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THE MEANING OF WORK: A COMPARISON OF AGE  
AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
in  
Psychology:  
Industrial/Organizational

---

by  
Shachipriya Tripathi  
March 2013

THE MEANING OF WORK: A COMPARISON OF AGE  
AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

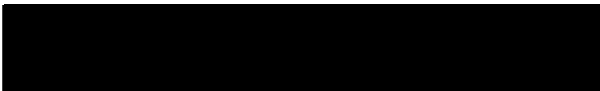
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by  
Shachipriya Tripathi  
March 2013

Approved by:

  
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## ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between Meaning of Work (MOW) in relation to the variables of age, cultural orientation, as well as the combined effect of age and cultural orientation. The study was conducted among 380 individuals in the form of an online survey. Correlations, t-tests, and hierarchical regression were utilized for data analyses. The results indicate that MOW changes for individuals based on age and cultural orientation. It was also found that the combined effect of age and cultural orientation influence work role identification, whereas age and cultural orientation do not have an effect on work centrality and expressive value of work. Overall, the findings support hypotheses regarding the effect of age and cultural orientation on work related attitudes (work centrality, expressive values of work and work-role identification) and also the combined effect of age and cultural orientation on work-role identification. Suggestions for future research are presented.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE ....	1
Factors Affecting Meaning of Work .....	8
Age and Meaning of Work .....	10
Socio-cultural Norms and Meaning of Work .....	18
Interplay of Meaning of Work, Age, and Culture .....	25
CHAPTER TWO: METHOD	
Participants .....	35
Procedures .....	36
Measures .....	37
Culture Orientation Scale (CO) .....	38
Meaning of Work Questionnaire (MOW) .....	38
CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS .....	40
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION .....	50
Implications .....	60
Theoretical Implications .....	61
Practical Implications .....	62
Limitations .....	65
Future Research Directions .....	66
Summary and Conclusion .....	67
APPENDIX A: EXPECTED RESULTS FOR HYPOTHESES 7, 8, AND 9 .....	69

APPENDIX B: HYPOTHESES SUMMARY TABLE .....	72
APPENDIX C: EMAIL INVITATION TO TAKE THE SURVEY .....	74
APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT .....	76
APPENDIX E: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY .....	78
APPENDIX F: CULTURAL ORIENTATION SCALE .....	82
APPENDIX G: THE MEANING OF WORK QUESTIONNAIRE (ADAPTED) .....	84
APPENDIX H: CROSSTAB DATA FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AND CURRENT ROLE .....	86
APPENDIX I: ACTUAL RESULT FOR HYPOTHESIS 9 .....	88
APPENDIX J: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD .....	90
REFERENCES .....	92

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations .....	41
Table 2. Results for Pearson's $r$ and T-test .....	42
Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Predicting Work Centrality .....	45
Table 4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Predicting Expressive Values of Work .....	47
Table 5. Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Predicting Work-role Identification .....	48



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are several studies demonstrating that work is rated second only to family in terms of importance. In fact a study by Arvey, Harpaz, and Liao (1996) indicates that some individuals say they would continue to work even after winning a large amount of money in a lottery. This kind of attitude toward work suggests that there is something more to work than just the financial reasons and thus raising several questions about work related attitude such as -why an individual would want to continue working even when financial needs can be taken care of by winning a large sum of money? What is it about work that makes it so central to life?

There have been attempts by researchers in different fields to answer these questions. On the one hand economists' perspective define work as primarily a money-making activity while on the other hand psychologist and sociologists tend to agree that there is a great deal more to work besides money, such as feelings of productivity, self-esteem, commitment, social interactions, and feelings of contribution to society. Such diverse perspectives on work are indicative of the

importance of work in individuals' existence and different fields of studies are interested in understanding what it entails.

Work related attitudes have clearly earned different definitions, however, the process of creating these definitions go through the exercise of finding answers to questions such as - what it means to work, how important is work, and what role work plays in an individual's life. Some of these work attitude related questions are part of the Meaning of Work (MOW) literature. Studies conducted by MOW International Research Team (MOW IRT) are considered pioneers in the field of studying attitudes related to work. A systematic MOW research study began in 1978 with a cross-national study conducted by the MOW IRT which consisted of psychologists from eight countries: Netherlands, Slovenia, USA, Israel, UK, Belgium, Germany, and Japan. Since then researchers from other countries have contributed to the MOW literature including Brazil, China, Portugal, Russia, and South Africa. One of the major contributions of MOWIRT is the proposal of MOW heuristic model which often serves as the basis for other researchers. In their research, MOW IRT collected data from different countries to answer questions around activities and attitudes related to leisure, community,

religion, and family based on the data collected from these countries, a five-component model was proposed in an effort to define the meaning of work. The five components identified include work centrality, work goals, importance of work goals, work-role identification, and social norms about working. With this model MOW IRT attempts to give some structure to the MOW literature.

Let us now briefly discuss the components of MOW IRT's model for MOW. It also provides a sense of how vast the scope of MOW is and also highlights the potential, as well as need for further research in this field. Following are the five constructs:

1. Work centrality - This construct defines work as one of the most important roles individuals play in life. The lottery example presented earlier indicates that work plays a central and fundamental role in most individual's lives. Many individuals are willing and eager to work despite no financial reasons to work. The concept of work centrality evaluates the importance of work or working in comparison to other aspects of one's life, such as relationships, affiliations, and religion (MOW, 1997). Dubin, Champoux, and Porter (1975)

defined work centrality<sup>o</sup> as a degree of general importance that work has in one's life at any given time and individuals with high work centrality believe that work is an important part of their life. Kanungo (1982) defined work centrality as the psychological identification and involvement with work and related activities.

2. Work Goals - Every individual has his or her own reasons (goals) for working and these goals tend to have a value or valence, which drives that individual. Work and work motivation related research indicates that workers differ with regard to the reasons they have for working and the needs they want to satisfy through work. Zedeck (1997) defined work values as goals that people strive to attain through working. These concepts of valences seem to be closely tied to the motivational drives where work goals become the main reason for working.

In the definitions of work values, the idea of an attitude towards work constitutes a central element. Nord, Brief, Atieh, and Doherty (1990) defined work values as 'end states that guide

individuals work related preferences that can be attained through the act of working'. The MOW study showed that most individuals have two dominant work goals - "interesting work" (expressive) and "good pay" (instrumental). In addition, Warr (1982) identified six benefits of having a job: the provisions of money, activity, variety, temporal structure, social contacts, and status and identity within society's institutions and networks.

3. Importance of work goals: The importance of work goals is related to the basic question of what individuals seek from work and what value it holds for them. As outlined by the previous construct - work values - each individual can have multiple goals or valued outcomes that he/she seeks from his/her work. Also, individuals tend to assign ratings or importance to each work goal. The literature on work goals or work aspects is very diverse and covers such topics as work values, work needs, work outcomes, job satisfaction, and reward preference. Based on the MOWIRT study, a practical definition of the work goal would be

related to the economic orientation, which would include income, role of money, and good pay, among others. For some individuals interpersonal relations (e.g., interesting contacts; type of people one works with) are of high importance; whereas for others, satisfying work (e.g., possibility to express oneself; variety; interesting work; job-abilities match; autonomy) is important.

4. Work-role identification: This construct defines the role identity of an individual at work and emphasized that we differ in how they connect to their job/work. This identification is the extent to which an individual connects his personal identity to his work. This is an important aspect in the meaning of work model since it is the sense of purpose and significance or value and worth that employees find in their work. This in turn helps to explain the kind of attitude one holds towards his role/work, thus providing a linkage between the general attitude towards work and one's personal identity. Cherrington (1980) emphasized on importance of work and suggested that

individuals identify with their work more when they feel proud of the work they are doing.

5. Social norms regarding work - Socialization is an integral part of everyone's life as norms exists in every aspect of social interaction. Social norms play an important role in how an individual thinks and behaves. The construct of 'social norm regarding work' is treated as a supporting/overarching variable in this current study and is discussed in greater detail in the section of 'cultural orientation and MOW'.

As mentioned earlier, research carried out by MOW IRT and the MOW model proposed by the team are an attempt to organize the concepts around work related attitudes by providing a more consistent definition of work, however, work is a broad concept and so is the concept of 'meaning'. For a better understanding of 'meaning of work', we have to remember that meaning does not evolve on its own or in isolation. Attitudes and meanings develop in reference to individual's relationship with work, and therefore, it is important to remember that other factors may have an effect on this relationship. Let us now briefly discuss factors that tend to affect meaning making

process and/or MOW and this discussion also lays the ground for the variables of the current study.

### Factors Affecting Meaning of Work

Literature around work related attitudes tend to classify these influencing factors at three broad levels - individual, group, and societal. While individual level factors include variables related to a person (e.g., gender, age, educational background, and economic status), group and social factors tend to define the context within which an individual exists, where group is the environment closer to the individual, e.g., professional membership, family background. The social factor is the structure within which both individuals and groups exist. There seems to be an intricate interplay of three levels of factors on work related attitudes (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Baltes & Young, 1992; Adams & Beehr, 1998; Hutchens & Dentinger, 2005). All these factors have a potential of being variables of study in this research. However, for the scope of the current project two variables will be studied more closely - age and social norms (cultural orientation). These two variables are chosen in light of the current business context where the aging workforce (individual level factor) is being identified as a growing



reality by most of the industrialized world (social factor).

According to Dychtwald, Erickson, and Morison, (2004) businesses across the United States are seeing an increase mainly in two age segments of workers - 16 to 24 years (younger workers) and 55+ years (older workers). Medical and technological advancements are helping individuals to live healthier and longer lives, thus providing the opportunity to contribute to the workforce for a longer time than what we used to a half century ago (Albrecht & Bury, 2001). Thus, there is a clear need to better understand the meaning of work for this segment of the workforce.

In addition, there has been increasing cross border exchange/movement of the workforce, therefore, it is only natural that individual of different cultural orientation may end up working together. For example, the USA attracts qualified workers from all across the world which may differ in their cultural orientation. This workforce mobility is a current reality making cultural orientation an important variable to study and understand.

As discussed earlier, individuals exist within a social structure which has its own set of norms and practices (Adams & Beehr, 1998). Thus, studying culture

seeks to understand the ways in which meaning is generated, disseminated, and produced through various shared practices, beliefs, and institutions. As a result, the need to understand cultural differences and related social context in which culture manifests itself with regard to attitudes related to work is also a key research need. Therefore, the current study dives into the variables of age and cultural orientation to understand the effects of age (individual factor) and cultural orientation (social factor), as well as the combined effect of these two variables on MOW.

The following sections discuss the framework of the current research and summarize the research around MOW as it relates to age, cultural orientation, and how the variables of age and cultural orientation interact to affect MOW.

### Age and Meaning of Work

Individuals accumulate life experiences as they age and sociological perspectives on age suggest that it is only natural to have changes in attitude towards work as individuals move through various life stages, each characterized by different configurations of work, work commitment, work values, and expectations regarding work

roles. Certain factors (e.g., developmental and cohort effects) may change the relative weights that people assign to different aspects of work, such as financial aspects, social esteem, and promotional opportunities at work (Harpaz & Fu, 2002).

So why study age as a variable? Increasingly, businesses are recognizing age as an important variable in an organizational context, especially since most of the developed nations are on the way to having approximately 20% of the population over the age of 65 years by 2025 (Source: US Census Bureau, International Data Base, April 2005 version). This projection raises a number of important organizational concerns related to the aging workforce, including the association between employee age and age related attitudes. Job attitudes are important because they link to engagement, performance on the job and often employee turnover and these are important components for any organization. Having said that, it is important to know why people work, what drives and motivates individuals to be able to create conditions in which they will enjoy working, excel in what they do and willing to participate longer in the workforce. This is especially relevant with respect to the aging population, as well as the growing need for utilizing and transfer of

knowledge, skills, and abilities that older workers possess.

Change in work related attitudes due to age finds support in the AARP study (conducted by Montenegro, Fisher, & Remez, 2002) in which 2,518 workers ages 45-74 were interviewed, including a representative sample of 1,500 workers including African American, Hispanic, and Asian American aged 45+ workers. The study was conducted to identify workers' motives for working, and their attitudes and perceptions about their workplace. This study identified four broad phases in adult life and it was suggested that an individual will typically identify with one of these at any given point in their life - "Sustainers" who list enjoyment as a major reason for working, but they also identify money as another major factor. "Providers" who believe work is important because of the function it serves to help them provide for dependents, as well as maintain self-esteem as a provider. "Connectors" are typically highly connected to the workplace, investing a lot of time into the workplace and perhaps expecting returns such as a pension or health benefits. Finally, "Contributors" are those individuals who work because they see it as a contribution to society. This is indicative that relative weight (i.e., importance)

that individuals place upon each of these components when allocating importance to work in their lives may shift as part of the aging process and as we progress in our careers (Sterns & Doverspike, 1989; Sterns & Miklos, 1995). For example, money is one of the primary reasons to work, however, value attached to earning money may vary depending on what phase of life person is at - e.g. Provider versus Contributor (Levinson et al., 1978; Montenegro, Fisher, & Remez, 2002).

A recent study by Ng and Feldman (2010) demonstrates that older workers have higher work centrality compared to their younger counterparts. Such findings can be a result of declining/reducing familial responsibilities as individuals go through the life stages and this leads individuals to focus more on work itself instead of money related values of work (salary, benefits, insurance etc.). Older individuals tend to be more aware of the fact that resources (time and employment opportunities) may be limited, and with this kind of awareness they tend to prioritize work related tasks and goals that are meaningful (Carstensen, 2006; Grant & Wade-Benzoni, 2009) leading to higher involvement and focus at work, which in turn leads to higher work centrality.

Triandis (1972) proposed a set of normative assumptions about what individuals should expect from work and working (opportunities or entitlements), as well as what they should expect to contribute through working (obligations). Attitude towards work in terms of entitlements or obligation would change based on what phase of life and career an individual is at (Levinson et al., 1978, Bardwick; 1980; Gallos, 1989). For example, individuals in early career (sustainers) will focus more on what work brings to them (e.g., salary and other financial incentives), while 'connectors' and 'contributors' would have more obligatory attitude towards work, where they would like to contribute to the society. In a review of generational differences in work attitudes, Twenge & Campbell (2010) summarized that younger workers (Generation Me, also known as GenY, Millennials, nGen, and iGen; born 1982-1999) believe that work is less central to their lives and value leisure more, while their older counterparts (Baby Boomers; born 1946-1964) have higher work centrality. Such findings indicate that work has more of an instrumental value for younger workers as compared to older workers, where as older individuals focus more on the expressive aspects of working lives.

The MOW study found that there is a strong tendency for older workers to define working in positive terms and value the expressive outcomes of working. Coetsier and Claes (1990) emphasize that younger workers prefer instrumental values because they lack financial security and the older workers prefer expressive or intrinsic values. As individuals transition through the initial phases of life, they face responsibility (sustainer and providers) and that is the time when individuals may tend to focus on the economic part of work rather than work itself. Studies such as the one conducted by AARP demonstrate that the needs of individuals may change over the life course as individuals move through the work-life, where work and social relationships (family and other) tend to become central to life cycle (Sterns & Doverspike, 1989; Montenegro, Fisher, & Remez, 2002) and family consideration tend to influence older individuals, including the idea of spending time with family, care responsibilities and obligations, and economic considerations such as educating children/grandchildren. A majority of older workers ranked "family" higher than "working," perhaps suggesting that aging makes family ties more salient (Harpaz, 2002; Sterns & Miklos, 1995). This indicates an increased importance of opportunities to

maintain social connections at work as a motive for investing efforts towards work. The need for building and maintaining meaningful relationships increases with age while younger workers hold stronger values for extrinsic rewards (e.g., salary, bonus) compared to their older counterparts (Carstensen et al., 2000).

The MOWIRT (1987) study also found that there is a strong tendency for older individuals to demonstrate high levels of identification with working, define working positively, and value the expressive outcomes of working. In a survey of working adults, 59 percent of older workers strongly agreed with - a good deal of my pride comes from my work and my career (MOW, 1987). In addition, a study by Ng and Feldman's (2010) demonstrated that older workers have higher job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and involvement with work. They also tend to have higher levels of commitment to their organizations and identify more with their organization and work than younger workers. Younger employees put more emphasis on quick promotions than older workers who put more value on the moral importance of work. This focus on moral importance also indicates that older workers would identify more strongly with their role and job than younger workers (Cherrington, 1970; Ng & Feldman, 2010). A study by



Huiskamp and Schalk (2002) demonstrated that older employees work extra hours, work well with others, provide a good service, and deliver good work in terms of quality and quantity, whereas younger employees focus more on opportunities for promotion.

One's priority and expectations from work changes with age (Montenegro, Fisher, & Remez, 2002) and older individuals show higher work centrality, focus more on expressive values of work outcomes (Twenge & Campbell, 2010), and demonstrates higher identification with their work (Cherrington, 1970; Ng & Feldman, 2010). Therefore, following hypotheses are proposed:

*Hypothesis 1:* Older individuals will score higher on work centrality than younger individuals.

*Hypothesis 2:* Older individuals will score higher on expressive value of work than younger individuals.

*Hypothesis 3:* Older individuals will score higher on work-identification as compared to younger individuals.

Next, we discuss the definition of culture as it relates to the current study along with the synthesis of research around work related attitudes.

## Socio-cultural Norms and Meaning of Work

Culture refers to the set of behavioral patterns responding to common experiences which creates a 'typical' life within a society and members of the society learn and share these behaviors. According to Hofstede (1980), culture can be defined as beliefs and customs that define common characteristics of a human group much like how personality explains an individual's identity. Therefore, socialization is a big part of an individual's existence within a cultural/social context. In addition, culture represents the historically determined set of what is good, right, and desirable, that is shared by a group of individuals who have undergone a common historical experience (Schooler, 1996).

Traditionally, we have witnessed two broad categories of social norms defined as 'individualism' and 'collectivism' (Hofstede's, 1980). In highly individualistic societies focus is typically on individual merits, actions, and interests. Conversely, in highly collectivist national cultures, individuals look after an extended network of friends and family, and are more willing to subsume their own interests to the needs of the collective. As a result, collectivist societies tend to

induce a stronger sense of personal obligation in every aspect of life, including work (Triandis et al., 1988).

In addition, there are general work and non-work related norms in every society. It is believed that if a society generally holds positive norms and attitudes towards work, then work is central and cherished by the members of that society (Pain et al., 2001). Also, in such a society, not working or staying away from work will be considered a deviation from the norm of that society. Societies also tend to differ in work environment, structure, expectations, evaluation parameter, and composition of the workforce. Thus, we can predict variations regarding work related attitudes that will differ based on differences in cultures. Researchers (e.g., Arvey, Harpaz, & Liao, 2004; Brief & Nord, 1990; England, 1991; Harpaz, 2002) have suggested that the degree to which individuals associate or identify with working is central to how they define themselves as individuals, a phenomenon that has been demonstrated across cultures and in most industrialized nations (e.g., Belgium, Netherlands, Japan, United States). Work related meaning is determined by individuals' choices and the experiences they have in the organizational, as well as

the environmental context in which they live and work (MOW, 1987).

Marsh and Mannari (1977) highlighted systematic work related differences between culture of individualism and collectivism. For example, time-off (leisure) taken by the Japanese is far less than when compared to their western counterparts demonstrating that Japanese focus more on work rather than leisure, hence more commitment towards work. This comparison holds true to most eastern countries, where taking time off for leisure activities is far less prominent when compared to the western countries, particularly in western Europe. Also, putting extra hours at work without pay is typical in eastern countries and not so prevalent in western society (Marsh & Mannari, 1977). Thus, we may derive that cultural differences lead to differences in work related attitudes since culture is one of the most salient factors that can affect attitudes towards work. Positive relationships between collectivism and work centrality where individuals from collectivist nations demonstrated higher work centrality and pride in work.

A study by Hattrup, Ghorpade, and Lackritz (2007) examined relationships between work group collectivism and work centrality and pride in work, with nationality as a

moderator. Their study demonstrated that individuals from collectivist cultures were significantly higher on work centrality when compared with individuals from individualistic cultures. Similarly, Mulla and Krishnan (2006) asserted that meaning of work in Indian context, which is typically defined as a collectivist culture; equate work with karma (action) and a path to liberation and also a means of living a meaningful life in this world. This kind of life philosophy would affect the work centrality since every action is guided by a sense of karma and that should make work as one of the important aspects of an individual's life in such a culture.

A financial outcome of work is one of the major goals for individuals (Warr, 1982). But, it is interesting to assess if cultural differences can increase or decrease the value of money and in turn devalue the financial goal to a certain extent. In collectivist cultures, for example, family (typically includes extended families) is a dominant institution in an individual's life and if needed, people can depend on family to provide for the material necessities of life. Collectivist society promotes inclusive existence and social obligations are deeply embedded into the transactional systems and lays great emphasis on relationships and interdependence (Chen,

Chen, & Meindl, 1998). Such social transaction would devalue the instrumental aspect of money as individuals can depend on relationships in case of need. Whereas, absence of socio-emotional support for individuals could translate into the need to depend greatly on financial independence and can serve as a security blanket in absence of social support when needed (e.g., in times of sickness and old age). In line with this logical deduction about the relationship between money and social relationship, Zhou and Gao (2008) suggested that money related needs are negatively correlated with social/relationship related needs of an individual. The nature of social transactions in collectivist societies frees up the individual from the need to depend only on money during tough times.

Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, and Neale (1998) demonstrated that collectivistic cultures will identify more strongly with their group and group tasks leading to stronger identification with the organization and in turn its products and services. Hofstede (1980) characterizes members of individualist cultures as having less loyalty to the organizations as compared to members of collectivist cultures. Boyacigiller and Adler (1991) argue that the commitment of employees with an individualist

orientation may be to the compensation system (instrumental value) rather than commitment to work and the organization's products and services. Such a phenomenon across collectivist culture can also be indicative that work-money association is weak and individual will, therefore, derive other meanings from work and/or identifies with work more. This may also be explained by the finding by Marsh and Mannari (1977) that individuals with collectivist orientation tend to spend extra hours at work (without expectation to be compensated for these extra hours). Positive attitude toward work and the organization is a component of person's general value system (Allen & Meyer, 1993) and commitment to group and organizational goals are typical of collectivist societies making individuals from such society more committed to work related aspects.

There are differences in guiding principle among country/culture and typically collectivistic norms encourage commitment toward social relationships both, at work and outside of it. In addition, the research literature suggests that individuals with collectivist orientation will demonstrate higher work centrality, will focus more on social aspect of work (expressive values), and have higher work-role and organizational

identification as compared to individuals with individualistic orientation.

*Hypothesis 4:* Individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on work centrality as compared to individuals with individualist orientation.

*Hypothesis 5:* Individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on expressive value of work than individuals with individualist orientation.

*Hypothesis 6* Individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on work-identification as compared individuals with individualist orientation.

We have so far discussed the differences in MOW for different groups based on either culture (individual/collective) or age (younger worker/older worker). The literature clearly indicates differences in work related values for these groups (H1-H6), where MOW literature suggested that meaning is a result of subjective interpretation and social norms contribute to the meaning making process. This is a strong argument because countries do differ in their culture, work systems, and age composition of their labor forces. In addition, these differences bring along uniqueness in work related perceptions and age related norms which in turn governs work as well as non-work roles within each



country. Next, we discuss the combined effect of age and cultural norm on work related attitude.

#### Interplay of Meaning of Work, Age, and Culture

Riley (1973) demonstrated that variation among workers of different ages reflects not only consequences of age related factors, but also the group membership and norms associated with it. This explanation indicates that age differences in MOW are affected by cultural context since expectations for different stages of life differ based on cultures. For example, individualistic culture encourages an adult to be self-sufficient, as well as set and pursue personal goals. On the other hand, collectivistic cultures encourage adults to contribute to the group, work with others to achieve mutual goals, adhere to the traditional values of the group, and understand their place within the social hierarchy, as well as perform their socially expected roles. These arguments signal some sort of interaction among these variables - MOW, culture, and age. However, MOW literature does not directly address this interaction of variables. In this section, MOW literature will be leveraged to identify interaction among work values, age, and culture.

Literature (Cherrington, 1970; Carstensen et al., 2000; Ng & Feldman, 2010; Twenge & Campbell, 2010) has indicated that older workers have higher work centrality, score higher on expressive values than instrumental values of work, and identify more with work as compared to younger workers (H1 - H3). On the other hand, literature (Chen, Chen, & Meindl, 1998; Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998; Hattrup, Ghorpade, & Lackritz, 2007) also suggested that workers from collectivist cultures have higher work centrality, expressive values, and work-identification (H4 - H6). Having these in place, what can we conclude about the potential interaction of these variables?

To answer this question and hypothesize about the interactions, we have to keep in mind that work values operate as secondary drivers of action that are determined by need (primary driver), as well as socialization, cognition, and experiences (Kooij et al., 2010). Cultural influence on work values is inevitable as social norms as socialization, collective cognition, and other experiences, which mean that workers with the same cultural background will exhibit similar work values as a result of socialization (Latham & Pinder, 2005; Loscocco & Kalleberg, 1988). For example, Cialdini et al. (1999)

found that individuals from collectivist culture utilize their peer's histories to make decisions. This tendency should influence younger workers to demonstrate similar work values as their older counterparts. With this in mind, we discuss the interplay of the variables.

Studies have indicated that, in general (regardless of culture), older workers have higher work centrality as compared to younger workers (Ng & Feldman, 2010), in other words we can say that work centrality can vary depending on stage of life. Also, we have previously discussed that workers (regardless of age) from collectivist cultures are typically higher on work centrality as compared to individualistic cultures (Hattrup, Ghorpade, & Lackritz, 2007). With that as a basis, we can derive that younger worker from collectivist culture should demonstrate higher work centrality as compared to younger workers from individualist culture. In addition, the financial need hypothesis suggests that people during early and middle careers often have responsibilities requiring financial stability which contributes significantly to the importance of working (Gould & Werbel, 1983). This is especially true for workers from collectivist culture starting a career which signifies a big phase of transition for the young adults. This phase formalizes the

transition into adulthood, which means a gradual increase in familial/social responsibilities. During this phase, the need to gain social acceptability via work would be relatively high, therefore, younger workers would exert more personal resources (time and effort) around work related engagements than non-work related activities; hence higher work centrality as compared to younger counterparts in individualistic culture where familial responsibility is not a social obligation.

Studies have demonstrated that older workers will value social interaction (H2) more in comparison to the instrumental gains and younger workers would be more inclined towards instrumental values (Cartstensen et al., 1999). Additionally, younger workers are facing economic challenges in wake of world wide recession and turbulent financial markets, therefore, money and other instrumental work values (e.g., health insurance) may be perceived as a tangible guard against such uncertainties. Having argued that younger workers would value instrumental gains more than older counterparts, the question to ask now would be whether we would see differences in attitude based on culture?

Two different studies have demonstrated that younger Kuwaiti and Japanese workers tend to give priority to

extrinsic rewards from work as compared expressive values of work. They also prefer instrumental values more than older workers of the same culture as well as when compared to United States (Hasan, 2004; Loscocco & Kalleberg, 1988). And to explain this inclination of younger workers from collectivist culture towards instrumental values, we need to again consider cultural norms around social/familial obligation in a different light. Adulthood in collectivist culture typically means more social roles including being responsible for the family (and parents). Individuals from collectivist cultures often view career choice in the context of potential contributions and obligations defined by the society (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). These kinds of responsibilities can lead to instrumental orientation towards work because work becomes the source of income that would provide for the family and this is in line with the 'sustainer' and 'provider' roles we discussed earlier (Baltes & Bal, 2012). These roles are more structured and formal because of the social rules/norms in collectivist culture i.e. socially expected and transferred from one generation to another. This also means that instrumental value of work may not be as important for the older generation because now the younger ones in the family share responsibilities. Also, families

and social relationships are guards against uncertainty for people in collectivist culture and if needed, people can depend on family to provide for the material necessities of life. Whereas on the other end, we should see similar trend of decrease in instrumental value of work among older workers from individualistic culture because of the social structure that the society provides to the individuals, such as health facilities and social security benefits. However, individualist culture is often referred to as materialistic due to their individualistic and task-oriented life styles (Mujtaba & Balboa, 2009). Similarly, Wong's (1997) conspicuous consumption and materialism research found that individualism was positively correlated with materialism, while collectivism was negatively related to materialism. Based on these theories, we can argue that older workers from individualistic society would score higher on instrumental value of work despite the social infrastructure available to them to offset the lack of social support as part of the aging process (e.g. old age care).

Older adults have fewer prescribed roles—most are no longer employed for pay and very few are still responsible for young children (Moen et al., 2000). Wright and Hamilton (1978), and Kalleberg and Loscocco (1983) found

that older workers were not as concerned about income and promotion opportunities as compared to their younger counterparts. This brings us back to the 'connector' and 'contributor' roles attached to the older workers (Baltes & Bal, 2012). Workers' tenure in the professional field could contribute to identification with work as routine and familiarity with work which has been established over years tends to lead to higher identification with work, especially when work is not synonymous to financial gains any longer (Cherrington, 1970; Ng & Feldman, 2010). In an examination of work motivation, Lord (2004) found that the primary reasons for older workers "enjoy working, derive satisfaction from using their skills, gain a sense of accomplishment from the job they perform, and enjoy the chance to be creative" and this attitude towards work help them to remain active in the workforce. This kind of attitude among older worker should be particularly true in collectivist culture because growing old in collectivist society means having a newer generation of family and society to share responsibilities and that tends to provide older workers more opportunities to focus on work related activities. Work should gain more importance (meaning) than merely being a source of providing stability to the family. As the pressure of providing for

the family gradually reduces, older workers would look for other meanings at work and it is more likely that they continue to work because they identify and relate to what they are doing which means that work will be central in their life and hence higher identification with their work. We should see higher work role identification among older workers from collectivist culture as compared to older workers from individualistic culture (Marsh & Mannari, 1977). Researchers have also demonstrated positive relationship between work centrality and job involvement (e.g., Diefendorff et al., 2002) and since older workers tends to be higher on work centrality as compared to younger workers (H1) and also, workers from collectivist culture score higher as compared to workers from individualist culture (H4), therefore, we may conclude that older workers from collectivist culture should have higher job involvement which will lead to greater work-role identification.

Based on above discussed differences in how familial and social interactions are set up in different societies, and also changes in expectations from work related activities depending on age, the following hypotheses are proposed:



*Hypothesis 7:* Age and culture will interact in predicting work centrality. Specifically, work centrality increases with age, however, younger individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on work centrality as compared to younger individuals with individualist orientation, thus demonstrating a slower pace of change in work centrality as they age. (Figure 1)

*Hypothesis 8:* Age and culture will interact in predicting the desired value of work. Specifically, scores on expressive values of work slowly increases with age; however, younger individuals with collectivist orientation will score lower on expressive values of work as compared to younger individuals with individualistic orientation, thus representing a faster pace of change. (Figure 2)

*Hypothesis 9:* Age and culture will interact in predicting work-identification. Specifically, identification with work increases with age; however, older individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on work-role identification as compared to older individuals with individualist orientation, whereas younger workers from both cultures will show

similar levels of identification with work. (Figure 3)

A snapshot of all the hypotheses can be reviewed in Appendix B.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHOD

#### Participants

The present study included 380 participants ranging in age from 18 to 74 years old ( $M = 29.16$ ,  $SD = 10.14$ ) with 26% men and 74% women. Fifty percent of the participants reported they were single, 37% percent reported being married, whereas, the remaining 13% reported their marital status as separated, living with partner, or divorced. Almost 33% had earned at least a bachelor's degree and 33% had college education of some level, but no degree. Fifty-one percent of the participants reported the United States as their country of birth, while 45% reported India as their country of birth. In addition, 42% and 58% currently reside in India and the US, respectively. Thirty-seven percent of individuals currently residing in India have individualistic orientation and 62% has collectivist orientation, whereas 59% of individuals residing in United States have individualistic orientation while 40% has collectivist orientation. In terms of identifying with a socio-economic class, 23% identified with the lower income group, where as 21%, 30%, and 23% reported to be from

working class, middle class, or professional and upper middle class, respectively. Based on the current employment status, students and individuals employed full time (30 hours or more per week) made up most of the participant pool for this study (student = 35%, fulltime employees = 41%, part-time employees = 15%, homemakers and unemployed but looking = 4%). Also, data showing specific current role and individuals' identification with Socio-Economic Status is presented in Appendix H.

### Procedures

The survey to collect data for the study was hosted on [www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com) and a survey link was created. The survey link was available for three weeks (10/23/2012 to 11/14/2012) for data collection after which the link to the survey was disabled and no individual could access it. Participants for this study were recruited online via email and also through social network sites such as: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter (see Appendix C for the text of those recruitment communications). California State University San Bernardino's Sona-Systems (a research management system) was utilized to recruit students for the study and to award extra credit for research participation. Participants were invited to complete an

online survey which included the measures for cultural orientation and MOW questionnaire. The opening statement of the survey included an informed consent with an IRB approval stamp (see Appendix D for wording of the informed consent statement).

At the end of the survey period data was downloaded from the Qualtrics web site. A total of 566 participants started the survey; however 467 (81%) participants formally completed it (participants who received the 'thank you' message). Missing value analysis was conducted and Little's MCAR analysis demonstrated that the missing data was missing completely at random. Completed data was sought for questions for age, country of birth, current country of residence, cultural orientation (cultural orientation scale), work centrality, expressive values of work, and work-role identification (constructs of MOW scale). These were the main variables for the current study; therefore, completeness of data for these variables was important. As a result, complete data was available for only 380 participants.

#### Measures

The final survey that was sent out to the participants included a list of demographic measures and

the following two scales (see Appendix E for the complete list of questions demographics questions).

#### Culture Orientation Scale (CO)

The Culture Orientation Scale designed by Bierbrauer et al. (1994) was used to identify cultural orientation of the participants. In this scale, participants respond to anchors of 1 to 7 with the labels of "very bad" to "very good" to identify the cultural orientation of the participants. The COS is shown in Appendix E. The scale contains 13 items measuring the perception of typical 'individualistic' and 'collectivist' norms. Bierbrauer et al. (1994) reported a Cronbach's reliability estimate of the COS of 0.86. The scale was validated with German and Korean participants and internal consistency of the scale was found to be acceptable (Germans = 0.82; Koreans = 0.70). The reliability coefficient for the current study was found to be consistent with the previous studies,  $\alpha = .87$ . Additionally, none of the items were deleted, as the item-total correlations did not indicate an improvement in the Cronbach's alpha level if items were deleted.

#### Meaning of Work Questionnaire (MOW)

An adapted version of the Meaning of Work questionnaire was used for the current study. It was

comprised of 12 items categorized into three sub scales to include items for work centrality (4 items), as well as instrumental or expressive value of work (4 items) and work-role identification (4 items). A 7-point Likert type response scale was used for items related to work centrality, work goals (instrumental/expressive value), and work-role identification, where, 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree. A higher score on each item indicated that the participant has high identification with the item and the related construct (see Appendix G). The reliability for the MOW scale has been reported between 0.66 to 0.82 (Snir, 2005). The reliability analysis for the current study on the MOW scale indicated an adequate internal consistency reliability coefficient,  $\alpha = .66$ , and the analysis did not support the deletion of any of the items.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics for the main variables of the study. To test the hypotheses Pearson r coefficients were calculated to measure the association between MOW constructs and age (H1-H3), mean differences on MOW based on cultural orientation were tested using Student's t-tests (H4-H6). Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted for hypothesis H7, H8, and H9 to determine the combined effect of age and culture on MOW. Specifically, moderator analysis was conducted for age, culture, and the MOW constructs to understand the joint effect of age and culture on MOW. A two-step process analysis was carried out, where age and culture were entered in the first step of the regression analysis as the predictors of the MOW constructs. In step two, the product of age and culture (age\*culture) was added. As suggested by Ro (2012), the two step analysis was used in which the interaction term (age\*culture) was entered in its own step. The main effect of the independent variable and the moderator effect from first step separately from the effect of the moderator in the second step were then estimated.



Cultural orientation (CO) items were dichotomized at the mean value of 4.85, where, a score of 4.85 or below on CO Scale was recoded as 0 (indicating individualist orientation), while those scored greater than 4.85 was recoded as 1 (indicating collectivist orientation). This categorization was necessary for comparative analysis between the two groups. Since age and cultural orientation were used as a component of interaction term in the analyses, these variables were mean-centered.

Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations

Study Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	380	18	74	29.16	10.14
Work centrality	380	1	7	3.70	1.41
Expressive values of work	380	2.5	7	5.79	0.99
Work - role identification	380	1.25	7	5.35	1.30
CO scale	380	2.38	6.69	4.85	0.60

Table 2. Results for Pearson's r and T-test

MOW Construct	Age	Individualistic		Collectivistic		Df	t-test		Eta Squared
		Pearson's r	(I)	(C)	SD		t-value	Sig.	
Work Centrality	0.26*	3.58	1.37	3.83	1.44	378	-1.71	.044*	0.008
Expressive work value	0.30*	5.64	1.04	5.94	0.93	378	-2.89	.002*	0.021
work-role identification	0.34*	5.11	1.37	5.59	1.18	378	-3.65	<.001*	0.034

Note: n = 380

Pearson r was calculated to test hypothesis 1, which stated that older individuals will score higher on work centrality as compared to younger individuals. The results found significant positive relationship between age and work centrality, where,  $r = .26$  ( $r^2 = .06$ ),  $p < .05$ . The result shows that older individuals scored higher on work centrality thus supporting hypothesis 1.

Pearson r was also calculated to test hypothesis 2, which stated that older individuals will score higher on expressive value of work as compared to younger individuals. The results found significant positive relationship between age and expressive values of work, where,  $r = .30$  ( $r^2 = .09$ ),  $p < .05$ . This result shows that older individuals scored higher on expressive values of work thus supporting hypothesis 2.

In addition, a Pearson  $r$  was calculated to test hypothesis 3, which stated that older individuals will score higher on work role identification as compared to younger individuals. The results found a significant positive relationship between age and work-role identification, where,  $r = .34$  ( $r^2 = .13$ ),  $p < .001$ . This result demonstrates that older individuals scored higher on work-role identification thus supporting hypothesis 3.

A  $t$ -test was calculated to test hypothesis 4, which stated that individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on work centrality as compared to individuals with individualistic orientation. The data supports the hypothesis and results show differences on work centrality between the individuals with individualistic orientation ( $M = 3.58$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) and individuals with collectivist orientation ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ),  $t(378) = -1.71$ ,  $p = .044$ , where, individuals with collectivist orientation scored significantly higher than individuals with individualist orientation. However, the effect size was very small at  $\eta^2 = .008$ , indicating that only .8% of the variance in work centrality is associated with cultural orientation.

A  $t$ -test was also calculated to test hypothesis 5, which stated that individuals with collectivist

orientation will score higher on expressive values of work as compared to individuals with individualistic orientation. The data supports the hypothesis and results show significant differences on expressive values of work between the individuals with individualistic orientation ( $M = 5.64$   $SD = 1.04$ ) and individuals with collectivist orientation ( $M = 5.94$ ,  $SD = .93$ ),  $t(378) = -2.89$ ,  $p = .002$ . Specifically, individuals with collectivist orientation scored significantly higher than individuals with individualist orientation on expressive values of work. However, the effect size was relatively small at  $\eta^2 = .021$ , indicating that only 2.1% of variance in expressive values of work is associated with cultural orientation.

A t-test was calculated to test hypothesis 6, which stated that individual with collectivist orientation will score higher on work-role identification as compared to individuals with individualistic orientation. The data supports the hypothesis and results show significant differences on work-role identification between the individuals with individualistic orientation ( $M = 5.11$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) and individuals with collectivist orientation ( $M = 5.59$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ),  $t(378) = -3.65$ ,  $p < .001$ . Specifically, individuals with collectivist orientation

scored higher than individuals with individualist orientation on work-role identification. However, the effect size was relatively small at  $\eta^2 = .034$ , indicating that only 3.4% of variance in work-role identification can be accounted for by the cultural orientation.

Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Predicting Work Centrality

Variable	Step 1		Step 2			
	B	SE	B	B	SE	B
Intercept	3.70	.070		3.71	.070	
Age	.036	.007	.262	.036	.007	.262
Cultural Orientation (CO)	-.011	.116	-.005	-.011	.116	-.005
Age*CO				-.002	.011	-.010
F		13.88*			9.24*	
$\Delta R^2$		.069			.000	
$\Delta F$		13.88			.041	

\* $p < .05$

To examine the unique contribution of a combined effect of age and cultural orientation in the explanation of work centrality as a construct of MOW, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed. Age, cultural orientation, and the age\*cultural orientation interaction term were entered in two step models. In step 1, work centrality was the dependent variable, while age and

cultural orientation were the independent variables. In step 2, the interaction of age and cultural orientation was entered.

The results of step 1 indicated that the variance accounted for ( $R^2$ ) with the age and cultural orientation as independent variables equaled .06, which was significantly different from zero ( $F(2,377) = 13.88$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In step 2, the interaction variable (age\*CO) was entered into the regression equation. The change in variance accounted for ( $\Delta R^2$ ) was equal to .000 (i.e., no change), which was not different from zero ( $F(1, 376) = .041$ ,  $p > .05$ ). As a result, the analyses failed to support hypothesis 7 which predicted an interaction of age and cultural orientation on work centrality.

Table 4. Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Predicting Expressive Values of Work

Variable	Step 1			Step 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>
Intercept	5.797	.048		5.799	.048	
Age	.029	.005	.293	.029	.005	.293
Cultural Orientation (CO)	.292	.080	.177	.292	.080	.177
Age*CO				-.006	.008	-.034
<i>F</i>		26.45*			17.77*	
$\Delta R^2$		.123			.001	
$\Delta F$		26.45			.49	

\*  $p < .05$

To examine the unique contribution of a combined effect of age and cultural orientation on expressive values of work as a construct of MOW, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed. Age, cultural orientation, and age\*cultural orientation were entered in two step models. In step 1, expressive value of work was the dependent variable, while age and cultural orientation were the independent variables. In step 2, the interaction of age and cultural orientation was entered into the equation.

The results of step 1 indicated that the variance accounted for ( $R^2$ ) with the age and cultural orientation

as independent variables equaled .12, which was significantly different from zero ( $F(2, 377) = 26.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In step 2, the interaction variable (age\*CO) was entered into the regression equation. The change in variance accounted for ( $\Delta R^2$ ) was equal to .001, which was not significantly different from zero ( $F(1, 376) = .049$ ,  $p > .05$ ). As a result, the analyses failed to support hypothesis 8 which predicted interaction of age and cultural orientation on expressive values of work.

Table 5. Hierarchical Multiple Regression for Predicting Work-role Identification

Variable	Step 1		Step 2			
	B	SE	B	B	SE	B
Intercept	5.351	.061		5.359	.061	
Age	.042	.006	.326	.042	.006	.327
Cultural Orientation (CO)	.508	.101	.236	.507	.101	.236
Age*CO				-.021	.010	-.101
<i>F</i>		38.92*			27.75*	
$\Delta R^2$		.17			.01	
$\Delta F$		38.92			4.67*	

\*  $p < .05$

To examine the unique contribution of a combined effect of age and cultural orientation on work-role identification as a construct of MOW, a hierarchical



multiple regression analysis was performed. Age, cultural orientation, and age\*cultural orientation were entered in two step models. In step 1, work-role identification was the dependent variable, while age and cultural orientation were the independent variables. In step 2, the interaction of age and cultural orientation entered into the equation.

The results of step 1 indicated that the variance accounted for ( $R^2$ ) with the age and cultural orientation as independent variables equaled .17, which was significantly different from zero ( $F(2, 377) = 38.92$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In step 2, the interaction variable (age\*CO) was entered into the regression equation. The change in variance accounted for ( $\Delta R^2$ ) was equal to .01, which was significantly different from zero ( $F(1, 376) = 4.67$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Therefore, the result supports hypothesis 9 which predicted an interaction of age and cultural orientation on work-role identification (See Figure 5).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

Before proceeding with the interpretation and discussion of what the data from the current study suggests, it is important to highlight that even though data resulting from this study supports differences in MOW constructs in relation to age and cultural orientation, the effect size estimates for MOW construct and cultural orientation were relatively small (Cohen, 1988). However, even a small effect size may mean that we are able to bring individuals, who are 65 years or older, back to contributing to the workforce to some extent. This may be more powerful than it seems in numbers right now, especially with growing number of individuals in that age group. Having said that, results should be generalized with caution as results may not be replicable since the magnitude of the difference between the comparison groups is indicated to be low by the effect size estimates. Suggestions for future research are discussed in the limitation section and include suggestions for use of other variables that may lead to medium to large effect size. With that in mind let's discuss what story current data might be telling us.

The present research was an attempt to explore the effects of age and cultural orientation on MOW constructs and to assess the extent to which these variables interact with each other to affect MOW. Results of this study extend the work by the MOW IRT (1987), specifically contributing to the establishment of the constructs of MOW heuristic model proposed by MOW Team. Age and cultural orientation are a unique combination of variables, therefore, contributing to the ongoing multi-disciplinary discourse around what it means to work.

In line with the AARP study by Montenegro, Fisher, and Remez (2002), data from the current study shows that older employees tend to focus more on work itself, expressive values of work, instead of economic values. They also have higher work-role identification. This kind of result may be explained by the fact that older individuals typically witness a decrease in familial responsibilities, which could make economic rewards less salient and work is likely to come to the center of individual's life making it a way to express their individuality. That is, work becomes central and a mode of expression leading to higher identification (Brief & Atieh, 1987; Brief, Konovsky, George, Goodwin, & Link, 1995). Older individuals (connectors and contributors in

AARP study) would have more obligatory attitude towards work, where they would like to connect and contribute to the society through their work, making work the most important aspect of their lives. Also consistent with the MOWIRT (1987), this study found a strong tendency among older people to demonstrate high levels of identification with work. It shows that older workers continuing to work even when financial and familial responsibilities are reduced; they can focus on work itself and therefore report higher involvement in work and commitment to their organizations; as compared to their younger counterparts. The focus on work also indicates that older workers would identify more strongly with their role and job than younger workers and this is also in line with the findings of Cherrington (1970), as well as more recently Ng and Feldman (2010) studies.

The results of the current study also indicate differences in work related attitudes based on individual's cultural orientation (Arvey, Harpaz, & Liao, 2004; Brief & Nord, 1990; England, 1991; Harpaz, 2002); where individuals with collectivist orientation scored higher on work centrality, expressive values of work, and work-role identification. It is important to note that 37% of individuals currently residing in India reported having

an individualistic orientation, while 62% reported having a collectivist orientation; whereas 59% of individuals residing in United States reported having an individualistic orientation, on the other hand 40% reported having a collectivist orientation (See Appendix H). Even though the majority of the participant in this study demonstrated the assumed location based cultural orientation (i.e., collectivist orientation for participants from India and individualist orientation for participants from the US), however, the variability in the data shows that participants location and cultural orientation are not interchangeable. In fact, cultural orientation seems to be dependent more on the individual's inherent inclinations.

Data indicate that individuals with collectivist orientation score higher on work centrality as compared to individuals with individualist orientation. This result is in line with the study by Marsh and Mannari (1977) which suggested that individuals from collectivist countries such as India and Japan focus more on work when compared to other non-work activities, such as travel or vacations.

The financial outcome of work is one of the major goals for individuals (Warr, 1982). Brief and Atieh (1987) demonstrated that financial rewards are more attractive

aspect of the work for individuals with familial responsibilities as families tend to be demanding on time, energy as well as economic resources. Since collectivist culture provides social environment in terms of familial/extended family support which frees up individuals to focus on expressive values of work more than financial reasons. Also, individuals in such a setup are not solely dependent on financial capability to manage adverse situations such as illness. Social cushion of collectivist culture, therefore, devalues the instrumental aspect of work as individuals can depend on relationships in case of need. This kind of social structure is conducive for expressive values of work especially, since work is not necessarily a 'means' to supporting a family, an individual is able to focus more on the work itself, thus making it important. Focus is more on work because of the attributes of work and the role, rather than work being the reason for fulfilling financial responsibilities, saving for future, and the like.

One of the unique contributions of the current study was to explore the possible interaction of age and cultural orientation on MOW constructs of work centrality, expressive values of work, and work-role identification. Such a relationship has not been explored in the field of

MOW studies. Most of the previous studies in this field have leaned toward examining age related differences and cultural difference separately, whereas this study was an exploratory attempt to see if these two variables interact to affect MOW. The results demonstrate that the combined effect of age and culture does not explain any further variance already explained by age and cultural orientation separately for two of constructs of MOW. Specifically, work centrality and expressive values of work were not found to be statistically significant, while we obtained a significant interaction effect for work-role identification.

It is possible that work centrality and expressive values of work are difficult construct to capture in this context. One of the reasons for such a result could be that age and cultural orientations act as independent variables and influence MOW, however, when combined together lose their unique characteristic, their exclusivity and influence on these constructs. This may occur because age is a naturally occurring and global phenomenon which everyone recognizes and every individual identifies with 'age' regardless of their cultural orientation. A possible example is the AARP study, where life is defined through various stages - sustainer,

providers, connectors, and contributors and expectation from work differs based on what life needs from an individual at a specific time of life and regardless of cultural orientation, an individual would typically identify with one life stage more than others.

Similar to the AARP's four stages, traditionally the Hindu way of life is loosely based into four phases of life called the 'ashram' system, where an individual is expected to lead their lives based on these phases; Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanprastha, and the Sanayasa ashrama. Each ashrama signified a particular relevant phase of life and the duties and obligations one is supposed to fulfill (Saraswathi, Mistry, & Dutta, 2011). There are resemblances between the stages by the AARP study and the ashram system, where the first phase is of sustenance where an individual works and lives for the moment while preparing for later life which brings in more responsibility. This stage is then followed by more responsibilities (social and familial) and then the next stage which brings the individual back to personal/individual obligations. Based on these stages we see more similarities between the two cultures than differences, especially in how stages of life progresses as part of the aging process. This indicates that despite



the differences in cultural orientation, individuals tend to identify with different life stages in somewhat similar fashion which makes age an integral and non-exclusive variable within a culture. This should be especially true for work centrality and work value because these are typically influenced by the most current needs of the individual and should differ based on stages of life.

As mentioned earlier, these kinds of relationship have not been addressed in previous literature within this field of study, thus it is difficult to determine if there was an issue with the sample or the procedure followed in the study. However, based on the analyses, it seems that age and cultural orientation do not interact to influence work centrality and expressive values of work; although the reasons for this lack of interaction is still not completely clear.

Even though the study did not obtain significant interaction effects for work centrality and expressive values of work, data of the current study supports that age and cultural orientation demonstrates a combined effect on work-role identification. Work-role identification is one of the constructs of MOW that tends to be affected by not only the variables related to the individuals (e.g., age or cultural orientation), but also

the context within which 'work' itself exists, such as, organization, nature of work, as well as the product and services that work produces. Since job/role specific expectations are a component of a person's value system, there tends to be significant difference in commitment to individual, as well as organizational defined roles at work. This result is in line with a study by Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, and Neale (1998) that suggested cultures differ in how they identify with their group and group tasks leading to differences in identification with their role and the organization that they work for.

Looking more closely to the interactions effect (as depicted in Figure 5 in Appendix I), it is also interesting to see the trends for work-role identification and the results indicate that there are greater differences between younger workers with collectivist orientations and younger workers with individualistic orientation, and that these differences tend to decrease with age. Specifically, younger workers with a collectivist orientation scored higher on work-role identification as compared to their counterpart with individualistic orientation. Alternatively, even though older workers with collectivist orientation scored higher on this construct as compared to their counterparts with

individualistic orientation, the difference is not as much and is gradually decreasing with age (as depicted in Figure 5 in Appendix I). The result also confirms that irrespective of cultural orientation, older workers score higher on this construct as compared to younger workers (Cherrington, 1970; Ng & Feldman, 2010).

The result, even though significant, is different from the hypothesis. Specifically, it was predicted that younger individuals (regardless of cultural orientation) will show similar level of identification with work whereas work-role identification gap will be larger for older workers with different cultural orientation. However, our data is showing the opposite trend as compared to what was predicted, in that the gap in work-role identification is getting smaller with an increase in age. One possible rationale could be selective attrition phenomenon during late work phase of life when older individuals choose to continue working only because they strongly identify with their role or industry. This is in line with the study Lorence and Mortimer (1985) which demonstrated that job involvement stabilizes during later part of one's career, while identification and involvement with work is much more volatile during early career stages.

In addition, Chatman et al. (1998) in their study found that individuals with collectivist orientation tend to have higher identification with the organization and its products/services that their role helps deliver. This is consistent with the results of the current study where individuals (regardless of age) scored higher on work-role identification. There are researchers who studied employment opportunity options available to older workers and concluded that employment opportunities available decreases with age, i.e., older workers have fewer employment options (Harrison & Hubbard, 1998; Meyer & Allen, 1987). This lack of opportunities for employment could potentially motivate older employees to keep their current job and also make additional efforts into their role leading to greater work-role identification as compared to younger workers who have many more employment opportunities to explore.

#### Implications

Results of the current study have the potential to contribute the MOW literature and Human Resources practices.

### Theoretical Implications

The current study makes important contribution to the literature around MOW by not only providing valuable data for the heuristic mode but also confirming the findings of past researches on MOW. This study provides important data for the heuristic model. MOW has been a topic of study by researchers across the globe since the 1980s; however, no established theoretical model is available in this field of study. Data from the current study contributes component MOW model proposed by MOW IRT and confirms the legitimacy of work centrality, work values, and work-role identification as constructs of MOW.

In line with AARP's four phases of life (Montenegro, Fisher, & Remez, 2002), where sustainers and providers focus more on the financial aspect of the work, while connectors and contributors focus more on the expressive values of work itself (reflected by job involvement). This conclusion is evident in significant age related differences expressive values of work and work-role identification constructs, where older individuals clearly scored higher on these work values as compared to the younger individuals.

The current study also confirms the findings of the studies which demonstrated higher role identification (job

involvement) among older individuals (Cherrington, 1970; MOWIRT, 1987; Ng & Feldman, 2010). The results of the current study demonstrate that older individuals (regardless of cultural orientation), score higher on work-role identification construct of MOW.

Results of the current study also indicates that collectivist culture devalues financial aspects of work in relation to other expressive values that comes with a job/work and also encourages individuals to focus on work values other than financial gains. This kind of attitude towards work also tends to encourage higher work centrality. Data from the current study demonstrated that individuals with collectivist orientation (regardless of age) scored higher on expressive values of work, as well as on work centrality. This kind of result calls for further exploration on how collectivist culture encourages higher work centrality, job involvement, and expressive values of work and how social supports devalues financial value of work.

#### Practical Implications

With so many organizations operating in a multinational environment today, globalization of corporations is leading to increasing connection among countries. Work related rewards that are encouraged and

rewarded depend in part on the prevailing cultural value emphasized in a society and people in various countries may view and interpret the same types of work goals differently (Arvey, Harpaz, & Liao, 2004; England, 1991; Harpaz, 2002). Therefore, understanding cultural difference in MOW is important for organizations if they want to succeed in the demanding competitive environment. Data from the current study suggests that work has different meanings for people of different cultural orientations, therefore organizations should continue to customize the work-reward policies to suit the employee, especially in cross border business models (multinationals).

Results of the current study also indicate clear differences in work related attitudes based on age. As younger workers continue to account for a less likely source of new employees, the retention of older workers becomes an important human resource strategy. The aging of developed nations' population and workforce is likely to have numerous human resource implications over the coming years. Loi & Shultz (2007) highlighted the possible workforce planning including recruitment, training and retention of older workers. Organizations need to focus on on attracting and retaining of older workers to avoid loss

of skills, experience, and corporate knowledge. Insights from the current study can help Human Resources Management (HRM) practices to motivate and facilitate older workers to continue to work by providing insights into drives and motivations in the workplace scenario can help in the development of context relevant incentive systems to encourage employees to continue to participate in the workforce. For example, the current study indicates that older workers tend to have higher work centrality and work-role identification which should make them an attractive group to the organizations to recruit. This is especially true because of higher work centrality along with all the industry and technical/trade experience that older worker possess.

Since, older workers tend to have higher work-role identification; organizations can utilize them as coach and mentors for the younger workers and help them in the socialization process in their early career stage. This may help in the transferring of positive attitude toward work and organization.

Results also show that an expressive value of work, such as social relationship at work, is more important for older individuals. This points to the organizations that if they wish to attract retirees back to work, they will



need to carve out roles for them which will satisfy social interaction aspect as compared to the instrumental or monetary benefits.

#### Limitations

This current research was limited in scope, therefore, affecting the generalizability of the results and findings for relationship between age and cultural orientation should be considered as preliminary until further research is conducted to study their relationship with MOW constructs. The differences established by the study should be interpreted with caution and further research should be conducted to see if the results are similar.

A single source method of data collection was used for this study which may lack important cues about the sample as compared to multi-source data collection method. Qualitative questions that are part of an interview with probing questions would have been a rich source of qualitative and multidimension data.

Since the construct of MOW are multi-faceted, it is possible that different aspects of work may interact differently with individual differences and societal values to produce diverse results. The present study

focused on single individual level variable (age) and broad cultural orientation so the results may not be generalized based on ethnicities, geographical based differences, therefore, may not have a representative sample from the larger geographic areas.

The data in the current study was also limited by the time frame in which it was collected. Absence of longitudinal data limit the generalizability of the results as work related attitudes may undergo changes through time. So our inference regarding different stages of life leading to changes in work related priorities may be misinformed and possibly due to methodological confounds such as cohort or period effects.

#### Future Research Directions

Future research should further examine the relationship between MOW constructs with age and cultural orientation as there are still gaps in literature. Future research should explore this relationship using data not only from various countries classified as collectivistic or individualistic, but also test the sample to confirm the cultural orientation of individuals of those countries to address both the national and individual level of culture. Future studies should also explore different

individual level variables such as gender, educational qualification, and level of household responsibility (breadwinner, number of household members etc.).

#### Summary and Conclusion

The current study investigated the role of age, cultural orientation and the interactions of age and cultural orientation in the relation constructs of MOW, including work centrality, expressive values of work, and work-role identification. It was found that MOW may mean different things for individuals based on age and cultural orientation, whereas the combined effect of age and cultural orientation tends to influence work-role identification, however, may not have effect on work centrality and expressive values of work.

The results of the present study show that we need to consider individual differences in helping to explain how MOW differs across cultural settings. The role of societal values should also be considered to optimize operations of motivational theories within an organization. This level of understanding of individual and societal cultural differences will strengthen the literature around work related attitudes which will in turn be particularly

relevant to the businesses when examining employee policy in global settings.

APPENDIX A  
EXPECTED RESULTS FOR HYPOTHESES 7, 8, AND 9

### Expected Results for Hypotheses 7, 8, & 9

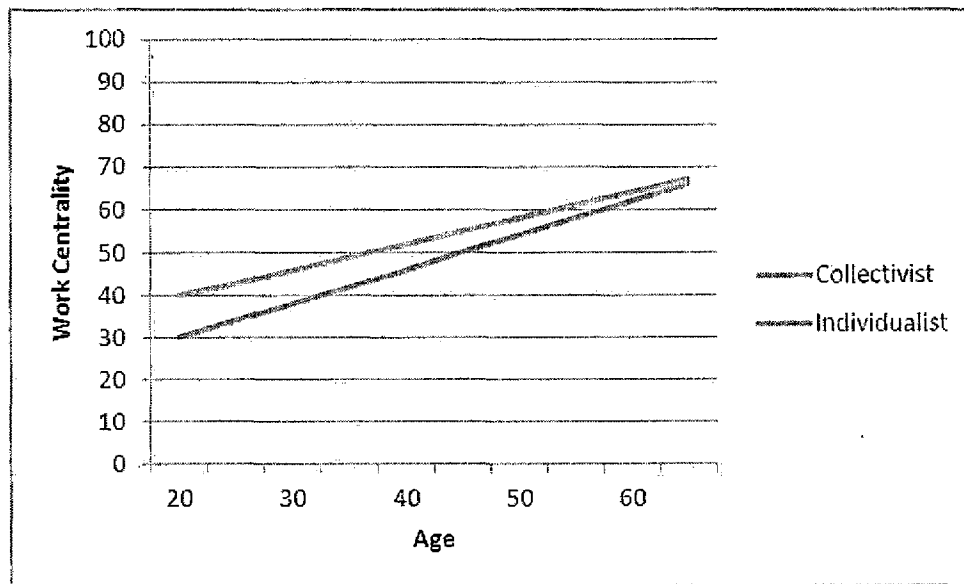


Figure 1: Expected Results for Work Centrality – Scores as a Function of Age and Culture

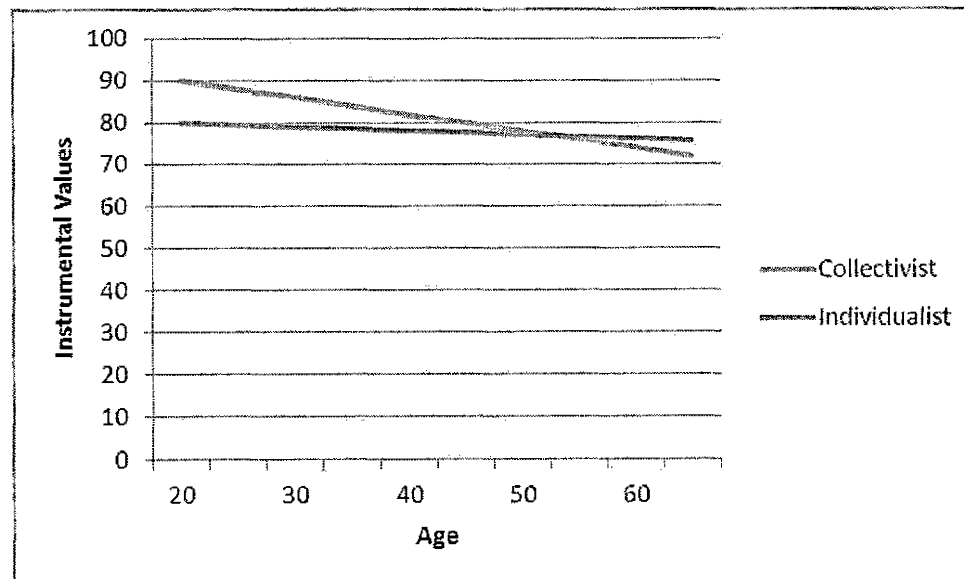


Figure 2: Expected Results for Instrumental Values of Work– Scores as a Function of Age and Culture

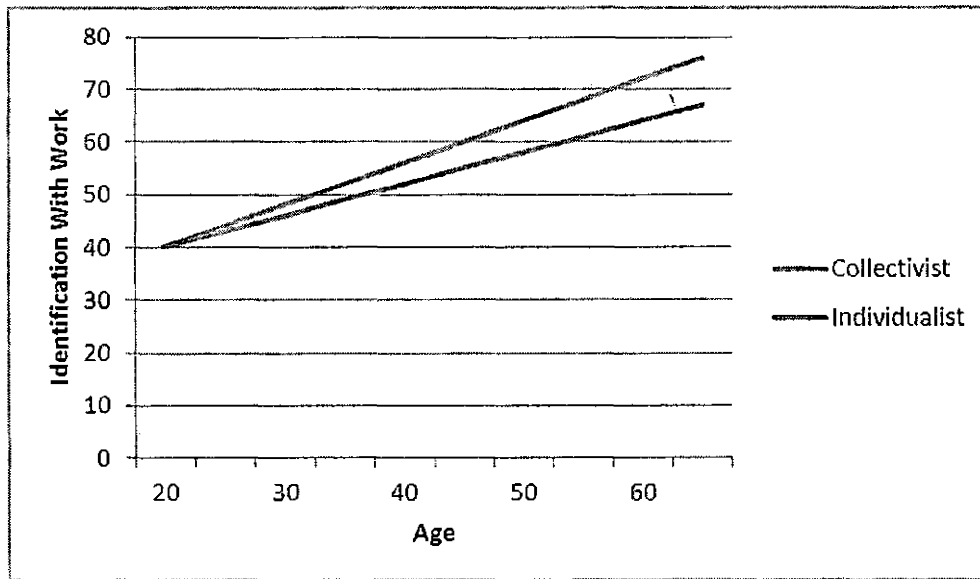


Figure 3: Expected Results for Work Identification - Scores as a Function of Age and Culture

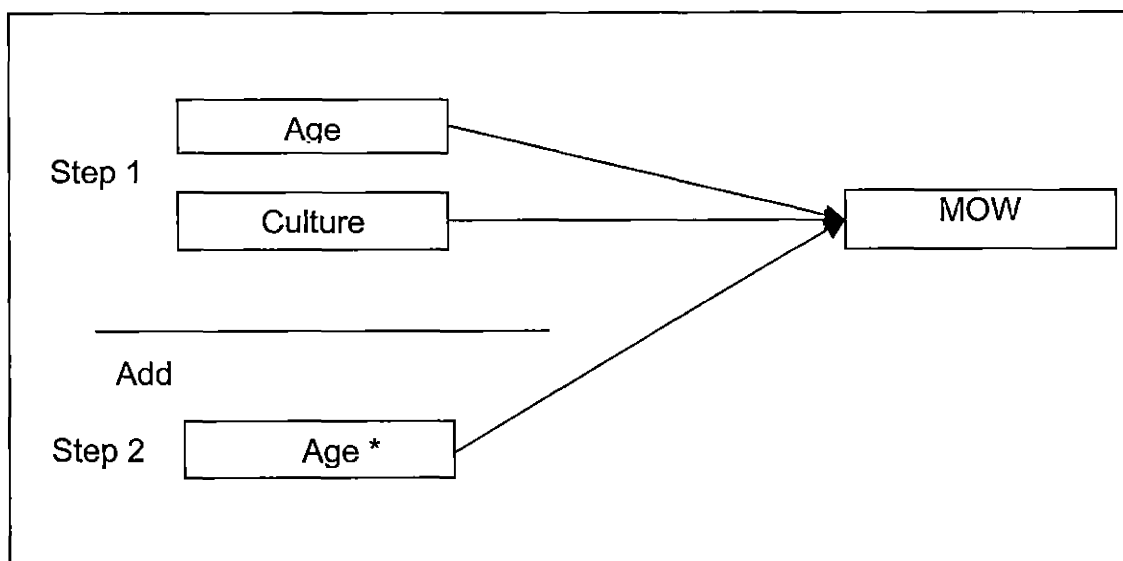


Figure 4: Hierarchical Regression Model for the Moderator Effect, Ro (2012)

APPENDIX B  
HYPOTHESES SUMMARY TABLE



**Hypotheses Summary Table**

HO No.	Hypotheses Description
1	Older individuals will score significantly higher on work centrality than younger individuals.
2	Older individuals will score significantly higher on expressive value of work than younger individuals.
3	Older individuals will score higher on work-identification as compared to younger individuals.
4	Individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on work centrality as compared to individuals with individualist orientation.
5	Individuals with collectivist orientation will score significantly higher on expressive value of work than individuals with individualist orientation.
6	Individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on work-identification as compared individuals with individualist orientation.
7	Age and culture will interact in predicting work centrality. Specifically, work centrality increases with age, however, younger individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on work centrality as compared to younger individuals with individualist orientation, thus demonstrating a slower pace of change in work centrality as they age.
8	Age and culture will interact in predicting the value of work. Specifically, scores on expressive values of work slowly increases with age; however, younger individuals with collectivist orientation will score lower on expressive values of work as compared to younger individuals with individualistic orientation, thus representing a faster pace of change.
9	Age and culture will interact in predicting work-identification. Specifically, identification with work increases with age; however, older individuals with collectivist orientation will score higher on work-role identification as compared to older individuals with individualist orientation, whereas younger workers from both cultures will show similar levels of identification with work.

APPENDIX C  
EMAIL INVITATION TO TAKE THE SURVEY

### **Email invitation to take the survey**

Hello,

My name is Shachi Tripathi and I am pursuing a Master's Degree in Industrial/Organizational Psychology at California State University, San Bernardino. I am writing to invite you to participate in an online survey designed to understand work related attitudes. Specifically, I am interested in exploring how age and culture can affect Meaning of Work.

I would appreciate a few minutes of your time to complete my survey which will help me gather the data required to complete my thesis. The survey will take about 10 -15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used only for the purposes of research for this project. Please know that there is no right or wrong answers and your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time during the study, or refuse to answer any specific question

Simply click on the link below, or cut and paste the entire URL into your browser to access the survey: [Survey Link](#)

**Also, if you know of anyone else who may be willing to complete my survey please forward this email to them.**

Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,  
Shachi Tripathi

APPENDIX D  
INFORMED CONSENT

## Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a study designed to investigate effects of age and cultural orientation on Meaning of Work (MOW). This study is being conducted by Shachi Tripathi under the supervision of Professor Kenneth Shultz. This study has been approved by the Department of Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee of the California State University, San Bernardino, and a copy of the official Psychology IRB stamp of approval should appear on this consent form. The University requires that you give your consent before participating in this study.

This study is for participants who are 18 years of age or older. In this study, you will complete a short survey regarding your perceptions with regard to your work and culture. This survey is anonymous and will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. If you are a CSUSB Psychology student, participation is worth 1 unit of extra credit in a psychology class of your choice, at your instructor's discretion.

This survey will not ask you to provide your name. Data will be reported in group form only and stored on a password protected account, and only the researcher will be able to access the account. The results from this study will be used for a graduate level thesis requirement. Summary results of this study will be available from Dr. Kenneth Shultz (kshultz@csusb.edu; (909) 537-5484) after March 31, 2013.


Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time during the study or refuse to answer any specific questions without penalty. There is minimal risk associated with this study. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, in and of themselves, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. To ensure the validity of the study we ask that you not discuss this study with other potential participants.

It is very unlikely that any psychological harm will result from participation in this study. However, if you would like to discuss any distress you have experienced, do not hesitate to contact the CSUSB Counseling Center (909-537-5040).

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Kenneth Shultz (kshultz@csusb.edu; (909) 537-5484). You may also contact the Human Subjects office at the California State University, San Bernardino (909) 537-7588 if you have any questions or concerns about this study.

*By clicking continue, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and that I understand the nature and purpose of this study, that I freely consent to participate, and that at the conclusion of the study, I may ask for additional explanation regarding the study. I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.*

**CONTINUE**

California State University Psychology Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee			
Approved	10/15/12	Void After	10/15/13
IBB #	H-12FA-06	Chair	

APPENDIX E  
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

## Demographic Survey

- What is your current age? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your gender?
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
- What is your current marital status?
  - ☐ Single
  - ☐ Married
  - ☐ Separated
  - ☐ Living with partner
  - ☐ Divorced
  - ☐ Widowed
  - ☐ Other (please specify)
- What is your highest Level of Education completed?
  - ☐ Less than High School
  - ☐ High school or equivalent
  - ☐ Vocational/technical school (2 year)
  - ☐ Some college but no degree
  - ☐ Bachelor's degree
  - ☐ Master's degree
  - ☐ Doctoral degree
  - ☐ Professional degree (MD, JD, etc.)
  - ☐ Other (please specify)
- What was your country of birth?
  - ☐ India
  - ☐ United States of America
  - ☐ Other (please specify)
- What is your current country of residence?
  - ☐ India
  - ☐ United States
  - ☐ Other (please specify)
- Years in current country of residence? \_\_\_\_\_

- Your household consists of how many members (including you)?
  - ☐ 1
  - ☐ 2
  - ☐ 3
  - ☐ 4
  - ☐ 5
  - ☐ Other (please specify)
- How many children live in your household who are:
  - ☐ Less than 5 years old?
  - ☐ 5 through 12 years old?
  - ☐ 13 through 17 years old?
  - ☐ N/A - Do not have children
- Are you responsible to take care of aging parents/relative?
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Yes (if yes, how many?)
- Excluding members of your household, do you have other family members, close relatives and/or friends residing within a 1 hour commute from of where you live?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- Which of the following categories best describes your current employment status (regardless of your actual position)?
  - ☐ Homemaker
  - ☐ Student
  - ☐ Employed full-time (30 hrs/week or more)
  - ☐ Retired
  - ☐ Employed part-time (30 hrs/week or less)
  - ☐ Unemployed and looking for job
  - ☐ Unemployed and not looking for job
  - ☐ Other (please specify)



- If currently employed, which of the following best describes your role?

- ☐ Upper Management
- ☐ Middle Management
- ☐ Entry level management
- ☐ Administrative staff
- ☐ Support staff
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Skilled labor
- ☐ Trained Professional
- ☐ Temporary employee
- ☐ Consultant
- ☐ Researcher
- ☐ Self employed
- ☐ Intern
- ☐ Other (please specify)

- If currently employed, your organization can be defined as:

- ☐ Public sector
- ☐ Private sector
- ☐ Not-for-profit
- ☐ Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_

- How would you define your current socio-economic status?

- ☐ Low income
- ☐ Working class
- ☐ Middle Class
- ☐ Upper-middle or professional
- ☐ Upper class or wealthy
- ☐ Other (please specify)

APPENDIX F  
CULTURAL ORIENTATION SCALE

### Cultural Orientation Scale (Adapted)

*Please read each of the following statements carefully and indicate the degree of your approval or disapproval. (1 = I think the mentioned behavior is very bad, 7 = I think the mentioned behavior is very good)*

1. What do you think of teenagers listening to their parents' advice on dating?
2. What do you think of people sharing their ideas and newly acquired knowledge with their parents?
3. What do you think of people listening to the advice of their parents or close relatives when choosing a career?
4. What do you think of people talking to their neighbors about politics?
5. What do you think if someone taking the advice of friends on how to spend his or her money?
6. What do you think of someone doing exactly what he or she wants to do, regardless of what friends and colleagues present may think?
7. What do you think of children living at home with their parents until they get married?
8. What do you think of people being annoyed when visitors arrive unannounced?
9. What do you think of people choosing to take care of sick relatives rather than going to work?
10. What do you think of people consulting their family before making an important decision?
11. What do you think of people discussing job or study related problems with their parents?
12. What do you think of people feeling lonely when not with their brothers, sisters or close relatives?
13. What do you think of someone feeling insulted because his/her brother had been insulted?

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APPENDIX G  
THE MEANING OF WORK QUESTIONNAIRE (ADAPTED)

## **The Meaning of Work Questionnaire (Adapted)**

For the following questions, please think about what working means to you. While answering these questions think about your personal beliefs and value regarding life and work.

*Below are a number of statements which you may agree or disagree. Please indicate if you 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = mildly disagree, 4 = neither agree or disagree, 5 = mildly agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree*

### **Work centrality**

1. The most important things that happen in life involve work
2. Work should be considered central to life
3. Individual's personal life goals should be work-oriented
4. Life is worth living only when people get absorbed in work

### **Work outcomes**

#### *Instrumental values*

5. Working provides me with an income that is needed
6. The money I receive because of my work is important to me

#### *Expressive values*

7. Working permits me to have interesting contact with other people
8. Good interpersonal relations at work is important

### **Work-role identification**

9. Working itself is basically interesting and satisfying to me
10. The tasks I do while working are meaningful to me
11. My company or organization is an important aspect of my life
12. The product or services I provide through my work is meaningful

MOW-International Research Team (MOWIRT). (1987). *The meaning of work: An international view*. London: Academic Press.

APPENDIX H  
CROSSTAB DATA FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS  
AND CURRENT ROLE

Crosstab Data for Socio-economic Status and Current Role

	Low Income	Working Class	Middle Class	Upper-Middle Class	Upper Class	Other	Percentage
Upper Management	1	0	0	11	0	0	3.64%
Middle Management	2	3	18	24	0	0	14.24%
Entry Level	5	6	5	2	1	0	5.76%
Admin Staff	7	8	4	0	0	0	5.76%
Support Staff	12	8	5	0	0	0	7.58%
Student	29	20	18	5	2	0	22.42%
Skilled Labor	6	9	2	0	0	0	5.15%
Trained Professional	1	6	17	16	1	0	12.42%
Temporary Employee	4	4	1	1	0	0	3.03%
Consultant	0	0	4	5	0	0	2.73%
Researcher	0	4	5	8	1	0	5.45%
Self Employed	0	2	2	0	1	0	1.52%
Intern	1	1	3	1	0	0	1.82%
Other	4	4	12	7	0	1	8.48%
Percentage	21.82%	22.73%	29.09%	24.24%	1.82%	0.30%	

APPENDIX I

ACTUAL RESULT FOR HYPOTHESIS 9



### ACTUAL RESULT FOR HYPOTHESIS 9

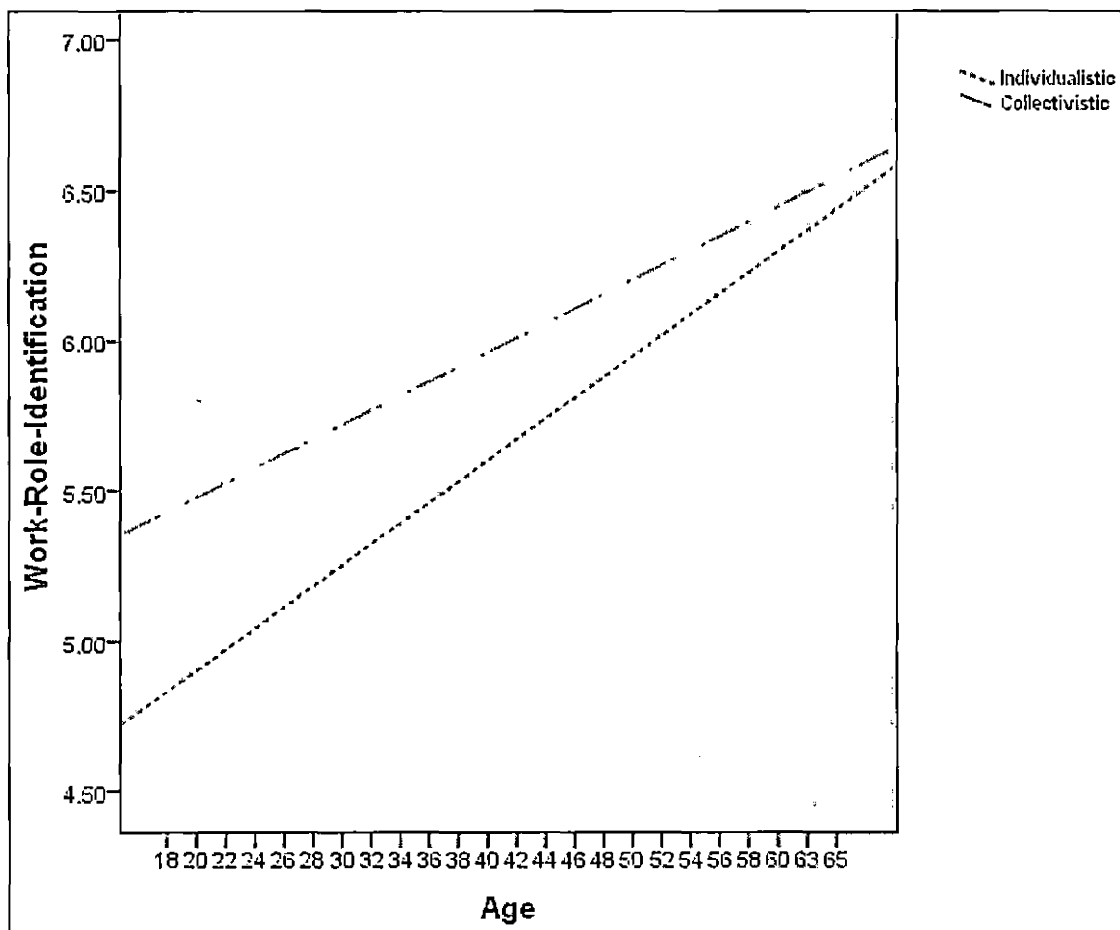


Figure 5: Graph demonstrating effect of age and cultural orientation on work-role identification construct of MOW (fit line)

APPENDIX J  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

**Human Subjects Review Board  
Department of Psychology  
California State University,  
San Bernardino**


**PI:** Tripathi, Shachipriya and Shultz, Kenneth  
**From:** John P. Clapper  
**Project Title:** Meaning of Work: A Comparison of Age and Culture  
**Project ID:** H-12FA-06  
**Date:** 10/15/12

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**Disposition: Administrative Review**

Your IRB proposal is approved. This approval is valid until 10/15/2013.

**Good luck with your research!**



John P. Clapper, Co-Chair  
Psychology IRB Sub-Committee

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