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Toward modeling the predictors of managerial career success: does gender matter?

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Abstract *Although research has uncovered important predictors of managerial career success, the causal relationships between these predictors has not been fully explored. Accordingly, we propose and test a model that establishes a link between individual differences, salient career-related beliefs, career enhancing outcomes and managerial career success. Using path analysis, we found that education and career impatience directly affected willingness to relocate and perceived marketability, which in turn led to more promotions offered and greater exposure to powerful networks. Finally, the number of promotions offered directly affected management level, which in turn affected compensation level. With respect to gender differences, we found that beliefs regarding the efficacy of mentoring positively influenced a woman's sense of marketability, and like her male counterpart, exposure to powerful networks. However, we also found that for women managers, unlike men, such exposure did not affect the number of promotions they were offered.*

Why are some managers more successful than others are? Why do some earn more and rise higher in the managerial ranks than their peers? While answers to these perennial questions abound, especially among practicing managers, in fact, most of the attempts to answer these questions have been quite speculative and incomplete. To date, research has primarily examined various predictors of career success (Judge *et al.*, 1995; Kirchmeyer, 1998; Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Wayne *et al.*, 1999) such as education, motivation and family status. However, while providing partial answers, it has not offered a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics between these variables. Put differently, despite the fact that careers are generally viewed as the evolving sequence of an individual's work experiences over time (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) in which individuals compete in a tournament for status and money (Rosenbaum, 1979, 1981, 1989), what is still needed is a more dynamic model of the underlying process as it unfolds (Tharenou *et al.*, 1994).

To date, much of the empirical research on managerial careers has implicitly, if not explicitly, adopted a traditional view which emphasizes the notion of a linear career path, unfolding as one climbs the hierarchical ladder, often in a single company (Rosenbaum, 1989; Schein, 1978; Super, 1957). More recently, scholars have offered a



more contemporary view by stressing the boundaryless nature of careers (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996b; Sullivan, 1999). This perspective considers the inherent volatility and uncertainty in organizational environments and hence the likelihood of career paths within and between organizational boundaries. However, scholars have struggled with a number of fundamental questions about this perspective, which have hampered empirical research. Some have suggested that this perspective simply introduces a labor market phenomenon to the overall model of careers (Gunz *et al.*, 2000) while others have pointed to definitional inadequacies due to differences in career patterns across occupations (Goffee and Jones, 2000). In the end, while both views still have credibility and proponents, unraveling the antecedents of managerial career success will require a model that is informed by both views to some extent.

In addition, it is necessary to examine how the paths to managerial career success differ between the genders, given that women still encounter barriers in their careers (Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Wellington *et al.*, 2003). Research that examines predictors of career success for men and women has been inconclusive and contradictory. On the one hand, some studies have shown that the paths to promotion and higher compensation are similar irrespective of gender (Seibert *et al.*, 2001; Sheridan *et al.*, 1990), suggesting a universal process for all managerial careers. On the other hand, other research has suggested that factors such as family status, education and interpersonal support play a differential role in explaining how men and women attain promotions and higher compensation (Kirchmeyer, 1998; Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Melamed, 1995; Tharenou *et al.*, 1994). Although all these studies conclude that differences exist, some of their results have been contradictory. For example, while Melamed (1995) found education to benefit women's careers more than men's, Tharenou *et al.* (1994) found the opposite effect, i.e. that education benefits men's careers more than women's. Hence, by more effectively modeling the underlying career dynamics process, we believe we can begin to unravel some of these competing views.

To that end, we propose and test a more encompassing, yet parsimonious, model, informed by both traditional and boundaryless perspectives, to examine men's and women's managerial career success. Our model establishes a link between individual differences, salient career-related beliefs, career enhancing outcomes and two milestones of managerial career success – compensation and management level. Specifically, in keeping with the traditional perspective we incorporate the role of promotions offered, management level and compensation into our model. Owing to the boundaryless perspective, which theorizes “knowing why, how and whom” as important predictors of career success (Arthur *et al.*, 1999; Eby *et al.*, 2003), we incorporate career impatience (knowing why), marketability and willingness to relocate (knowing how) and mentoring efficacy and exposure to powerful networks (knowing whom). Finally, while we are cognizant that scholars have also suggested perceived satisfaction with career success as another potential barometer (Judge *et al.*, 1995; Powell and Mainiero, 1992; Wayne *et al.*, 1999), we chose to focus on tangible outcomes, i.e. compensation and management level, for two reasons. First, tangible outcomes are still widely considered the most important benchmarks of managerial success (Brett, 1997; Kirchmeyer, 1998, 1999, 2002; Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Melamed, 1995; Tharenou *et al.*, 1994). Second, given that the antecedents of career satisfaction are quite different from those related to tangible career outcomes (Judge *et al.*, 1995), we chose for the sake of parsimony to pursue a more fine-grained model.

Theoretical background

It has been argued that in order to further our understanding of career success, more encompassing models that include situational and personal factors should be developed (Ivarsson and Ekehammar, 2001; Marongui and Ekehammar, 1999; Tharenou *et al.*, 1994). Using a situation and person-based framework, Kirchmeyer (1998) studied four categories of predictors of career success: human capital, individual, interpersonal and family. Kirchmeyer (1998) focused on these categories of variables based on the earlier findings suggesting that they may affect men's and women's careers differently. Similarly Judge *et al.* (1995) examined demographic, human capital, motivational and organizational variables as predictors of career success. While Kirchmeyer (1998) and Judge *et al.* (1995) used a situation- and person-based approach, neither study examined how the categories of variables dynamically affect career success. However, Tharenou *et al.* (1994) did study how personal and situational influences interact to predict managerial advancement. Their study demonstrated that situational and personal variables interact with one another to produce a sequence of relationships that predict career advancement. It has thus been suggested that in order to understand managerial advancement and, particularly, any barriers that women may face, the relationship among personal and situational factors should be considered (Ivarsson and Ekehammar, 2001; Marongui and Ekehammar, 1999). Following this logic, our model examines how personal and situational factors dynamically influence men's and women's managerial career success.

Proposed model

Below we present the general sequence of variables hypothesized in our model followed by a discussion of how these relationships are predicted to differ for male and female managers. In general our model, shown in Figure 1, depicts individual differences as influencing salient career-related beliefs that then result in career enhancing outcomes that are linked to two milestones of managerial career success – compensation and management level. Below we present the general sequence of variables hypothesized in our model followed by a discussion of how these relationships are predicted to differ for male and female managers.

Individual differences

Education. Level of education attained has repeatedly been linked to career success (Cox and Harquail, 1991; Judge *et al.*, 1995; Melamed, 1996). Research indicates that the returns from educational attainment in terms of compensation level are significant (Judge *et al.*, 1995; Melamed, 1996; Whitely *et al.*, 1991). Thus, education is predicted to positively impact compensation. Education is also expected to influence one's beliefs concerning his or her marketability. According to human capital theory, "more educated workers have more options because they have increased their human capital investment" (Wayne *et al.*, 1999 p. 580). As such, the knowledge and skills attained through education should lead a person to believe that he or she is more valuable in the workplace. Therefore, education is expected to be positively related to one's beliefs regarding his or her marketability in the workplace.

Career impatience. Differences associated with motivation have been argued to be an important factor in predicting career success (Judge *et al.*, 1995; Wayne *et al.*, 1999; Whitely *et al.*, 1991). Because individuals implement their self-concepts when making

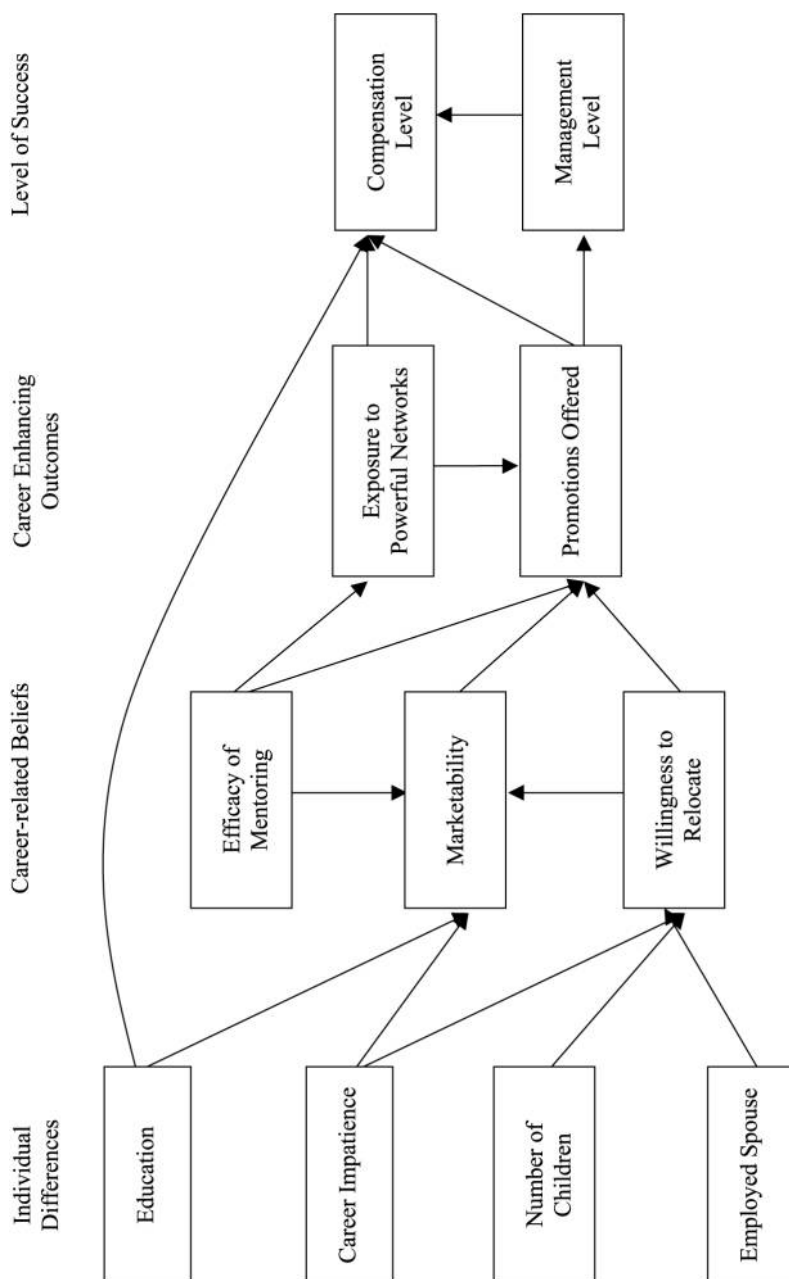


Figure 1.
Predicted overall model

choices in their careers (Super, 1957), personality traits associated with aspirations and ambition have been argued to influence one's career (Tharenou, 1997). McClelland (1985) demonstrated that motives drive and direct an individual's behavior toward gratifying one's goals, and to focusing on cues that will help reach these goals. In his pioneering research on career mobility, Jennings (1967, pp. 104-7) described mobile managers as impatient with success, willing to "seize every opportunity" and "prepared to leave [a company] if it means going higher or faster in another". Such impatient, opportunistic behavior was central to Jennings' (1971) explanation for the motivation behind managers whom he identified as being laterally, vertically and organizationally mobile. Building on Jennings' work, Veiga (1981, 1983, 1989) found that career impatience, which he described as the extent to which managers are likely to be impatient with their career progress (Veiga, 1983), was a primary motivator behind a manager's drive for advancement. Similarly, in a study of boundaryless careers, Eby *et al.* (2003) found that a proactive personality was an important predictor of career success. Thus, in accordance with research that has found that ambition and advancement motives are the most important traits in predicting managerial advancement (Howard and Bray, 1988), we focus on the role that career impatience plays in predicting one's career success.

Individuals who desire to get ahead and are ambitious in their careers, referred to here as being impatient with their careers, are more likely to take active steps to ensure that they achieve career success (Guthrie *et al.*, 1998). Accordingly, because relocation is often accompanied by opportunities for advancement, individuals who are highly impatient with their careers may possess the most positive attitude toward relocating (Brett *et al.*, 1993). For example, research has indicated that individuals who are highly impatient with their careers, that is those who demonstrate a proactive predisposition to advance to the top, are the most willing to relocate for the sake of their careers (Brett *et al.*, 1993; Veiga, 1983). Thus, it is predicted that career impatience will be positively related to one's willingness to relocate.

In addition, individuals who are highly impatient with their careers may believe that they are the most attractive, or marketable, in the workplace. This is in line with McClelland's (1985) research on motivation which suggests that the desire to get ahead drives individuals to focus on cues that will help them achieve. Because people who are marketable in the workplace are most likely to succeed (Veiga, 1983), individuals who are highly impatient with their careers may perceive themselves to be highly marketable. Indeed, research suggests that ambitious individuals tend to present themselves as highly capable and marketable to their organizations (Guthrie *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, we expect career impatience to be positively related to how marketable an individual believes that he or she is in the workplace.

Family status. Family status has been found to play an important role in individuals' career experiences (Schneer and Reitman, 1993; Tharenou *et al.*, 1994). "Through a chain of connections beginning with children in the home and extending to the spouse's willingness to relocate, managers' family status is linked to career advancement" (Brett, 1997 p. 146). The presence of children and the employment status of one's spouse influence the choices individuals make with regard to relocating (Brett, 1997). Owing to the disruption in their children's social ties that would occur in relocating, it is often argued that individuals with children are less willing to relocate than those without children (Brett, 1997; Brett and Reilly, 1988; Landau *et al.*, 1992).

Similarly, because relocation issues are complicated when one is in a two-career family, individuals with employed spouses may possess a more negative attitude toward relocating. Indeed, individuals with children (Brett, 1997; Brett and Reilly, 1988) and an employed spouse (Landau *et al.*, 1992) have been found to express less willingness to relocate. Thus, we expect the presence of children and an employed spouse to negatively impact one's willingness to relocate.

Career-related beliefs

Efficacy of mentoring. Mentoring is a type of interpersonal relationship that influences career progress (Whitely *et al.*, 1991) and success (Kram, 1988). Individuals who have multiple mentors benefit from aid in the development of their careers in various ways (Higgins and Kram, 2001). Recently, it has been argued that a crucial component essential to effective mentoring relationships is whether or not the protégé believes that the experience has been satisfying and successful (Young and Perrewé, 2000). Thus, it is not the level of mentoring support that is relevant, but the unique evaluation of that support based on an individual's specific level of need or expectation for career assistance (Young and Perrewé, 2000). In line with this view, we focus on individuals' beliefs regarding the efficacy of their mentoring relationships.

More specifically, we expect individuals' beliefs regarding their mentoring relationships to impact their sense of marketability. Individuals in mentoring relationships are seen as being potentially more promotable than those individuals who have not been mentored (Wayne *et al.*, 1999). In addition, research has shown that mentored individuals perceive themselves as more successful than those who have not been mentored (Turban and Dougherty, 1994). From these findings we see that mentoring impacts how valuable one perceives him- or her-self to be in the workplace. Therefore, we argue that individuals who strongly believe that their mentoring relationships have been effective will believe that they are highly marketable in the workplace.

Furthermore, as suggested by Young and Perrewé (2000), we also expect that individuals who strongly believe that their mentoring relationships are effective will receive the greatest degree of career enhancing outcomes. Mentors help their protégés gain exposure to powerful organizational networks through assignments that involve working with other managers and powerful executives (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989; Whitely *et al.*, 1991). Indeed, it has been argued that mentoring influences career attainment because of the ability of mentors to give their protégés access to powerful organizational leaders (Turban and Dougherty, 1994). In addition, mentors often intervene for their protégés by endorsing them for promotions. Research on mentoring has shown that those who have mentors benefit from increased mobility and promotion rates (Scandura, 1992; Whitely *et al.*, 1991). Therefore, we expect that individuals who believe that their careers have been significantly aided by mentors are more likely to be exposed to powerful networks and to receive promotions as a consequence of such supportive relationships than those who do not believe that mentors have played a role in their careers.

Marketability. Believing that one is attractive and marketable in the workplace can encourage an individual to seek out career enhancing opportunities (Veiga, 1989). Moreover, Arthur and Rousseau (1996) suggest that individual marketability is an important criterion of career success in the era of boundaryless careers. It has been

suggested that those who possess the most confidence in their abilities, and understand their worth in the marketplace, are the most likely to advance in their organizations (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989). Thus, individuals who see themselves as highly marketable are more likely to be selected for promotions because their organizations recognize their value, and thus reward them with promotions in an effort to keep them committed to their organizations. For example, it has been shown that individuals who believe that they are highly marketable move far more frequently in their organizations than those who do not believe they are marketable (Veiga, 1983, 1989), and Eby *et al.* (2003) suggest that individuals who see themselves as marketable are more likely to fare better in a boundaryless career. Thus, we expect that individuals who believe that they are highly marketable will receive the greatest number of promotions.

Willingness to relocate. Relocation plays an important role in career advancement (Brett, 1997). Individuals often relocate for managerial development (Noe and Barber, 1993), personal career enhancement and to remain employed (Landau *et al.*, 1992). Willingness to relocate can enhance a manager's value to his or her current employer and can present a manager with a wider range of options beyond one's current employer. Accordingly, willingness to relocate may influence an individual's sense of marketability. Indeed, research has shown that individuals who are most willing to relocate see themselves as being more marketable (Veiga, 1983). Willingness to relocate is thought to favorably influence perceived marketability because managers who are willing to relocate can respond to opportunities in other geographic locations and, thus, have a significant advantage over those who refuse to relocate. Managers who are willing to relocate also give their employers more flexibility to respond to environmental changes and the importance of these mobile managers increases as others refuse to relocate (Brett, 1997; Brett *et al.*, 1993). As such, it is predicted that willingness to relocate will be positively related to how marketable one believes that he or she is in the workplace.

In turn, organizations tend to view willingness to relocate as an indicator of career commitment (Brett, 1997; Noe and Barber, 1993). Employees who relocate more often reach higher organizational levels than those who relocate less frequently (Brett, 1997). Consequently, those who will not relocate are often seen as less promotable while those who are willing to relocate are viewed as worthy of promotion (Baldrige *et al.*, 2000; Markham, 1987). Likewise, in accordance with protean and boundaryless careers research, individuals who self-manage their careers by emphasizing mobility, openness to new experiences (Eby *et al.*, 2003) and career flexibility (Guthrie *et al.*, 1998) are more likely to progress in their careers. Thus, we predict that one's willingness to relocate will be positively related to the number of promotions offered.

Career enhancing outcomes

Exposure to powerful networks. Gaining access to powerful networks is an important career management strategy, especially in regard to boundaryless careers (Forret and Dougherty, 2001; Hall, 1996b). Networking is a proactive way for individuals to develop their careers "through such means as making contacts with others to obtain the necessary resources or developmental experiences" and to receive information regarding job opportunities (Forret and Dougherty, 2001 p. 286). The benefits received from gaining exposure to powerful networks may be particularly helpful to one's career. Powerful networks are those that are central to the organization and include

members from the dominant coalition (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989). Research shows that individuals with much exposure to powerful networks are the most likely to be selected for promotions and to earn high salaries (Michael and Yukl, 1993). Seibert *et al.* (2001) found that the more contacts that people establish at higher organizational levels, the more promotions and salary increases they gain from career sponsorship. Therefore, having exposure to powerful networks is expected to be positively related to promotions offered and compensation level.

Promotions offered. Studies on the careers of top executives have indicated that advancement to the top occurs in a series of promotions (Forbes and Piercy, 1991). Promotions often indicate upward progression in an organizational hierarchy and are perceived as a sign of success (Brett, 1997; Hall, 1996a). As such, it is expected that the greater the number of promotions offered, the higher the management level and compensation achieved.

Career success

Management level and compensation. As individuals move up the organizational hierarchy, so too should their pay. Increases in management level can be expected to lead to increases in compensation because of the greater degree of responsibility that accompanies managerial advancement. Indeed, studies have found management level and compensation to be significantly correlated (Kirchmeyer, 1998; Schneer and Reitman, 1995). Therefore, we predict that management level will be positively related to compensation.

Gender differences

While the above arguments focus on expected relationships in general, we would be remiss if we did not explore how some of these relationships may differ for men and women given that women must often overcome barriers on their road to success (Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Melamed, 1996; Wellington *et al.*, 2003). Concerning individual differences, we expect education and family status to affect men's and women's careers differently. Because research has shown that education is one of the most powerful influences on men's career success and appears to advantage men's careers more than women's (Stroh *et al.*, 1992; Tharenou *et al.*, 1994), education is predicted to have a more positive influence on men's compensation and their beliefs regarding marketability. The influence of family status on willingness to relocate is also expected to differ for men and women. Gender has been shown to play an important role in determining the extent to which children and the employment status of one's spouse influence one's attitude toward relocating (Landau *et al.*, 1992). Research indicates that while men's careers benefit from having children at home, women's careers are hindered by it (Tharenou *et al.*, 1994). Furthermore, women with pre-school age children at home have been found to possess a more negative attitude toward relocating (Baldrige *et al.*, 2000). It appears that for men, having children pushes them to make career choices that are likely to help them fulfill their role as provider, whereas for women having children makes them less likely to pursue their careers due to the extra demands that child rearing places on them (Blau *et al.*, 1998; Powell and Mainiero, 1992). Therefore, it is predicted that the presence of children at home will be positively related to men's and negatively related to women's willingness to relocate.

Concerning gender and spouse's employment status, it has been argued that men and women are often socialized to expect that men's careers will take priority (Blau *et al.*, 1998). Moreover, researchers argue that women often express reluctance to relocate because their husbands tend to contribute a higher percentage to their household incomes (Baldrige *et al.*, 2000), and it has been shown that spouses of relocated workers typically do not gain in earning power (Sagie *et al.*, 2001). In accordance with such research it is predicted that having an employed spouse will be more negatively related to women's willingness to relocate.

Turning to career-related beliefs, we expect that beliefs concerning the efficacy of mentoring and willingness to relocate will influence men's and women's careers differently. While some research has shown that the incidence of mentoring is the same for male and female managers (Kirchmeyer, 1998; Turban and Dougherty, 1994), Catalyst's latest study found that female managers suffered from a lack of mentoring (Wellington *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, studies have found that men are more likely to benefit from their mentoring relationships (Kirchmeyer, 1998; Koberg *et al.*, 1994; Lyness and Thompson, 2000). Women may benefit less from mentoring because they tend to be in formal mentoring relationships (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000; Ragins and Cotton, 1991) that have been shown to provide protégés with less positive outcomes than informal mentoring relationships (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000; Ragins and Cotton, 1999). In addition, women's mentors tend to possess less influence in their organizations than those of men (Powell, 1993; Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989). As such, even though women may believe that their mentoring relationships are effective, they may experience less career enhancing outcomes than their male counterparts. Therefore, it is predicted that beliefs regarding the efficacy of mentoring relationships will be more positively related to men's exposure to powerful networks and promotions offered than to women's.

In regard to attitudes toward relocating, willingness to relocate has been referred to as the "real cruncher" in regard to women's advancement (Tallon, 1979). Because women have been found to possess a more negative attitude toward relocating than their male counterparts (Landau *et al.*, 1992), they are often viewed as less committed to their careers and less worthy of promotion. However, in order for women to combat discrimination in the workplace and to advance in their careers it has been suggested that they must seek opportunities for geographic mobility (Lyness and Thompson, 2000). For example, one of the reasons why women managers' career advancement lags behind that of men's is because they relocate less frequently than male managers (Brett, 1997). As such, it may be more important for women to display a positive attitude toward relocating in order for them to receive promotions. Thus, a woman's willingness to relocate should be more strongly related to the promotions she is offered.

Career enhancing outcomes are also expected to affect men's and women's careers differently. Considering exposure to powerful networks, it has recently been reported that exclusion from networks and a lack of opportunity for visibility are significant barriers to women's advancement (Wellington *et al.*, 2003). Similarly, a study of senior-level female managers found that exclusion from informal networks hindered their careers in terms of management level and compensation (Lyness and Thompson, 2000). It appears that men are more likely to take advantage of informal connections that thereby lead to more frequent job promotions and raises (Lyness and Thompson, 2000; Markiewicz *et al.*, 2000) while women do not benefit from the use of powerful networks (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989). Therefore, it is predicted that exposure to

powerful networks will be more positively related to the compensation level and number of promotions offered to men than to women.

Turning to promotions offered, studies have shown that while women are offered as many promotions as their male counterparts, their promotions are not accompanied by the same increases in management level or compensation (Kirchmeyer, 1999; Stroh *et al.*, 1992). Extant research suggests that women need a greater number of promotions in order to reach the same management and compensation levels as their male counterparts. Such results have led to the notion of women being “pacified by promotion” (Powell, 1993). These promotions give women the appearance of increased responsibility and opportunity, but they are essentially hollow (Kirchmeyer, 1999; Powell, 1993); that is, they do not offer the same career benefits of the promotions offered to men (Meyerson and Fletcher, 2000). Thus, it is predicted that the number of promotions offered is more positively related to men’s management and compensation levels.

Methods

Sample

Data for this study were collected as part of a larger study of the determinants of individuals’ career outcomes. We used a snowball sampling approach which is commonly used to obtain data from a variety of firms in various industries (Martins *et al.*, 2002; Tepper, 1995). We asked in-career MBA students at a large state university in the East to voluntarily participate in the research study as one option for earning extra credit. Of 200 students asked, 176 agreed to participate. They were asked to identify up to ten individuals from the managerial and/or professional ranks of their company, and request them to anonymously fill out a survey and return it to us directly via postage paid envelopes. In order to reduce spurious effects produced by gender differences in background characteristics, volunteers were told that for every person they identified, they should attempt to identify another person of the opposite gender who was similar in age (± 5 years), and from the same organization, division, functional area, and geographical region.

In total, 975 completed surveys were returned out of the approximately 1,350 distributed, yielding a response rate of 72 per cent. Out of this database, we selected only those cases where a match existed, resulting in a total of 338 matched pairs for a total sample size of 676. Responding managers/professionals were from over 100 companies in over 26 industries and various functional backgrounds. Women in the sample were, on average, eight months younger than the men (36.2 vs 36.9 years old), and were somewhat less likely to have a graduate degree (26.3 vs 34.6 per cent). There were no significant differences in functional area between men and women. Women in the sample were less likely to be married (60 per cent were married vs 69 per cent of the men) or to have children (43.9 per cent had no children vs 32.6 per cent of the men). Whereas total family income was similar on average for both men and women, the women in the sample earned a salary of \$7,200 less than the men (\$54.12k vs \$61.32k). Finally, we drew our sample from the same geographic area, thus essentially controlling for cost of living differences.

Measures

Individual differences. Education, spouse’s employment status, and number of children living at home were self-reported by respondents; of these, number of children, and

level of education (1 = high school graduate, 2 = two-year associate degree, 3 = bachelor's degree, and 4 = graduate degree) were measured as a continuous variable, and spouse's employment status was dummy coded; having an employed spouse was coded 1, and non-employed spouse 0. *Career impatience* was measured using a five-item measure developed by Veiga (1983, 1989). Respondents indicate level of agreement or disagreement on a Likert, seven-point scale to items such as "As a manager moves throughout a career, he or she should always continue to strive for a higher position," "Promotions should be largely a matter of seniority and experience and thus managers should wait their turn" (reverse coded) and "Since all managers cannot reach the top, it's better to be satisfied with a middle level position than to frustrate oneself trying to reach the top" (reverse coded). The final score was the average response to all five items ($\alpha = 0.75$).

Career-related beliefs. *Efficacy of mentoring* was measured by a single item developed by Cox and Harquail (1991) to assess the extent to which respondents believe that their career has been aided by mentors on a seven-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (maximum benefit). *Marketability* was assessed using a measure developed by Veiga (1983) where respondents were asked to estimate how marketable they believed they are by rating their chances of obtaining a position at another company similar to their present position on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (no chance – 0 per cent) to 5 (excellent chance – 100 per cent). *Willingness to relocate* was assessed using a five-item measure developed by Landau *et al.* (1992) exploring the degree to which an individual would be willing to relocate geographically using a five-point scale which ranged from 1 (not willing) to 5 (very willing). We extended this measure by adding a sixth item that addressed the realities of downsizing by assessing the need to relocate because one's job is being phased out at the current location. Factor analysis revealed that all six items loaded on one dimension (54 per cent of the variance explained) with factor loadings ranging from 0.66 to 0.80 ($\alpha = 0.83$).

Career enhancing outcomes. *Exposure to powerful networks* was assessed as visibility to top management; a survey item asked respondents to indicate the percentage of their average work week that they spent in activities that brought them into direct contact with top management (Veiga, 1983). *Promotions offered* was measured using an item developed by Cannings and Montmarquette (1991), asking respondents to indicate the number of promotions they had been offered over the past five years.

Career success. *Career success* was measured with two dimensions. The first, *management level* was measured by asking respondents to indicate their organizational level on a four-point scale developed by Stroh *et al.* (1992) in which 1 = non-management/professional, 2 = lower management, 3 = middle management, and 4 = upper management, and the second dimension *compensation* was measured by asking respondents to indicate their total annual compensation inclusive of all bonuses.

Method of analysis

We used a path analytic approach to test the intervening model (James *et al.*, 1984; Pedhazur, 1982). Path analysis simultaneously examines the relationships between all proposed variables and provides an overall assessment of the fit of a hypothesized model. Since our objective was to identify early career events associated with

subsequent career attainment, we used more objective single indicator measures for latent variables rather than more subjective multiple indicator measures. In order to estimate the latent variables measured with single indicators, let us consider the effects of random measurement error by setting the error variance to 1.0 (Bollen, 1989; Hayduk, 1987). We followed Harris and Schaubroeck's (1990) recommendation and limited the number of observed variables being analyzed to fewer than 20.

Path analysis was deemed most appropriate because it allowed us to analyze our model with individual difference dimensions as exogenous variables, model our unidimensional career enhancing outcome indicators as intervening variables, and capture the career attainment factors of compensation and management level as the ultimate dependent variables. Although it is possible to estimate a structural model without a measurement model, our approach is consistent with regression procedures followed in path analysis.

Finally, Harmon's single-factor test suggested by Podsakoff and Organ (1986) was used as a test for common method variance. Examination of the unrotated factor structure revealed distinct factors that paralleled ours, each with eigenvalues greater than 1, which collectively accounted for 65.6 per cent of the variance explained. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 3.2 and only accounted for 17.0 per cent of the variance, while the other factors loaded cleanly and accounted for an additional 48.6 per cent of the variance. Because the first factor did not account for the majority of variance, there was no general factor; thus, reducing the potential concern of common method variance in our study (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986).

Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables are reported in Table I. We began by testing the fit of our hypothesized model (Figure 1) to the overall data for both men and women combined. Given that the chi-square likelihood ratio statistic is a poor measure of fit with large samples (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1989), we used the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI non-normed) and the comparative fit index (CFI), which are less affected by sample size (Kenny, 1998). The closer these values are to unity, the better the fit, with 0.85-0.89 indicating a minimally acceptable fit, 0.90-0.94 indicating an acceptable fit and 0.95 or greater indicating a good fit (Kenny, 1998). Our analysis of the overall data produced a TLI of 0.98 and a CFI of 0.99, indicating a very good fit for the hypothesized model to the overall data.

Our detailed results are shown in Figure 2. As expected, we found that compensation level was significantly influenced by management level ($p < 0.001$). In contrast, promotions offered were not directly related to compensation, but rather influenced compensation indirectly through management level ($p < 0.001$). Exposure to powerful networks was not found to influence compensation, but was found to be significantly related to promotions offered ($p < 0.01$). Further, marketability was significantly related to promotions offered ($p < 0.01$). Efficacy of mentoring had a significant impact on both exposure to powerful networks ($p < 0.001$) and promotions offered ($p < 0.001$), and also an indirect influence on promotions offered through marketability ($p < 0.05$). Likewise, willingness to relocate had a significant influence on promotions offered through marketability, however, contrary to expectations, the direct relationship between willingness to relocate and promotions offered was only marginally significant ($p < 0.10$). As expected, education was significantly related to

Table I.
Means, standard
deviations, and
correlations

Variables	Women		Men		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Means	SD	Means	SD										
Education	3.02	0.83	3.22	0.70										
Career impatience	23.84	5.12	24.03	5.00	0.02									
Children	0.62	0.93	0.99	1.15	0.06	-0.12**								
Spouse employed	0.68	0.47	0.71	0.46	0.02	-0.14***	0.34***							
Willingness to move	3.96	1.01	3.94	1.01	0.05	0.16***	-0.07+	0.00						
Marketability	3.63	1.01	3.67	1.01	0.17***	0.19***	-0.07+	-0.07+	0.17***					
Efficacy of mentoring	3.92	1.86	3.92	1.85	-0.07+	0.00	0.00	0.04	-0.11**	0.05				
Powerful network	25.18	24.84	25.18	24.68	0.15***	-0.06	0.09*	0.04	-0.04	0.09*	0.13***			
Promotions	1.49	1.23	1.43	1.25	0.00	0.15***	-0.08*	0.04	0.07+	0.15***	0.18***	0.15***		
Management level	1.92	0.97	2.08	1.01	0.05	-0.07*	0.23***	0.18***	-0.07+	-0.03	0.10**	0.19***	0.18***	
Compensation level	54.15	22.12	61.27	24.20	0.30***	0.00	0.26***	0.16***	0.01	0.07+	0.04	0.16***	0.10**	0.51***

Notes: $n = 676$, $^+p < 0.10$, $^*p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, and $^{***}p < 0.001$

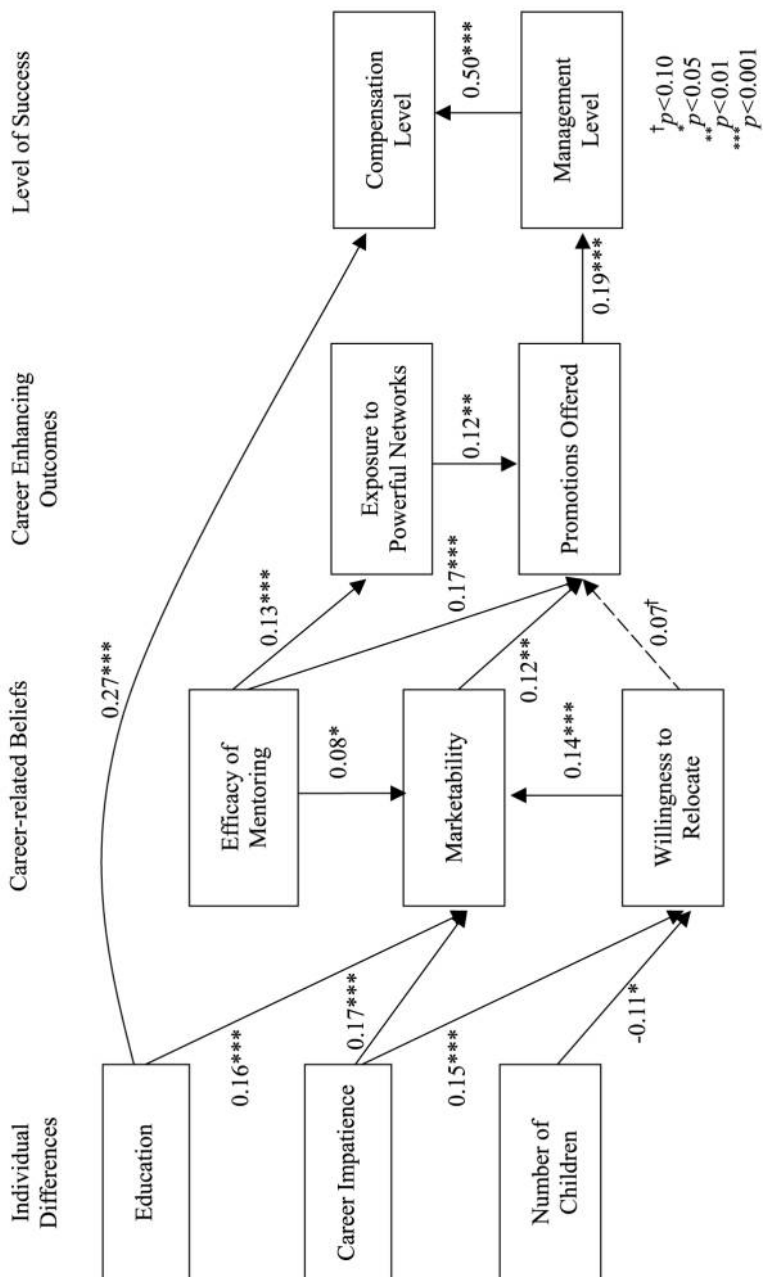


Figure 2.
Overall model path coefficients (Both men and women)

compensation level ($p < 0.001$) and marketability ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, career impatience was significantly related to marketability ($p < 0.001$) and willingness to relocate ($p < 0.001$). Finally, as expected, children ($p < 0.05$) was negatively related to willingness to relocate, however, having an employed spouse did not influence willingness to relocate.

Having examined the fit of the hypothesized model to the overall combined data set, we sought to better understand the potential differences between men and women by examining the fit of the general hypothesized model to the men's and women's data separately. For the men's data only the hypothesized model (Figure 1) produced a TLI of 0.98 and a CFI of 0.99, indicating a good fit. For the women's data we found a TLI of 0.99 and a CFI of 0.99, indicating a very good fit. We then used the modification indices produced by Amos (2000) and extant theory to guide our efforts to identify the simplest model for men and women that still produced a good fit. Here we used the TLI and CFI, as well as the change in chi-square likelihood ratio statistic to assess the fit of alternative models.

The resulting best-fit models are shown in Figure 3 for men and in Figure 4 for women. We found a TLI of 0.99 and a CFI of 1.0 for the revised men's model and a TLI of 0.99 and a CFI of 0.99 for the revised women's model indicating an excellent fit in both cases. While both hypothesized and trimmed models shown in Figures 3 and 4 fit the data well, a test of the change in the chi-squared likelihood ratio showed that the simplified model shown in Figure 3 fits the men's data significantly better than the initial hypothesized model, and the simplified model shown in Figure 4 fits the women's data significantly better than the initial hypothesized model. Table II summarizes the structural coefficients for the overall model and the separate models for both men and women.

As shown in Figure 3, both education ($p < 0.001$) and management level ($p < 0.001$) significantly influenced men's compensation level. As in the overall model, promotions offered had a significant influence on men's management level ($p < 0.001$) and exposure to powerful networks did not have a direct influence on either compensation or management level, but did influence these variables indirectly through promotions offered ($p < 0.01$). For men, neither having children at home nor an employed spouse, impacted willingness to relocate, and willingness to relocate did not have a direct influence on promotions offered, but rather an indirect influence through marketability ($p < 0.01$). In turn, marketability was influenced by both education ($p < 0.001$) and career impatience ($p < 0.01$). Career impatience was also found to influence the willingness to relocate ($p < 0.01$).

With respect to women managers, as shown in Figure 4, having children at home had a negative influence on willingness to relocate ($p < 0.001$), in contrast to men. We also found a positive relationship between having an employed spouse and willingness to relocate, however, this relationship was only marginally significant ($p < 0.06$). Also, efficacy of mentoring seemed to influence women's careers differently. First, unlike men, we found a positive relationship between efficacy of mentoring and marketability that approaches significance ($p < 0.06$). Moreover, while efficacy of mentoring was positively related to both men's and women's exposure to powerful networks, women did not appear to benefit as directly from this exposure. Specifically, we found a significant relationship between exposure to powerful networks and promotions offered for men but not for women. Women, however, did benefit from

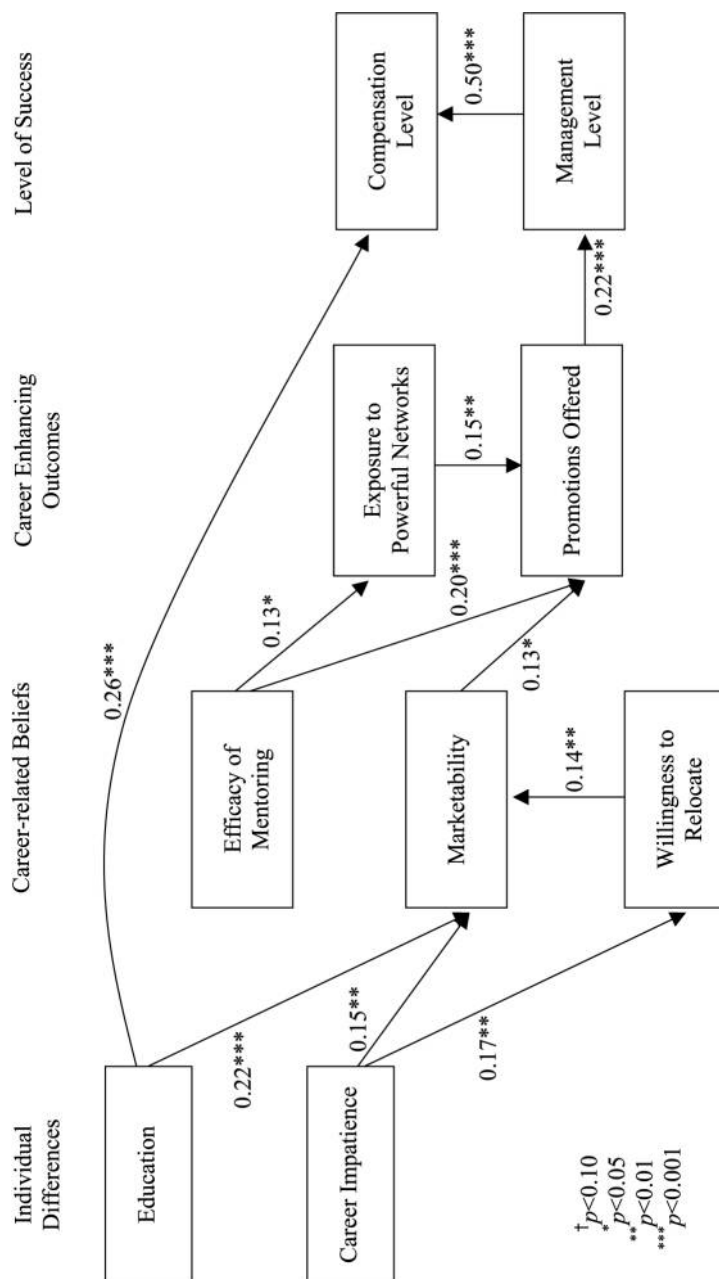


Figure 3.
Men's model path coefficients

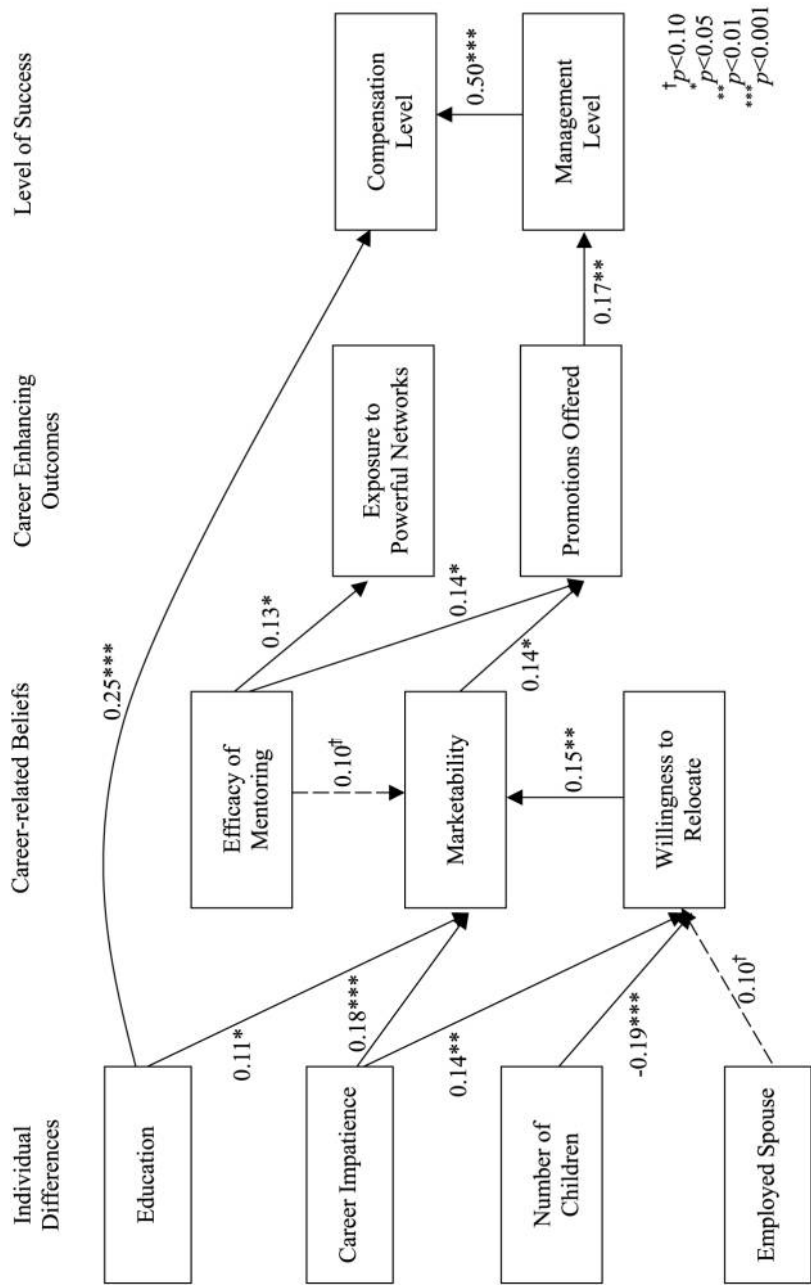


Figure 4.
Women's model path
coefficients

Parameters	Model 1: Total	Model 2: Women	Model 3: Men
Path coefficient			
Education → Marketability	0.16***	0.11*	0.22***
Education → Compensation level	0.27***	0.25***	0.26***
Career impatience → Marketability	0.17***	0.19***	0.15**
Career impatience → Willingness to move	0.15***	0.13*	0.16**
Children → Willingness to move	−0.11*	−0.21***	−0.02
Employed spouse → Willingness to move	0.07	0.11 [†]	0.03
Willingness to move → Marketability	0.14***	0.15**	0.14***
Willingness to move → Promotions offered	0.07 [†]	0.07	0.07
Marketability → Promotions offered	0.12**	0.13*	0.12*
Efficacy of mentoring → Marketability	0.08*	0.10 [†]	0.06
Efficacy of mentoring → Powerful network	0.13***	0.13*	0.13*
Efficacy of mentoring → Promotions offered	0.16***	0.13*	0.20***
Powerful networks → Promotions offered	0.12**	0.09	0.15**
Powerful networks → Compensation level	0.07	0.06	0.08
Promotions offered → Management level	0.19***	0.17**	0.22***
Promotions offered → Compensation level	0.00	0.06	−0.04
Management level → Compensation level	0.50***	0.49***	0.51***

Notes: [†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; and *** $p < 0.001$

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managerial
career success

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Table II.
Standardized regression
weights

efficacy of mentoring through its impact on promotions offered ($p < 0.05$) and marketability ($p < 0.06$).

Finally, as a strict test of difference between men and women, we conducted a multi-group analysis simultaneously estimating models for both men and women (Kenny, 1998). In this analysis we compared two models:

- (1) An invariant model in which all paths for men and women were set to be equal (CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98).
- (2) A variant model in which all paths were allowed to vary (CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.98).

Since both models were highly significant, and given that we found significant gender differences, we conclude that while differences between men and women clearly exist, our results suggest that given the use of generic variables, i.e. common to both genders, the overall models for males and females are more similar than dissimilar. Thus, predictive models for men and women are likely to be more robust when variables that are significant to each gender are separately modeled.

Discussion

While it can be said that no two managerial career paths are identical, our research suggests that there are several developmental milestones that further shape the human capital and motivation that an individual brings to the contest, which in turn influence the degree of success achieved. While we do not wish to denigrate the numerous, and important non-financial outcomes of a career, such as career and life satisfaction, it is clear in the present corporate world that one's compensation is still undeniably one of the major indicators of a successful management career. Indeed, societies and organizations often evaluate the success of an individual's career based on how well

the person is paid (Blau *et al.*, 1998; Brett, 1997). That said, trying to discern the pattern of developmental milestones that result in success is never an exacting science, but we believe our findings offer some important insights nonetheless.

There is no question that level of education and career impatience play an important role for both men and women in managerial careers. These are the *sine qua non* of a successful career in management. This finding is consistent with the boundaryless career perspective in that previous research has suggested “knowing why” is a fundamental predictor of success (Eby *et al.*, 2003). Furthering this perspective, it would appear that the more educated and driven managers are, the more they believe that they are marketable and willing to relocate (knowing how). And consistent with the traditional view, beliefs regarding marketability and willingness to relocate are both associated with greater number of promotions offered which in turn enhance advancement and pay. Furthermore, as expected, we found that education more positively influenced men’s beliefs regarding their marketability than it did women’s. This is in line with other research that has shown that education advantages men’s careers more than women’s (Stroh *et al.*, 1992; Tharenou *et al.*, 1994). However, we did not find that men’s compensation levels benefit more from educational attainment than do women’s. Thus, while education similarly influences the compensation of men and women managers, it plays a greater role in increasing men’s sense of marketability.

Considering family status, we found that having children at home and an employed spouse had a significant impact on women’s career success, but not men’s. Specifically, we found that unlike their male counterparts, women managers are likely to have their career progress impeded if they have children at home. While some women may be able to have it all, clearly if they have children, the odds are reduced. Indeed, other researchers have noticed that women managers are less likely to be married or have children than their male cohorts (Hewlett, 2002; Melamed, 1995; Schner and Reitman, 1995). Our findings suggest that for the average woman manager, having children to raise clearly reduces her willingness to relocate, which in turn reduces how marketable she feels, promotions offered, advancement and compensation.

Our findings also suggest that efficacy of mentoring plays an important role in successful careers (knowing whom). However, believing that a mentor has aided one’s career benefits men’s and women’s careers differently. For women, efficacy of mentoring relationships leads to an increase in number of promotions offered directly and indirectly through its positive influence on how marketable a woman believes she is. In contrast, for men, efficacy of mentoring relationships not only leads directly to an increase in promotions offered but also influences their exposure to powerful networks which, in turn, impact the number of promotions they are offered. Furthermore, as predicted, we found that men who strongly believed that their careers had been aided by a mentor received more promotions than their female counterparts. This supports research that has shown that men are more likely to benefit from their mentoring relationships (Kirchmeyer, 1998; Koberg *et al.*, 1994). Beliefs regarding the efficacy of mentoring relationships may be more positively related to men’s rate of promotion because female protégés tend to have less powerful mentors who are not able to promote their careers to the same extent as the mentors of men (Powell, 1993; Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989). Similarly, as expected, we see that men benefit from exposure to powerful networks while women do not. Thus, interpersonal relationships play a more important role in shaping men’s career progress. Women’s promotions are less

influenced by their mentoring relationships and, unlike their male counterparts, exposure to powerful networks plays no role in helping them gain promotions.

Our findings also suggest that promotions offered increase men's management level more than women's, as reflected by the larger and more significant path coefficient. Our finding is consistent with previous research that has found that women's promotions are not accompanied by the same increases in management level as their male counterparts (Kirchmeyer, 1999; Powell, 1993; Stroh *et al.*, 1992). This suggests that a glass ceiling for women still exists in that regardless of their rates of promotion, men will achieve higher management levels than women (Kirchmeyer, 1999). As such, women may need more promotions in order to attain the same management level as their male counterparts. However, increases in management level for both men and women lead to increases in compensation. While the association between management level and compensation appears to be equally strong for men and women, the fact that the women, on average, earned \$7,200 less than the men suggests that the women were rewarded less for the same increases in management level (Kirchmeyer, 1999).

Finally, we note that our path analytical approach permitted us to explore a variety of dimensions from both traditional and boundaryless perspectives. Our findings, while supporting both views to some degree, clearly suggest that future researchers need to continue to examine antecedents from both of these perspectives, preferably in a longitudinal design, to fully appreciate which elements are most salient.

Limitations and implications

Before discussing the implications of our findings, a few limitations of our study should be noted. First, this study was cross-sectional, yet cause-and-effect relationships were inferred. One must be sure to note that causal inferences made from cross-sectional designs are never more than inferences (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). Similarly, since the assessment variables were measured at the same time from the same source, common method variance was a concern. The Harman's single-factor test, while limited, suggests that this should not be a major concern in our study (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986). Path analysis cannot prove causation, but can merely support a set of hypothesized paths (Tharenou *et al.*, 1994). Longitudinal designs in the future would help to confirm the assumptions underlying our study. Second, while several of our variables were assessed with appropriate single-item measures, such as level of education, family status, and so forth, some of our more subjective variables were measured with single items. While these measures were utilized in previous research, we believe that multiple item measures could add additional robustness to the analysis, although we are also aware that some researchers have been able to show that single-item measures can be just as reliable as multi-item ones (Wannous and Hudy, 2001). In addition, the use of single item measures tends to attenuate the results; hence multiple item measures should produce even more robust findings. Third, our sample was comprised of managers, and therefore, the generalizability of our findings to other populations may be limited. In particular, although we reduced the spurious effects associated with organizational and functional differences by collecting a male-female sample matched by organization and functional area, the women in our sample were much less likely to be married or have children than other women in the general population (Blau *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, because of the matched male-female sample, a similar degree of men and women held top management positions, and

although this adds to the uniqueness of our study, this does not characterize women's actual representation in top management at *Fortune 500* companies.

Despite these methodological limitations, our study has important implications for research and practice. Our findings suggest that a fruitful avenue for future research is examining why exposure to powerful networks benefits men's careers, but not women's. Earlier research has tended to focus on women's inability to gain access to their organization's dominant coalitions (Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989; Wellington *et al.*, 2003). Results from our study show that the problem may no longer be women gaining exposure to top management, but their utilizing this exposure to aid their careers. Several factors should be examined to better understand how visibility to top management aids men's careers, but not women's. For example, does the proportion of women in the dominant coalition affect a woman's ability to gain promotions from top management visibility? Are there subtle forms of discrimination that keep women from benefiting from exposure to powerful networks? How can women gain the same career benefits as men from their interactions with top management?

Similarly, a second implication of our study points to the differences between men's and women's mentoring relationships. In line with other research (Kirchmeyer, 1998; Koberg *et al.*, 1994; Lyness and Thompson, 2000), we found that men's careers benefit more from mentoring relationships than women's. This is particularly disheartening since men and women believed their mentoring relationships to be equally effective. Future research should investigate the underlying reasons why men benefit more from their mentoring relationships and why women perceive their mentoring relationships to be effective despite their inability to offer them the same career advantages as those of their male counterparts.

From a practical standpoint, our findings suggest that organizations need to pay closer attention to their promotional practices if they hope to provide a nondiscriminatory environment where both men and women have equal chances of gaining promotions and rising in the management ranks. Two important aspects that organizations need to consider is how their female managers are being mentored relative to male employees, and the dynamics that occur when lower level managers interact with top managers. Our results suggest that while many organizations have taken steps to ensure that women form relationships with mentors and gain access to powerful networks, they have not ensured that women equally benefit from such interpersonal relationships. Organizations need to increase their awareness of the effects of men's and women's mentoring relationships and how powerful networks influence the promotion process. Furthermore, organizations must offer their female managers the same opportunities for promotions as their male counterparts and ensure that those promotions lead to comparable increases in management rank if they wish to retain their female employees (Stroh *et al.*, 1992; Sturges, 1999). Therefore, our research indicates that in order to understand gender differences in career attainment, researchers need to better understand how individuals obtain promotions from their organizations.

Given these differences, we suggest future researchers also take a closer look at more subjective career outcomes. This may be particularly important in light of recent research which suggests that women managers may be more inclined to place greater importance on socio-emotional sources of career satisfaction and less importance on status-based sources (Eddleston and Veiga, 2002). Hence, our study may have been

limited, especially for women managers, to the extent that we only examined tangible, status-based outcomes as measures of managerial success. Finally, our findings clearly suggest that understanding the relational dynamics of individual level variables and career process variables is important to identify how and when the road to success differs for men and women.

In sum, the conclusions from this study indicate that both traditional and boundaryless career perspectives should be simultaneously considered when studying the career success of managers. Owing to the traditional perspective, managers received promotions that lead to increases in management level and compensation suggesting that the vertical career path in management remains. In addition, we found that the “knowing why, how and whom” success factors of the boundaryless career (Arthur *et al.*, 1999; Eby *et al.*, 2003) were important to managers’ career progression. However, while it has been suggested that the boundaryless career is well-suited for women (Sullivan, 1999), our study showed that mentors and exposure to powerful networks (knowing whom) did not benefit their careers as much as men’s. Organizations that are interested in helping female managers advance should focus on helping them create and utilize interpersonal relationships that will aid their career advancement.

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