

## **A Comparison of Employee Job Satisfaction in the Service Industry: Do Cultural and Spirituality Influences Matter?**

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*Globalization and technology have fueled great growth in the services sector. Job satisfaction in services is a desirable outcome for employees and firms, yet the factors associated with it remain elusive. Much of the original and subsequent research on employee job satisfaction and motivation has occurred in the United States, but few studies have qualitatively assessed job satisfaction across other cultures. This research incorporates Hackman and Oldham's Job Diagnostic Survey and Hofstede's dimensions of culture in a study of employees in the global services industry. Managerial insights related to culture and spirituality in the workplace are also given.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Job satisfaction has been the source of extensive scholastic research, and it is linked to positive employee outcomes and firm performance (Sledge, Miles & Coppage, 2008; Thierry, 1998; Thomas & Au, 2002). Desirable employee outcomes attributed to satisfied workers include workplace safety and job security (Ritter & Anker, 2002), and advantageous firm results associated with satisfied workers include productivity and efficiency increases (Hwang & Chi, 2005). Schneider (1985) proffers job satisfaction as employee attitudes toward workplace outcomes. Although research contributions to job satisfaction are numerous relative to U.S. employees, fewer studies exist which focus on this topic outside of the U.S. (Sadler-Smith, El-Kot, and Leat, 2003). Subsequently, international evaluation of this multifaceted construct provides understanding and opportunity within the global marketplace. Job satisfaction is often linked to motivation (Thierry, 1998). Furthermore, researchers (Oishi, Diener, Lucas and Eunkook, 1999; Hwang & Chi, 2005) have supported practitioner beliefs that satisfied employees are likely to be motivated employees and that work-related satisfaction is an integral part of life satisfaction.

Scholars have often detailed the importance of the role of culture in the service industry (Hui, Au and Fock, 2004; Sledge, Miles & Coppage, 2008; White, 2005). According to Hofstede (1980; 2005), motivation on the job is influenced by culture. He defines culture as a five dimensional construct that illustrates the "collective programming of the mind" (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). Furthermore, Saxton & Dollinger (2004), found culture to be a significant variable in workplace studies. Spirituality, noted as

values (Wheaton & Baird, 2002) and the search for the sacred (Zellars & Perrewé, 2003) promotes respect and concern for community (Miles, Sledge & Coppage, 2008). This concept has been linked to life satisfaction (Emmons, 1999) and workplace benefits such as improved turnover, economic profits and job satisfaction (Barro & McCleary 2003; Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002). As the concepts of employee motivation, culture and spirituality continue to emerge, their impact on employee job satisfaction remains an important inquisition, and thus is the focus of this study.

Specifically, this study investigates the topic of job satisfaction in the service industry in three countries: Canada, Mexico, and the Netherlands. Hackman and Oldham's Job Diagnostic Survey (1975) is employed to qualitatively evaluate job satisfaction among service workers and applicability of a U.S.-based job satisfaction theory to other cultures. Hofstede's (1980, 2005) cultural dimensions are considered in the analysis to emphasize the impact of culture in the workplace.

This research makes an important contribution to the international business literature as it answers calls for additional qualitative research in the area of cross-cultural management studies (Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2004). Moreover, qualitative studies benefit from a rich data set developed through focused listening techniques, personal two-way communication, and awareness of non-verbal cues and cultural contexts, all of which are difficult to discover in quantitative work. Thus, the findings supplement prior quantitative work completed on job satisfaction among service workers worldwide.

This work continues as follows. First, a brief review of Hackman and Oldham's Job Diagnostic Survey (1975) and its applicability to the current study is provided. Secondly, the concept of culture and its relevance to job satisfaction is presented. Next, a synopsis of spirituality in the workplace and its links to job satisfaction is given, followed by methodology and results. Finally, conclusions and directions for future research are given.

### **Hackman and Oldham's Job Diagnostic Survey**

Hackman and Oldham's (1975; 1980) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) led to the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS), which is one of the most frequently cited job satisfaction models in the business literature (DeVaro, Li and Brookshire, 2007; Pierce, Jussila and Cummings, 2009). Its wide usage is attributable to its production of repeated confirmatory results for more than 30 years (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). In the JCM, 5 dimensions describe employee motivation on the job. They are as follows:

*Skill Variety* – the degree to which a job utilizes a mix of employee knowledge, skills and abilities

*Task Identity* – the degree to which a job involves completing a whole and specified project or piece of work

*Task Significance* – the degree to which a job makes a recognizable impact or contribution in the lives of others, whether they be inside or outside of the organization

*Autonomy* – the degree to which a job allows a worker independence and freedom in scheduling tasks and determining how the work will be accomplished

*Feedback* – the degree to which a job gives a worker data regarding the effectiveness of his or her efforts, either directly or indirectly

Hackman and Oldham (1975) note that these 5 key job dimensions are associated with and may produce 3 critical psychological states for workers, which are:

*Experienced Meaningfulness* – a state of cognition where employees perceive their work as being valuable and worthwhile. Linked to skill variety, task identity and task significance.

*Experienced Responsibility* – the extent to which an employee feels accountable personally for the outcomes of the work they perform. Linked to autonomy.

*Knowledge of Results* – the extent to which an employee, on a regular basis, is knowledgeable about and comprehends how effective they are performing their job tasks. Linked to feedback.

According to the JCM, these 3 states may be followed by *affective outcomes* for workers such as:

*Enhanced Job Satisfaction, Internal Motivation at Work, and Growth Satisfaction.*

In the model, worker autonomy and feedback for the worker are more noteworthy than job characteristics. Hackman and Oldham (1975; 1980) suggested that workers with greater internal needs for professional growth (the growth need strength dimension) would have a more positive response to job enrichment than other workers would (Garg & Rastogi, 2006). Hackman and Lawler (1971) stated that an employee's individual need for growth and development should be a part of studies on job satisfaction. However, due to the exploratory nature of this research, this dimension has been omitted from the current study.

Using the work of Gomes (2003) and Lee-Ross (2005), we found that the JDS was appropriate for this study as it considers the particular aspects of the service industry such as personal relationships and it also allows for variances in culture, background and personality among the survey participants. This coordination of model and research is significant as service jobs are role-based rather than task-based. Thus, the social aspects of the job are related to job performance. By using the JCM and the JDS, we can effectively document these information rich aspects of the work with qualitative research methods.

Some authors have stated that the JDS needs to be revised in order to produce the most accurate results (Corderly and Sevastos, 1993). In particular, they point out that positively phrased questions related to the JDS job dimensions are preferable to negatively worded questions in order to avoid dimensionality concerns. We have incorporated this concern into our work by using positively worded phrases for the JCM concepts in our survey. Another concern revolves around the impact of the education level of the respondents. This concern was dismissed by Kulik et al. (1986) who found that less educated workers were in fact able to distinguish between dimensions and thus education level was not a moderating factor in the model. Other authors, such as Katz and Kahn (1978) have confirmed the core job dimensions of the JDS.

### **Hofstede Framework: Culture's Influence**

National culture has been shown to be an important variable in global research (Kogut & Singh, 1988; Saxton & Dollinger, 2004) and many international business scholars have included it in their research. In a study by Smith and Schwartz (1997), nationality was responsible for almost 3 times more variance in respondent answers to job surveys than demographic factors such as age, gender and education level. In a 1995 study on U.S and European managers, Schlegelmilch and Robertson found that the country variable, which was used as a proxy for culture, accounted for differences in workplace values perceptions among the 2 groups. Lenartowicz and Roth (2001) discovered that subcultures within nations affect employee motivation and business performance, which underscores the importance of culture in International Business research. As one of the first global management scholars to write about national culture, Hofstede (1980; 2005) is the most often cited cultural scholar in the international business literature (Chandy & Williams, 1994). His paradigm paved the way for many other cross-cultural research studies. Many academics have replicated Hofstede's findings since his initial results were published over 25 years ago including Kogut and Singh (1988), and Sondergaard (1994). Barkema and Vermeulen (1997) established content validity in his 5 dimensions of culture using data from 1966-1994. Over twenty years later, Sivakumar and Nakata (2001) noted the strength of the conceptual basis of the Hofstede framework. Moreover, Hofstede confirmed the validity of his dimensions 25 years after introducing them (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

In his initial studies, Hofstede (1980) indicated that national cultures exist worldwide. He further suggested that these cultures direct behaviors of individuals within a country and explain variances in their preferences. Hofstede's original study included over 120,000 IBM employees located in 40 countries, and later he added 13 additional nations to support the theory using his Value Survey Module. Originally, four cultural dimensions were identified. A fifth dimension was added in a later study (Hofstede & Bond, 1988) with the input of Chinese scientists to avoid western mindset biases. The dimensions are as follows.

*Power distance* - The degree to which control and influence are distributed unequally; the degree to which people accept that some have more power in society than others. High power distance means power is distributed unequally in the society.

*Individualism versus Collectivism* – The concepts of “I and Me” versus “We and Us”; the degree to which people reference self or the group in making decisions. High individualism means individualism is valued in the society.

*Uncertainty Avoidance* – The degree of risk aversion; the degree to which people are comfortable with the unknown. High uncertainty avoidance means the society is avoidant of uncertain situations.

*Masculinity versus Femininity* – The desire for material possessions and recognition versus the desire for relationships and family; the degree to which gender roles are determined in a society. High masculinity means wealth, possessions and material items are valued and gender roles are strictly defined in the society.

*Confucian Dynamism also known as Long-Term Orientation* - Long-term versus short-term orientation; the degree to which people favor saving face in relationships and respect tradition. High Confucian dynamism means that the society prefers to save face and emphasize long-term goals and objectives over short-term goals and objectives.

These dimensions offer indicators of intercountry cultural differences and similarities as well as intracountry variations in tastes and preferences. Although some researchers (Brannen and Salk, 2000) suggest that the convergence of economies worldwide may lead to the global assimilation of business values and other scholars (Ohmae, 1985) argue that world cultures are converging, ample research supports Hofstede's (2005) contentions that cultural values vary around the world, and that national culture cannot be disregarded in the business world (Kogut & Singh, 1988; Sondergaard, 1994). Therefore, the dimensions will be used here to explore motivating factors among employees in three countries that exhibit cultural, economic, industrial, social and geographic diversity.

### **Spirituality in the Workplace**

Spirituality in the workplace as noted earlier has been linked to workplace benefits (Barro & McCleary 2003; Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002; Miles, Sledge & Coppage, 2008). Although traditionally ignored in management literature, the construct now is being studied more often. Volumes of work have been dedicated to this dimension, and studies on spiritual development, personality (Mohamed, Wisnieski, & Syed, 2004), values and ethics (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004) have become prevalent. Fernando and Nilakant (2008) contend that spirituality is the catalyst toward reaching self-actualization; while Miles, Sledge & Coppage (2008) have studied cultural and spirituality linkages. Spirituality's relationship to culture and job satisfaction merit its inclusion here. In addition, incorporating spirituality factors into an international evaluation of job satisfaction differentiates this research from many other previous studies.

## **METHODS**

### **Measurement**

An assessment of the literature revealed methodological concerns regarding some of the existing job satisfaction survey instruments (Hwang & Chi, 2005). For instance, the Two-Factor Theory of Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959) has not been duplicated with consistency outside of the original sample of engineers and accountants from the U.S. Although the Job Description Index (JDI) of Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969) is one of the most frequently used scales, it was deemed inappropriate for this study because we focus on the services sector and JDI is better suited to manufacturing environments (Hwang & Chi, 2005). The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) (Spector, 1985) offers more application to the service industry, but it has not received the confirmatory results that the JDS has in the business literature. Hackman and Oldham's (1975; 1980) Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) model has been used extensively and successfully in the service industries (Gomes, 2003; Lee-Ross, 2005). Thus, we chose to employ the JDS in the current study. JDS includes desired job outcomes such as employee motivation, job satisfaction levels, and employee growth and development.

The current study utilizes multiple measures to operationalize the construct of job satisfaction based on previous research (Gomes, 2003; Lee-Ross, 2005). Qualitative research methods that incorporate face to face interviews and observation techniques allow for cultural context to be considered. Thus, face-to-face interviews also allow nonverbal cues to surface during the data collection process and for respondents to have a dialogue with the researchers to ensure that the meaning of the constructs is preserved. For these reasons, we chose to employ qualitative research here to expand upon the numerous quantitative studies that evaluate job satisfaction in the services sector.

The JDS does not include the cultural aspects of work, which we felt were important based on the cross-cultural makeup of our sample. Therefore, we added Hofstede's (1980; 2005) cultural dimensions to our research to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and culture. In order to establish congruence between our sample and the national cultural values reported by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), our surveys contained questions that requested information about the 5 dimensions of culture using 5 point Likert scales. Participants were asked to what degree they agreed or disagreed with statements concerning power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. These answers are shared in the results section of the paper.

We also included questions on the survey that inquired about the importance of spirituality in the workplace for the service employees. Previous research has shown that spirituality can positively impact job satisfaction and job performance for workers (Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002; Miles, Sledge & Coppage, 2008). A summary of responses are found in the results section of the paper.

### **Sample**

The study was conducted in service businesses in Canada, Mexico and the Netherlands to achieve international diversity. Furthermore, local contacts, participant accessibility, the availability of translators and cooperative management in service sector businesses of interest were considerations in country and location. Service employees were targeted as they include both professional and domestic skilled workers and they comprise the majority of workers in most countries today. Many of the participants were employed in the hospitality industry, in hotels and tourism based jobs. The balance were employed in the education, health care and customer service jobs. This diversity of employers was desirable to gain insights from various sectors of the economy.

Employees from Toronto, Canada comprised sample A. Employees from Baja, Mexico comprised sample B. Employees from Amsterdam, Netherlands comprised sample C. In each study location, at least 3 workplaces were represented. A diversity of locations is consistent with the theoretical sampling procedure suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Managers were contacted initially about the aims of the research and to gain approval for the study. For each work location management agreed to use the anonymous survey findings to assess employee job satisfaction and business operations. We felt that management commitment was a key success factor to our research. We wanted our work to have practical

implications for those in our study and this commitment from management allowed us to attain this research goal.

Next, employees were randomly selected and identified for participation in the study due to shift assignment. Managers were consulted regarding the selection of employees to ensure a fair representation of occupations within the samples. Consistent with the recommendations of Glaser and Strauss (1967), operational observations and participation via personal interviews continued until theoretical saturation had been achieved, indicating that respondents were revealing no new information beyond that obtained from previous respondents. Thus, the number of subjects was contingent upon the saturation of information. Approximately 50 employees were selected for interviews at each location, but some interviews could not be completed due to special events, scheduling issues or absenteeism. Accordingly, the sample size was reduced to 40 each for samples A, B and C, for a total of 120. As suggested by the theoretical sampling procedure of Strauss and Corbin (1998), a demographically diverse sample of service employees was included as detailed in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

**TABLE 1**  
**RESPONDENT DESCRIPTIONS & CODING CANADIAN SAMPLE**

<b>RESPONDENT</b>	<b>SEX</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
C1	Female	Housekeeper	20s	1
C2	Female	Marketer	40s	1
C3	Male	Painter	30s	1
C4	Male	Painter	50s	1
C5	Female	Manager	40s	1
C6	Male	Accountant	30s	1
C7	Female	Tour Guide	20s	1
C8	Male	Desk Clerk	20s	1
C9	Female	Receptionist	30s	1
C10	Male	Reservationist	20s	1
C11	Female	Marketer	40s	1
C12	Male	General Manager	50s	1
C13	Male	Concierge	60s	1
C14	Female	Spa Worker	20s	1
C15	Male	Bookkeeper	30s	1
C16	Female	Tour Guide	30s	1
C17	Male	Groundskeeper	20s	1
C18	Male	Reservationist	40s	1
C19	Female	Decorator	40s	1
C20	Male	Golf Pro	30s	1
C21	Female	Receptionist	50s	2
C22	Female	Bookkeeper	20s	2
C23	Male	Fitness Trainer	20s	2
C24	Male	Assistant Manager	30s	2
C25	Female	Receptionist	40s	2
C26	Female	Waitress	20s	2
C27	Male	Waiter	30s	2
C28	Female	Cook	40s	2
C29	Male	Chef	50s	2
C30	Female	Bartender	20s	2
C31	Male	Bartender	30s	2
C32	Female	Office Clerk	20s	2
C33	Male	Supervisor	30s	2

**TABLE 1  
CONTINUED**

<b>RESPONDENT</b>	<b>SEX</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
C34	Female	Maid	40s	2
C35	Male	Handyman	40s	2
C36	Female	Manager	50s	2
C37	Male	Security Guard	60s	2
C38	Female	Florist	30s	2
C39	Male	Front Desk	20s	2
C40	Male	Mover	20s	2

**TABLE 2  
RESPONDENT DESCRIPTIONS & CODING  
MEXICAN SAMPLE**

<b>RESPONDENT</b>	<b>SEX</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
M1	Male	Accountant	30s	1
M2	Male	Asst Manager	30s	1
M3	Female	Bellman	30s	1
M4	Female	Phone Operator	40s	1
M5	Male	Concierge	20s	1
M6	Male	Sports Pro	20s	1
M7	Male	Personal Trainer	30s	1
M8	Female	Secretary	50s	1
M9	Female	Tour Guide	30s	1
M10	Male	Bus Driver	30s	1
M11	Male	Manager	50s	1
M12	Male	Electrician	60s	1
M13	Male	Janitor	50s	1
M14	Female	Bookkeeper	40s	1
M15	Female	House Cleaner	30s	1
M16	Female	Maid	20s	1
M17	Female	Maid	20s	1
M18	Female	Maid	30s	1
M19	Female	Supervisor	50s	1
M20	Male	Chef	40s	1
M21	Male	Chef	40s	2
M22	Female	Waitress	20s	2
M23	Female	Bartender	30s	2
M24	Male	Waiter	20s	2
M25	Male	Busboy	50s	2
M26	Female	Night Manager	30s	2
M27	Female	Exercise Teacher	20s	2
M28	Male	Guard	50s	2
M29	Female	Assistant Manager	30s	2

**TABLE 2  
CONTINUED**

<b>RESPONDENT</b>	<b>SEX</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
M30	Male	Guard	40s	2
M31	Female	Nurse	40s	2
M32	Male	Groundskeeper	40s	2
M33	Male	Groundskeeper	30s	2
M34	Female	Bookkeeper	20s	2
M35	Male	Driver	20s	2
M36	Female	Laundress	30s	2
M37	Female	Tour Operator	40s	2
M38	Female	Receptionist	20s	2
M39	Male	Plumber	30s	2
M40	Male	Accountant	50s	2

**TABLE 3  
RESPONDENT DESCRIPTIONS & CODING  
NETHERLANDS SAMPLE**

<b>RESPONDENT</b>	<b>SEX</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
N1	Female	Store Clerk	Teens	1
N2	Female	Flex worker	20s	1
N3	Female	Sales Assistant	20s	1
N4	Male	Bartender	20s	1
N5	Male	Cleaner	Teens	1
N6	Male	Cook	Teens	1
N7	Male	Store Clerk	20s	1
N8	Female	Researcher	20s	1
N9	Male	Phone Operator	20s	1
N10	Male	Marketer	20s	1
N11	Male	Teacher	40s	1
N12	Female	Cashier	Teens	1
N13	Male	Legal Assistant	20s	1
N14	Male	Café Worker	20s	1
N15	Male	Social Worker	40s	2
N16	Female	Nurse Coordinator	30s	1
N17	Female	Pastor	50s	2
N18	Male	Service Worker	50s	2
N19	Female	Housekeeper	40s	2
N20	Male	Service Worker	50s	2
N21	Male	Manager	40s	2
N22	Female	Nurse	40s	2
N23	Female	Caretaker	Teens	2
N24	Female	Manager	50s	2
N25	Female	Nurse	50s	2

**TABLE 3  
CONTINUED**

<b>RESPONDENT</b>	<b>SEX</b>	<b>POSITION</b>	<b>AGE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>
N26	Female	Janitor	40s	2
N27	Male	Nurse	20s	2
N28	Female	Housekeeper	Teens	2
N29	Female	Janitor	40s	2
N30	Female	Optician	20s	2
N31	Male	Café Worker	Teens	1
N32	Male	Warehouse Worker	Teens	1
N33	Female	Dish Washer	Teens	1
N34	Male	Hotel Manager	40s	1
N35	Female	Housekeeper	50s	1
N36	Female	Nurse	20s	2
N37	Male	Manager	50s	2
N38	Female	Admin. Assistant	20s	1
N39	Male	Janitor	40s	2
N40	Male	Bartender	Teens	1

**Data Collection**

Data collection engaged a Direct Values Inference Technique (Lenartowicz & Roth, 1999) where we measured the factors of the JDS via primary data collection. Three modalities were employed by 3 researchers in the 3 countries of interest. In most cases, on the job observations were conducted first to gain customer service protocols, group behavior norms and nonverbal communication cues. Managerial permission was granted before any observations, surveys or interviews took place. Next the survey administration took place, followed by interviews for clarification. Interviews were utilized to supplement the self-report questionnaires to benefit from the information rich face-to-face communication channel and to allow for explanation of concepts that might be culturally bound or culturally specific.

All study participants spoke English and were willing to communicate in English on the survey. To prevent any loss of meaning, translators were on hand during the survey administration in Mexico and the Netherlands to clarify any vague language. Two research assistants facilitated translations during the interviews, including one native Mexican and one native Dutch. In addition, Canadian, Mexican and Dutch scholars participated in pre-tests of the surveys to ensure construct equivalence. Results of this pre-test procedure confirmed the face validity of the instrument (Saxton & Dollinger, 2004). At this point, the 3 primary researchers reviewed and approved the contents of the document before it was administered to any service employees.

A standard questionnaire of JDS dimensions, following Clark (2005) and Gomes (2003) was used. See Table 4 for sample questions. Additional questions requested demographic information such as age, sex, education/preparation, job level/position, job tenure. Prior research recognizes these demographic factors as predictors of job satisfaction (Bedian, Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Robie, Ryan, Schmeider, Parra & Smith, 1998). However, the items were supplemented by questions presented in an open-ended format to retain respondent meaning and clarity. Participants were asked their opinions about skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. During respondent observation, the researchers noted participant reactions and environmental conditions that might negate or inform the goals of the study. Observations minimize common method variance associated with the sole use of self-report indicators.

**TABLE 4**  
**SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THE ORAL ADMINISTRATION**  
**OF THE JOB DIMENSION SURVEY**

INDICATE TO WHAT EXTENT YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

1. Disagree
2. Somewhat Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Somewhat Agree
5. Agree

- 
1. My job provides much variety
  2. My job allows me the opportunity to complete the work I start
  3. My job is one that may affect a lot of other people by how well the work is performed
  4. My job lets me be left on my own to do my own work
  5. My job provides feedback on how well I am performing as I am working
  6. My job provides me with a variety of work
  7. My job is arranged so that I have a chance to do the job from beginning to end.
  8. My job is relatively significant in the organization.
  9. My job provides the opportunity for independent thought and action.
  10. My job provides me with the opportunity to find out how well I am doing.
  11. My job gives me the opportunity to do a number of different things.
  12. My job is arranged so that I may see projects through to their final completion.
  13. My job is very significant in the broader scheme of things.
  14. My job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my work.
  15. My job provides me with the feeling that I know whether or not I am performing well or poorly.

NOTE:

- Questions 1, 6 & 11 relate to skill variety  
Questions 2, 7 & 12 relate to task identity  
Questions 3, 8 & 13 relate to task significance  
Questions 4, 9 & 14 relate to autonomy  
Questions 5, 10 & 15 relate to feedback about results

Survey questions are taken from: [www.nwlink.com](http://www.nwlink.com)

**Data Analysis**

Each participant was coded alphabetically, then by gender, job title and location. This descriptive coding scheme is consistent with the process suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Then, the JDS factors were noted and recorded from the subject responses.

Respondents' key factors were identified and coded (Miles and Domke-Damonte, 2000; Zhang and Rajagopalan, 2002) using the JCM framework. Line-by-line analysis of the transcripts was used in an open coding process to categorize the data into Hackman and Oldham's dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The analysis was performed by each researcher independently, and it consisted of reading each transcribed interview and the corresponding coding themes and noting comments, observations and answers related to each job dimension. This activity was completed several times for each respondent's answers in order to identify missed items, to solidify interpretations and codes, and to facilitate validity (Miles and Domke-Damonte, 2000).

Table 5 includes relevant definitions for the interview and survey constructs. These definitions were used for clarification and consistency purposes during the interview, observation and survey development stages. In addition, the definitions were used to assess reliability.

**TABLE 5**  
**DEFINITIONS OF CONSTRUCTS**  
**FROM THE JOB DIAGNOSTIC SURVEY**

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*Skill Variety* – the extent to which a job utilizes a mix of employee knowledge, skills and abilities

*Task Identity* – the extent to which a job involves completing a whole and specified project or piece of work

*Task Significance* – the extent to which a job makes a recognizable impact or contribution in the lives of others, whether they be inside or outside of the organization

*Autonomy* – the extent to which a job allows a worker independence and freedom in scheduling tasks and determining how the work will be accomplished

*Feedback* – the extent to which a job gives a worker data regarding the effectiveness of his or her efforts, either directly or indirectly

According to Hackman and Oldham, these 5 key job dimensions are followed by 3 critical psychological states, which are:

*Experienced Meaningfulness* – a state of cognition where employees perceive their work as being valuable and worthwhile

*Experienced Responsibility* – the extent to which an employee feels accountable personally for the outcomes of the work they perform

*Knowledge of Results* – the extent to which an employee, on a regular basis, is knowledgeable about and comprehends how effective they are performing their job tasks

Source: ([www.nwlink.com](http://www.nwlink.com))

To ascertain the reliability of the coding schemes, the researchers evaluated the coded data with the interview transcripts and notes from the observations. This process incorporates two components of the triangulation method of meaning validation suggested by Lee (1991) for qualitative work. Another researcher also validated this coding scheme via knowledge of the interviews and reading through the transcripts. To check for inter-rater reliability, a list of dimensional definitions, respondent responses, and coding categories from Table 4 were given to 2 assistants unfamiliar with the study. The assistants were asked to classify each definition and response according to the coding category to which it corresponded. The results indicated strong evidence for reliability of the coding categories with inter-rater agreement of 80% and 74%, respectively and an interclass correlation of .91 and .90, respectively between each of the assistants and the researchers ( $p < .001$ ) (Miles and Domke-Damonte, 2000). These results were found to be appropriate indicators of internal consistency in the coding procedure. Lee-Ross (1998) utilized these

same concepts when he established consistent reliability of the JDS and appropriate validity of the JCM using hotel workers in the United Kingdom.

## RESULTS

A matrix is used to present the coded data in order to summarize the satisfaction state for each participant and evaluate it against Hackman and Oldham's (1975: 1980) theoretical framework. The averages for each sample on each dimension are shown in Table 6.

**TABLE 6**  
**AVERAGE SCORES FOR 5 CORE DIMENSIONS OF THE JDS**  
**(5 POINT SCALE)**

	CANADA	MEXICO	NETHERLANDS
Skill Variety	2.96*	2.31	2.46
Task Identity	3.23	4.05*	3.38
Task Significance	3.71	4.89*^	3.71
Autonomy	4.68*^	4.42	4.45^
Feedback	4.59*	4.21	3.68
Country Average	3.83	3.98	3.54

\* Dimension high

^ Country high

### Canadian Results

As seen from the scale averages for the responses in Table 6, the Canadian sample lends support for the JDS. The Canadian employees showed above average agreement with the statements, with an average of 3.83 on a 5 point scale, where 5 indicates strong agreement with the positive statement regarding the job dimension. The highest level of satisfaction occurred in the area of autonomy, while the lowest level of satisfaction occurred in the area of skill variety. This finding suggests that the Canadian managers should encourage autonomy on the job, and also work to implement job enrichment techniques as well as expand the scope of employee jobs in this environment. These workers exhibited the middle average of the 3 focal countries for the facets of the JDS, indicating neither the highest nor the lowest level of satisfaction. This result could have been due to a central tendency of the respondents on the survey. The Canadian respondents were the most highly trained of the 3 countries and had the highest levels of education. Good relationships between workers and managers yielded a high knowledge of results, as these employees felt they were performing their jobs "effectively and efficiently." Affective outcomes for the Canadians were evident in their desire for training: "I want to take advantage of all of the training the company offers so I can grow personally and professionally" supported the affective outcome of growth satisfaction. Intrinsic motivation was noted in statements such as "Our manager does motivate us at work. But I rely on my own self motivation more."

Almost all of the Canadian participants labeled themselves as spiritual. They had the widest religious affiliations, including Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant and Buddhist. Most agreed that their

spirituality facilitated job satisfaction. One comment was “I am spiritual, both on the job and off the job.” Another comment was “I would not keep this job if I felt that it compromised my religious beliefs.” The Canadian workers showed much tolerance and acceptance of others’ religious beliefs, with comments such as “I respect the spirituality of others.”

### **Mexican Results**

The Mexican sample also yields strong support for the JDS. Table 6 shows that the Mexican employees had the highest average agreement scores, at 3.98 on a 5 point scale, thus they expressed the most satisfaction on the 5 dimensions. This is possibly due to the high unemployment rate in Mexico and the transient nature of the many jobs in the service sector, thus the workers were happy to be employed. These employees showed the highest satisfaction with task significance and the lowest satisfaction with skill variety. This finding would indicate that managers should continue to provide meaningful work assignments for their employees, especially those with customer contact as indicated by several participants. The managers should also work to actively increase the type and breadth of the tasks of their employees. These employees stated that they felt their work was very meaningful, especially those who worked directly with customers. “I care about my customers” was a common sentiment. For the Mexican workers, affective outcomes in the area of internal motivation at work overlapped their spirituality sentiments in some cases. Many respondents showed a reliance on God and expressed their faith at work through comments such as “I rely on God for everything.” And “I keep God close at work.” The Mexican workers exhibited the most responses for the spirituality questions, indicating the importance of spirituality in the workplace for them.

### **Netherlands Results**

The sample from the Netherlands yielded the lowest satisfaction rating of the three groups, with an average satisfaction rating of 3.54 on a 5 point scale. This could have been due to the low mobility of workers to transfer to different markets with new job opportunities. Therefore, managers in these organizations should investigate why employees exhibit relatively low satisfaction states, perhaps through focus groups or one-on-one meetings. This group was most satisfied with autonomy on the job and least satisfied with skill variety at work. Thus, the Dutch managers should continue to emphasize autonomous decision making for employees. Also they should increase the training and development opportunities for their workers while adding new tasks to add to the skill variety of the jobs. It is not surprising that some of the Dutch workers mentioned being pleased with their level of responsibility on the job, as Hackman and Oldham (1980) linked this job dimension to the psychological state of experienced responsibility. The affective outcomes for the Netherlands workers were manifest primarily as self motivation and individualistic personalized growth accounts. Typical sentiments reflected a self reliance to move forward in their careers and a practical and pragmatic approach to personal and professional growth.

Spirituality comments ran the gamut with this cohort. Some professed to be Atheists and Agnostics, while others were Roman Catholics, Reformed Christians and Buddhists, and some simply stated “none” when asked about religion. This group did not make many connections between job satisfaction and spirituality. “It’s not important to me”, “Whatever makes you happy” and “I’m religious in my own specific way” were some of the comments made. Few expressed strong spiritual views. This finding should merit further study and follow up.

### **Hofstede Application**

In light of the support for Hackman and Oldham’s (1975; 1980) framework and the different findings across the countries, several themes emerged from this study that are similar to Hofstede’s dimensions of culture (1980, 2005). In this section, we include a cultural analysis using the Hofstede framework to add meaning to our findings. Although Hofstede’s information is at the country-level and our information is at the individual level, his results are relevant for the insights gained here because our participants exhibited similar tendencies on the 5 dimensions of culture in informal discussions during the interview stage. The results of Hofstede’s 2005 findings on the 5 cultural dimensions are included in Table 7 below.

**TABLE 7**  
**CULTURAL DIMENSION SCORES FOR CANADA,**  
**MEXICO AND THE NETHERLANDS**

HOFSTEDE'S 2005 FINDINGS  
(STANDARDIZED SCALE:  
0-100)

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POWER DISTANCE

CANADA	39
MEXICO	81
NETHERLANDS	38

INDIVIDUALISM

CANADA	80
MEXICO	30
NETHERLANDS	80

MASCULINITY

CANADA	52
MEXICO	69
NETHERLANDS	14

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE

CANADA	48
MEXICO	82
NETHERLANDS	53

CONFUCIAN DYNAMISM/LONG TERM ORIENTATION

CANADA	23
MEXICO	60*
NETHERLANDS	44

Source: Hofstede & Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind*, 2005

\*Mexico was not included in the long term orientation study. This is a score given by our Mexican study participants.

*Canada*

The results from Canada show that the service employees exhibit many of Hofstede's cultural dimensions for the country. For example, Canada scored 80 on the collectivism-individualism continuum, with 0 being collectivist. This was evident in respondent comments regarding their jobs such as "I am responsible for my work" and the overriding theme that "I answer to myself" Additionally, some expressed the desire to move up into management positions, which require individualistic thinking skills. The respondents demonstrated the concept of masculinity as evident in the plaques and awards and

“employee of the month” recognitions that were evident in the workplace. Some employees showed agreement with Hofstede’s findings on the long term orientation dimension (Canada = 23 with 0 being short term oriented). This result is likely due to influences from the United States, where employees are typically focused on present day work issues rather than future work issues. Here a typical response was “I worry about today, not tomorrow.” The task identity dimension is related to Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension, Canada scored a 48 where 100 is avoidant. Employees were not overly talkative on this topic, with some expressing the desire for more direction in their jobs and some expressing the desire for less direction from their managers. The autonomy dimension is related to Hofstede’s high power distance, where Canada scored 39 out of 100, where 100 represents distant power. These employees were most satisfied with their level of autonomy on the job. “We work with our manager to solve problems.” was an indicative response.

### *Mexico*

The relationships exhibited by the respondents both on the job and off the job, as well as the behaviors they describe in the surveys indicate a collectivist workplace. “We get along quite well” was a quote given by a Mexican transportation employee to describe coworker and managerial associations. Several participants worked with family members in the workplace and the strong family bonds carried over into the work environment. This finding is in agreement with Hofstede’s (1980, 2005) results, where Mexico showed collectivist preferences with a score of 30, with 100 being individualistic. Most likely the service industry focus on customer service reflected in this team orientation. Mexico did not have a rating by Hofstede (1980; 2005) for long-term orientation, but the participants displayed long term oriented preferences, with allusions to tradition, family and “working for a better tomorrow.” No statements were made by respondents that discussed gaining power or authority. “I am satisfied with the power that I have.” was one response given, aligning with Hofstede’s score of 81 on power distance where 100 is distant power. Mexico ranked rather high on masculinity in Hofstede’s studies, with a score of 69 where 100 is masculine. One comment was “My work here helps me to buy nice things for my family. It allows me to have a nice life.”

### *The Netherlands*

The finding that the Netherlands employees showed the lowest level of satisfaction with the skill variety dimension suggests that they would enjoy and benefit from programs such as job enlargement and job enrichment. One employee stated that she wanted to “Get a college degree in law school”; thus, her current job as a flex worker was not meeting her needs in terms of the variety of skills used on the job. Interestingly, Canada and the Netherlands scored within 1 point of each other on Hofstede’s power distance rating, with scores of 39 and 38, respectively, where 100 is power distant. One participant echoed this rating by stating they believed in “equality for everybody.” Both groups exhibited satisfaction with the degree of power they held in society and on the job, as evidenced by the lack of comments detailing a desire for more power and authority. Also interesting was the fact that Canada and the Netherlands scored the same on Hofstede’s individualism continuum, with a score of 80 where 100 is individualistic. Comments from the Dutch participants regarding a dedication to continuing their educations and the importance of “everybody’s own choice” indicate a strong sense of self that embraces individualism. The Netherlands scored a 14 on Hofstede’s cultural dimension of masculinity, where 100 = masculine. This was quite different than Canada’s score of 48 and Mexico’s score of 82. Employees showed concern for relationships, aesthetics and harmony at work, more so than the masculine values of power, wealth and possessions. Discussions about future professional plans revealed a common theme about getting more education in order to get a better job, which suggests a long term focus for the Dutch employees. This finding correlates with Hofstede’s score for the Netherlands on Confucian Dynamism/Long Term Orientation, as the Dutch scored 44, where 100 = long term oriented. Hofstede found the Dutch to be in the middle regarding uncertainty avoidance, with a score of 53 where 100 = avoidant. In interviews, the employees expressed neither a desire to avoid uncertainty nor a desire to access uncertainty. Thus, they

seem to understand the need for some uncertainty in the workplace. Most likely their government structure of socialism influences this finding.

## DISCUSSION

Job satisfaction is a concept that has application to the global workplace, but it must be framed within the appropriate cultural context. Therefore, it is important to understand its meaning from a country and cultural perspective. By using Hackman and Oldham's (1975) Job Characteristics Model in Canada, Mexico and The Netherlands, our results give support to the model, as workers in each country understood and expressed various levels of satisfaction on the 5 dimensions. When reviewing these results relative to Hofstede's (1980; 2005) work, we can associate some of the observed differences to the influence of culture. We also acknowledge the role that spirituality played in job satisfaction among the workers, as evidenced by their statements in our surveys and interviews. Our results indicate that job satisfaction is a result of external and internal influences. There are a number of cultural, gender, institutional, socio-economic and societal issues that should be considered. Including Hofstede's (1980, 2005) cultural dimensions in the study adds meaning and insights that incorporate many of these variables.

Study limitations include possible loss of meaning through interpretation and translation. The Growth Need Strength variable was omitted here but it may be included in future work. In addition, the research might be taken to the next level with quantitative follow-up and other cross-cultural extensions. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, formal statistical non-parametric and parametric procedures were not considered appropriate for this study. Though the sample size is typical for qualitative data, further larger-sample analyses could add to the themes highlighted in this paper by analyzing the degree to which these attitudes and observations exist in other cultures and environments.

Finally, as we consider the factors that motivate employees across cultures, we find universal themes that have different applications in different nations. We hope that our early results will inspire other international business researchers to analyze the complex relationships between culture, job satisfaction and spirituality for employees in the workplace. Through collaborative studies, where findings are shared and communicated, such work could lead to new theories that will allow global managers and employees to maximize job satisfaction and job performance simultaneously. The considerations of culture and spirituality should prevent managers from applying a one size fits all approach to employee job satisfaction and motivation.

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