix of negative, positive, and non-significant correlations suggest that common method bias is not a significant concern (Spector, 2006). The EPL scales show a significant positive correlation (r = .24, p < .01) between leadership and entrepreneurial motivation, while there is no correlation between either of these scales and professional motivation. This pattern of correlations is consistent with Chan et al. (2012). The positive correlations between gender and both entrepreneurial and leadership motivation indicates that males were more likely to express higher motivations for these roles.

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Patterns of correlations within the Schwartz value dimensions are also consistent with past studies. Dimensions near each other on the circumplex (Figure 1) tend to correlate positively with each other (e.g., power, achievement, hedonism). Dimensions on opposite sides of the circle display negative correlations (e.g., stimulation, self-direction with tradition, conformity and security).

The correlations in Table 1 show that achievement (r = .14, p < .01), stimulation (r = .21, p < .01) and self-direction (r = .16, p < .01) are all significantly related to entrepreneurial motivation, thus supporting Hypothesis 1.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 stated that self-enhancement values (power, achievement, hedonism) and self-transcendence values (universalism, benevolence) would relate positively to leadership motivation. From Table 2 we see that achievement is positively related to leadership motivation (r = .20, p < .01) thereby

partially supporting Hypothesis 2. However, power is non-significant, and hedonism is negatively correlated (r = -.15, p < .01) which is inconsistent with the hypothesized relationship. Benevolence is positively correlated with leadership motivation (r = .17, p < .01), partially supporting Hypothesis 3, but universalism is non-significant.

Turning to cultural values, uncertainty avoidance is positively correlated with professional motivation (r = .22, p < .01) thereby giving partial support to Hypothesis 4. However, the hypothesized negative correlation with both leadership and entrepreneurial motivation was non-significant.

Given that EPL motivation is a new construct, and there is little prior research into the influence of values on motivation to enter entrepreneurial, professional, and leadership careers, it was not possible to set out hypotheses regarding all three motivations. Non-hypothesized significant relationships should be interpreted with caution, but suggest further avenues for exploration. Considering universal values, there is a strong significant negative relationship between both conformity and security values and entrepreneurial motivation (both r = -.14, p < .01). This is consistent with the identity of an entrepreneur as a risk taker who seeks new directions and challenges existing ideas. Hedonism is positively correlated with professional motivation (r = .16, p < .01), suggesting that enjoyment and intrinsic interest is a core driver of motivation to pursue specialization in careers.

Only one hypothesis was made regarding cultural values. The positive correlation between uncertainty avoidance and professional motivation (r = .22, p < .01) supports Hypothesis 4, but the hypothesized negative relationship with entrepreneurial and leadership motivation was non-significant.

Two significant non-hypothesized correlations are also present in Table 2. Individualism/ Collectivism is positively correlated with entrepreneurial motivation (r = .22, p < .01) suggesting that students with stronger collectivist values are more highly motivated to become entrepreneurs. Power distance is negatively correlated with leadership motivation (r = -.16, p < .01). These two results will be explored more in the discussion section.

Discussion

Although somewhat exploratory in nature, this study has confirmed the importance of considering the role of values in career motivations. Most of the hypothesized relationships received at least partial support. Values of achievement, stimulation, and self-direction are strongly associated with entrepreneurial motivation. Similarly, leadership motivation is also characterized by values of achievement and stimulation (though not self-direction). The motivating goal of self-direction is "independent thought and action – choosing, creating, exploring" (Schwartz, 2012, p. 5). At first glance it might be expected that motivation towards leadership roles (especially transformational leadership) would be predicted by the motivation for "independent thought and action". The lack of a significant correlation suggests that the students in our sample may have a different conception of leadership – for example, in the years immediately following graduation they are unlikely to be in positions to bring about significant change, and may well consider their leadership career in terms of conforming to organizational structures and norms.

Contrary to the hypothesized relationship, hedonism is negatively correlated with leadership motivation. It is possible that this is a sample-specific finding. Singapore is a collectivist society, placing emphasis on the importance of individuals contributing to the community and society; leadership may therefore be seen more as a social obligation, using leadership as a way to benefit others rather than satisfy one's personal desires. The significant correlation with benevolence (a value focused on enhancing the welfare of others) supports this interpretation. This perspective is captured by Chan and Drasgow's (2001) social-normative component of the motivation to lead. Future research could usefully seek to clarify whether certain societal cultures are more conducive to different types of leadership, thereby moderating the relationship between individual values and leadership motivation.

The non-hypothesized negative correlations between the values of conformity and security and entrepreneurial motivation are consistent with the role of entrepreneurs as risk-taking innovators, and also serve to distinguish entrepreneurial from leadership motivation in our study. Given the degree of commonality between these constructs (Vecchio, 2003), this is an interesting finding worthy of further investigation.

The only universal value to show a significant correlation with professional motivation was hedonism. This raises important practical considerations. Given that specialists are often expected to take on leadership or innovation roles, the lack of overlap between values which motivate professionalism and those which motivate leadership and entrepreneurship is concerning.

One of the limitations of the study is the relatively low reliability of cultural values, which argues for caution in interpreting results. The positive correlation between uncertainty avoidance and professional motivation was expected. However, the finding that higher levels of collectivism are associated with entrepreneurial motivation, and that lower levels of power distance are associated with leadership motivation are surprising. While further research is needed to replicate and extend these results, they raise interesting possibilities. As suggested above, societal values in Singapore may result in entrepreneurs with an identity more firmly rooted in collective concerns than in individualistic aspirations. Lower power distance values might allow individuals to conceive of taking on leadership roles themselves, rather than conforming to existing power hierarchies.

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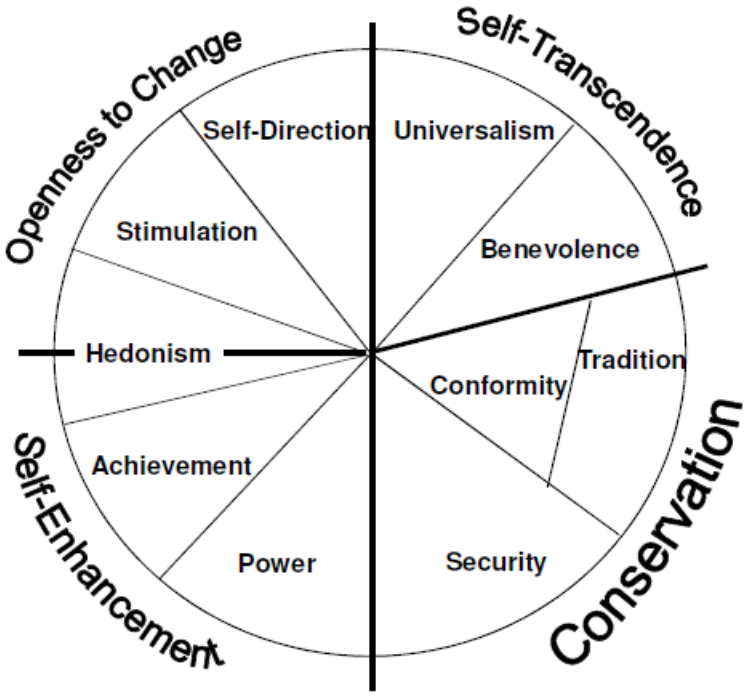

Figure 1. Theoretical model of relations among Schwartz's ten value sub-dimensions (from Schwartz, 2012, p. 9)

Table 1
Scale descriptive statistics and inter-scale correlations (EPL motivations and Schwartz values).

Scale (No. items)	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Demographics																	
1. Gender	-	-	-														
2. Age	21.93	2.56															
EPL motivations																	
3. Entrepreneurial (9)	3.10	.66	**.23**	.01	(.81)												
4. Professional (9)	3.86	.53	.00	.03	.01	(.76)											
5. Leadership (9)	3.65	.49	**.21**	-.01	**.24**	-.04	(.71)										
Schwartz Values																	
6. Power (4)	-1.26	1.19	.03	.04	.06	.04	-.08	(.65)									
7. Achievement (4)	.38	.84	.04	**-.14**	**.14**	-.11	**.20**	**.29**	(.64)								
8. Hedonism (3)	-.12	1.34	-.01	-.03	-.05	**.16**	**-.15**	**.29**	-.03	(.69)							
9. Stimulation (3)	-.55	1.35	.11	-.08	**.21**	-.09	**.12**	.00	**.22**	.04	(.75)						
10. Self-Direction (5)	.32	.80	**.12**	-.08	**.16**	-.01	.08	**-.17**	**.14**	.02	**.45**	(.68)					
11. Universalism (8)	-.16	.72	.01	.09	-.01	.01	.02	**-.45**	**-.31**	**-.33**	-.05	.12	(.80)				
12. Benevolence (5)	.41	.79	.08	.04	-.05	-.05	**.17**	**-.35**	**-.12**	**-.31**	**-.27**	**-.24**	-.03	(.80)			
13. Tradition (5)	-.97	1.01	-.02	.09	.01	.03	-.07	**-.19**	**-.43**	**-.30**	**-.37**	**-.36**	.02	**.19**	(.62)		
14. Conformity (4)	.26	.84	-.01	-.07	**-.14**	-.02	-.04	**-.24**	**-.15**	**-.22**	**-.41**	**-.39**	-.08	**.37**	**.26**	(.67)	
15. Security (5)	-.01	.69	-.04	.07	**-.14**	.08	.02	-.01	**-.19**	.01	**-.30**	**-.34**	.01	-.03	-.02	**.15**	(.66)

Note: Main diagonal provides scale Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients in parentheses.
Correlations greater than ± .12 are significant at p<.05 (2-tailed) and are shown as bold in the table; correlations ± .15 are significant at p<.01 (2-tailed).
Gender: 0 = Female, 1 = Male.
N = 272.

Table 2
Scale descriptive statistics and inter-scale correlations (EPL motivations and Cultural values).

Scale (No. items)	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Demographics										
1. Gender	-	-	-							
2. Age	21.93	2.56								
EPL motivations										
3. Entrepreneurial (9)	3.10	.66	**.23**	.01	(.81)					
4. Professional (9)	3.86	.53	.00	.03	.01	(.76)				
5. Leadership (9)	3.65	.49	**.21**	-.01	**.24**	-.04	(.71)			
Cultural Values										
6. Individualism/Collectivism (6)	3.57	.49	**.18**	.08	**.22**	.08	.07	(.62)		
7. Uncertainty Avoidance (5)	3.83	.41	.02	-.01	-.03	**.22**	.09	.03	(.56)	
8. Power Distance (5)	2.08	.52	-.02	.02	.02	.06	**-.16**	.09	**.19**	(.59)

Note: Main diagonal provides scale Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients in parentheses.
Correlations greater than ± .12 are significant at p<.05 (2-tailed) and are shown as bold in the table; correlations ± .15 are significant at p<.01 (2-tailed).
Gender: 0 = Female, 1 = Male.
N = 272.