

## Networking behaviors and career outcomes: differences for men and women?

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### Summary

Engaging in networking behaviors, by attempting to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to provide work or career assistance, is considered to be an important career management strategy. This study explores the relationship between networking behavior and career outcomes (i.e., number of promotions, total compensation, perceived career success) in a sample of managerial and professional employees. Furthermore, we investigate whether networking behavior is as beneficial for women as it is for men. Results indicated that some types of networking behavior were related to both objective and perceived career outcomes. In addition, gender differences do impact the utility of networking behavior as a career-enhancing strategy. Explanations of our results and implications for engaging in networking behavior are discussed. Copyright © 2004 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

### Introduction

The practitioner literature discusses numerous suggestions for networking behavior (Barton, 2001; Fisher & Vilas, 1991; Kramer, 1998; RoAne, 1993; Wellington & Catalyst, 2001). These include activities such as joining professional associations, seeking high-visibility assignments, and participating in social functions. Engaging in such behavior is considered vital for those pursuing protean careers who rely on themselves, rather than their organizations, to shape their career futures (Hall, 1976; Mirvis & Hall, 1996a, 1996b). Research by network scholars (e.g., Brass, 1984; Ibarra, 1992) has tended to study social networks once they already exist, examining the effects of network structures on a variety of career outcomes. The purpose of this study is to investigate the network-related behaviors that are associated with building social capital—what we call ‘networking behaviors’—and how they affect individual career outcomes.

Furthermore, since women have historically lacked access to important organizational contacts (e.g., Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1993; Kanter, 1977; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; O’Leary & Ickovics, 1992;

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Powell & Mainiero, 1993; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989; Wellington & Catalyst, 2001), networking behavior has been thought to be especially critical because it is one strategy women can use to break through the glass ceiling (Baker, 1994; Catalyst, 1999; Wellington & Catalyst, 2001). Networking behavior helps build relationships with others and may serve to extend women's reach into the upper echelons of organizations. But while women have been encouraged to engage in networking behavior, it is unknown whether networking behavior is as advantageous for women as it is for men. Knowledge of the importance of networking behavior for women's career progress is useful for determining effective career management strategies. A further purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore whether networking behavior is as beneficial for women as it is for men.

### *Networking behaviors and the changing nature of careers*

Networking behaviors will be defined here as *individuals' attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career*. This definition describes networking as a proactive behavior that helps develop one's relationship constellation (Kram, 1985). According to Kram, a relationship constellation refers to the range of relationships that support one's career development. Individuals may build their relationship constellation through engaging in networking behavior with persons both inside and outside their organization (Downey & Lahey, 1988; Higgins & Kram, 2001). The above definition of networking behaviors also describes building relationships with others who have the 'potential' to assist individuals in their work or career, whether or not assistance is ever provided. Although networking behaviors may be beneficial for improving other aspects of one's personal life, the primary purpose of networking behaviors in our context is for the receipt of career benefits.

Individuals engage in networking behaviors to help build multiple developmental relationships (Higgins, 2000; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Thomas, 2001). Thus, networking has some similarity to mentoring, as both involve developmental relationships (Kram, 1985). Turban and Dougherty (1994), for example, examined how employees' initiation of mentoring relationships was related to the amount of mentoring received. However, networking behavior is used here to examine a wider range of network relationships than have been previously studied. Those individuals who provide work or career assistance have been referred to as 'developers' (Higgins, 2000). In mentoring relationships, mentors tend to provide multiple roles (e.g., sponsorship, protection, counseling, acceptance) to the protégé (Kram, 1985). Network relationships, on the other hand, are typically characterized by fewer roles linking the individuals, that is, the relationship tends to be less intense and personal than a mentoring relationship.

Networking as a career management strategy is important as the burden of responsibility for one's career has shifted from the organization to the individual, with the notion of employability becoming one's career goal (Altman & Post, 1996; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996a; Hakim, 1994; Sullivan, 1999). Writings on the protean career stress the importance of performing self-assessments, obtaining developmental work experiences, and networking (Hall, 1976; Hall & Mirvis, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1996a). Developing interpersonal relationships through networking is considered to be a specific career competency vital for managing one's career (Arthur, Claman, & DeFillippi, 1995; Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994).

However, recent research suggests that some individuals are more likely to engage in networking behavior than others. Utilizing factor analysis, Forret and Dougherty (2001) identified five types of networking behavior: maintaining contacts, socializing, engaging in professional activities, participating in community, and increasing internal visibility. They found that gender, socioeconomic background, extraversion, self-esteem, and attitudes toward workplace politics were related to the

networking behavior of managers and professionals. The only gender difference in the five dimensions of networking behavior Forret and Dougherty (2001) found was that men engaged in more socializing behavior than women. However, a subsequent comparison of men and *single* women showed no differences in the amount of socializing, indicating that gender bears little relationship with the propensity to network. Research on job searchers has shown that extraversion, conscientiousness, and comfort with networking are related to networking intensity in searching for jobs (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000).

Our study builds upon past research by examining how networking behaviors of managers and professionals are related to career outcomes. Furthermore, this study seeks to determine whether the relationship of networking behavior to career outcomes differs for men and women.

### *Networking behaviors and career outcomes*

Networking should have a direct relationship to valuable career outcomes, such as enhanced promotions and compensation, given that engaging in networking behavior is one means individuals can use to help develop their social capital. Social capital has been defined as ‘the structure of individuals’ contact networks—the pattern of interconnection among the various people with whom each person is tied’ (Raider & Burt, 1996, p. 187). Social capital constitutes a valuable resource. Relationships possessed by an individual can provide one with access to new information, resources, and opportunities (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). This information, resources, and opportunities, both within and outside one’s current firm, can result in direct enhancements of one’s career, including promotions and compensation. Obtaining visible work assignments, for example, should help lead to promotions (Wellington & Catalyst, 2001). In this vein, studies by Burt (1992) and Granovetter (1973, 1974) have shown that a more diverse network of contacts can extend one’s ‘reach’ into different social circles and consequently enhance one’s career opportunities, such as obtaining faster promotions and finding jobs. It follows that more promotions and new jobs also typically provide one with enhanced compensation. To build their social capital, individuals can increase the number and diversity of their contacts through engaging in networking behavior (Baker, 2000; Burt, 1992; Ibarra, 1993; Kanter & Eccles, 1992).

Only a few empirical studies have examined the relationship between networking behavior and career outcomes. These studies have typically not included extensive or systematic efforts to define and establish construct valid measures of networking. Gould and Penley (1984) found that networking was positively related to salary progression for managers but not for clerical and professional employees in a study of 217 male and 197 female employees of a municipal bureaucracy. Networking was measured with a two-item scale where subjects indicated the extent to which they built a network of contacts and friendships in the organization. Using data from 457 managers from public and private organizations, Luthans, Hodgetts, and Rosenkrantz (1988) found networking to be related to promotions. Networking was defined as interacting with outsiders and socializing/politicking. Michael and Yukl (1993) studied networking behavior in a sample of 247 managers from a diverse group of companies. An 11-item internal networking scale (defined as interactions with others in the organization) and an eight-item external networking scale (defined as interactions with outsiders such as clients and suppliers) was used. Both internal and external networking were shown to be related to rate of advancement in the organization. While more scale development work was conducted in the Michael and Yukl study, the internal/external distinction focused on who the networking behavior was directed toward, rather than the types of networking behaviors utilized (e.g., engaging in professional activities, socializing) that may be beneficial to one’s career. In their research on job searchers, Wanberg et al. (2000) developed a measure of networking intensity (i.e., frequency and thoroughness)

specifically oriented to the job search process. Networking intensity was related to re-employment and unemployment insurance exhaustion, but not after general job-search intensity was included in the analyses. Contrary to expectations, there was no difference in subsequent job satisfaction and intentions to leave the organization for individuals who found jobs through networking versus other means.

Taken as a whole, relatively few studies have been conducted on the career outcomes of networking behavior. Moreover, measures of networking behavior used in past research have been typified by either few items or have focused on the target (internal versus external) of the networking behavior. Our study utilizes recent efforts to systematically define and measure the networking behavior construct (Forret & Dougherty, 2001). As discussed earlier, given the enhanced information, resources, and opportunities that should result from developing networks of contacts, we hypothesize that networking behaviors are related to objective career outcomes.

*Hypothesis 1:* Involvement in networking behavior will be positively related to number of promotions.

*Hypothesis 2:* Involvement in networking behavior will be positively related to total compensation.

Prior research on networking behavior has not examined the relationship between networking behavior and perceived career success measures. Besides objective career success outcomes such as promotions and compensation, Hall (1976, p. 94) states that 'another important measure of career effectiveness is the way the career is perceived and evaluated by the individual himself or herself.' Similarly, Judge, Cable, Boudreau, and Bretz (1995, p. 486) define career success as 'the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one has accumulated as a result of one's work experiences.' Past research has found that the predictors of objective and perceived career success measures are often very different (Judge et al., 1995). The inclusion of perceived measures is important to gaining a fuller understanding of all the dimensions of one's career success (e.g., Judge et al., 1995; Kirchmeyer, 1998; Schner & Reitman, 1995, 1997; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001; Turban & Dougherty, 1994).

Networking behaviors are likely to be related to perceived career success. For instance, individuals who become active in their professional societies would be expected to feel greater perceived career success as they become known and recognized by others in their profession. Within one's own organization, engaging in networking behaviors (e.g., through accepting visible work assignments or volunteering to serve on committees) helps an individual develop connections with others and creates awareness of potential opportunities, thus enhancing one's feelings of a successful career. Taking the perspective of networking as a kind of developmental relationship, employees who are involved in supportive relationships with others often receive 'inside information' that can produce a feeling of empowerment in the organization. They also perceive extra social support in their work that enhances their ability to have a variety of personal needs met, such as a building of self-confidence and clarification of career goals (Ragins, 1989, 1997), all of which would enhance their perceptions of career success. Fagenson (1989) found that those individuals with mentors, one particular type of developmental relationship, reported being more satisfied and having more opportunities and recognition in their organization than non-mentored individuals. To summarize, we expect involvement in networking behaviors to be positively related to perceived career success in addition to more traditional measures of career success such as promotions and compensation.

*Hypothesis 3:* Involvement in networking behavior will be positively related to perceived career success.

### *Gender differences in career outcomes*

The results of many studies on career progression show that women receive less return on their investments than men. Obtaining similar levels of education and work experience, pursuing external labor market strategies, occupying similar functional areas, pursuing training opportunities, and obtaining supportive relationships have all been shown to be more beneficial for the career progression of men than women (e.g., Brett & Stroh, 1997; Dreher & Cox, 2000; Kirchmeyer, 1998; Landau, 1995; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990; Schneer & Reitman, 1997; Stroh, Brett, & Reilly, 1992; Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994). While networking behavior is another means to improve human capital through the development of contacts with others, past research has not examined whether engaging in networking behavior will be as advantageous for women as it is for men.

Research on organizational influence structures can be used to explain why networking behavior may not be as beneficial for women as for men. Women in organizations have tended to occupy less influential positions with fewer resources available to them (Brass, 1984, 1985; Brett & Stroh, 1997; Ibarra, 1993; Kanter, 1977; Powell & Mainiero, 1993; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Research shows that men occupy more central positions in organizational networks and are perceived to be more influential, instrumental, and powerful than women (Brass, 1984, 1985; Ibarra, 1992, 1993). The lack of women in influential organizational circles puts women at a disadvantage, even after efforts to improve their status (Ibarra, 1992, 1993). In Ibarra's (1992) study of advertising firm employees, education, rank, and professional activity were related to greater network centrality for men than for women. Thus, we expect that although men and women may engage in similar networking behavior they will not achieve the same benefits due to differences in organizational influence structures.

Research indicates that a variety of forces are at work to help maintain the existing organizational influence structures. Tokenism theory (Kanter, 1977) suggests that polarization occurs when there is a small, easily identifiable minority group of individuals. Polarization amplifies the distinctions between the minority and majority groups and results in an increase in stereotyping. For example, in a recent study of matched female and male executives, Lyness and Thompson (2000) found that female executives were more likely than male executives to report lack of culture fit and being excluded from informal networks as barriers to their career advancement. Research on women's proportional representation in upper levels of organizations also provides support for tokenism theory. Ely's (1995) study of sex-integrated and male-dominated law firms showed that sex-role stereotypes were exaggerated in the male-dominated firms. These results further support the research on organizational interaction networks in that women, due to their token status, have less access to the members of the dominant power structures.

In sum, research shows that men and women do not benefit equally from the investments they make in their careers and that multiple forces are at work to help maintain existing power structures in organizations. Based on existing theory and research on organizational influence structures, it appears unlikely that women will receive the same level of career benefits as men for similar networking behaviors. As such, we expect that gender will moderate the relationship between networking behavior and objective career outcomes.

*Hypothesis 4:* Gender will moderate the relationship between involvement in networking behavior and objective career outcomes (i.e., number of promotions and total compensation), such that these relationships will be stronger for men than for women.

In contrast, there is a lack of theoretical arguments or prior research evidence to suggest that gender will moderate the relationship between involvement in networking behavior and perceived career success. Little is known about how men and women differ in their conceptualizations of perceived career

success. While Kirchmeyer's (1998) study of MBA graduates showed that women perceived more career success than men, Turban and Dougherty (1994) found no relationship between gender and perceived career success in their study of managers and professionals. Given the lack of theoretical justification and inconsistent research findings, no hypothesis will be proposed. However, on an exploratory basis we will examine whether gender moderates the relationship between networking behaviors and perceived career success.

## Organizational Context

This study was conducted with business school alumni (both undergraduate and MBA) from a large Midwestern state university. To ensure a wide variability of individuals in different career stages, a random sample was drawn of individuals graduating over a 35-year period. The participants held jobs in general management, finance, marketing, technical, and other professional positions. At the time of data collection, the United States was experiencing an economic boom. The GDP was growing steadily and the unemployment rate was hovering around 5.5 per cent. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, individual lay-off events were consistently around 5700 per year (this is in stark contrast to 2001, when over 8300 lay-off events occurred and the GDP grew by a paltry 0.3 per cent). Although we were experiencing strong economic times, lay-offs were occurring as businesses strove to remain competitive—and even competent employees were not immune to receiving the proverbial pink slip. It was clear that the psychological contract had changed, with the concept of loyalty under siege.

## Method

### *Sample and setting*

The participants in this study were business school graduates from a large midwestern state university. Surveys were mailed to a random sample of 1180 participants, who were assured that their returned questionnaires would be kept confidential. A reminder postcard and a replacement survey were mailed to sample members who had not responded to the initial survey. The response rate was 50 per cent. Only participants who were working 35 or more hours a week at the time of data collection, and who were not self-employed or working in a family business, were included, resulting in a sample size of 418. Those working part-time, or who are self-employed or working in a family business, are likely to exhibit different patterns of career-related behaviors. Their exclusion is consistent with other research on careers (e.g., Carroll & Teo, 1996; Dreher & Cox, 2000; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). Of the 418 respondents, 303 (73 per cent) were male and 115 (27 per cent) were female. The average age of the respondents was 38. The respondents were predominately Caucasian (98 per cent), and married (73 per cent). The respondents averaged 15 years of full-time work experience and worked an average of 51 hours per week. In addition, 150 (36 per cent) of the respondents had obtained an advanced degree.

### *Dependent variables*

#### **Number of promotions**

We asked respondents to report the number of promotions received in their career, in effect an index of rate of advancement because number of years of full-time work experience was included as a control variable. A promotion was defined as a change in more than one of the following: (a) change in offices and/or type of furniture/decor in office; (b) significant increases in annual salary; (c) qualifying for a company bonus, incentive, or stock plan; (d) significant changes in job scope or responsibilities; and (e) changes in company level. This definition of a promotion has been used in prior research (e.g., Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991).

#### **Total compensation**

Total compensation consisted of all forms of financial compensation from the employing organization including annual salary, commission income, and supplementary income (e.g., stock options, profit sharing, bonuses). The self-reported dollar figures were added together to determine the total income from the present employer. Self-reports of income have been shown to correlate highly with company records (Dreher, 1977).

#### **Perceived career success**

Perceived career success was measured with four items on 7-point scales: 'How successful has your career been?' 'Compared to your co-workers, how successful is your career?' 'How successful do your "significant others" feel your career has been?' and 'Given your age, do you think your career is "on schedule," or ahead or behind schedule?' This scale has been used in prior research on managerial and professional career outcomes (e.g., Kirchmeyer, 1998; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Coefficient alpha for the perceived career success scale was 0.88.

### *Independent variable*

#### **Networking behavior**

Networking behavior was measured using Forret and Dougherty's (2001) networking behavior scale. This scale measures five types of networking behavior. These are: Maintaining Contacts (five items)—sample items include giving out business cards, and sending cards, newspaper clippings, faxes, or e-mail to keep in touch; Socializing (seven items)—sample items include attending social functions of your organization, and playing golf, tennis, etc. with co-workers or clients; Engaging in Professional Activities (eight items)—sample items include accepting speaking engagements, and attending conferences/trade shows; Participating in Community Activities (four items)—sample items include participating in church social functions, and attending meetings of civic and social groups and clubs; and Increasing Internal Visibility (four items)—sample items include accepting new, highly visible work assignments, and going to lunch with your current supervisor. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 6-point scale how often they typically engage in the networking behaviors (e.g., within the last year). Coefficient alphas for the five types of networking behavior are reported on the diagonal of the correlation matrix in Table 1.

### *Moderator variable*

#### **Gender**

Gender was coded 1 for males and 2 for females.

Table 1. Correlations, means, and standard deviations of study variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
1. Number of promotions	4.37	3.68	—																			
2. Total compensation	\$78,701	\$108,048	0.30	—																		
3. Perceived career success	4.88	1.13	0.20	0.36 (0.88)	—																	
4. Degree	1.36	0.48	0.08	0.03 -0.04	—																	
5. Work experience	179.72	116.21	0.38	0.31 0.10 0.17	—																	
6. Continuous work history	1.21	0.41	-0.00	-0.13 -0.22 0.16	0.04	—																
7. Hours worked per week	50.91	8.08	0.22	0.26 0.30 0.10	0.12 -0.01	—																
8. Organization level	2.76	1.27	0.39	0.41 0.37 0.11	0.43 0.00	0.31	—															
9. Line or staff	1.41	0.49	-0.02	-0.09 -0.13 0.01	-0.08 -0.03 -0.12 -0.09	—																
10. Industry	1.76	0.43	-0.05	-0.12 -0.12 0.04	-0.10 0.08 -0.15 -0.08 -0.07	—																
11. Organization size	4.78	2.32	0.06	0.01 0.04 0.07	0.01 -0.12 0.05 -0.22 0.12 -0.15	—																
12. Gender	1.28	0.45	-0.12	-0.18 -0.09 -0.08	-0.35 0.05 -0.21 -0.24 0.18 0.11 0.02	—																
13. Marital status	1.27	0.44	-0.23	-0.19 -0.05 -0.11	-0.44 0.04 -0.02 -0.24 -0.09 0.11 -0.06 0.15	—																
14. Socioeconomic background	4.00	0.83	-0.06	0.03 0.04 -0.06	-0.35 -0.05	0.05 -0.03 -0.03	0.00 -0.07	0.09 0.17	—													
15. Maintaing external contacts	3.19	0.96	0.18	0.18 0.32 -0.01	0.01 -0.03	0.39 0.28 -0.15	-0.02 -0.10 -0.04	0.01 0.19 (0.79)														
16. Socializing	2.74	0.75	-0.01	0.04 0.20 -0.05	-0.37 -0.16	0.18 -0.02 -0.03	-0.13 0.11 -0.07	0.24 0.20 0.33 (0.77)														
17. Engaging in professional activities	1.95	0.65	0.21	0.25 0.26 0.24	0.11 -0.02	0.29 0.29 -0.06	0.06 0.00 -0.06 -0.12	0.04 0.39 0.15 (0.73)														
18. Participating in community activities	2.36	1.08	0.13	0.08 0.05 0.14	0.16 0.00	0.11 0.13 -0.08	0.03 -0.06	0.01 -0.26 -0.06	0.21 -0.03 0.30 (0.75)													
19. Increasing internal visibility	3.19	1.02	0.28	0.29 0.35 0.10	0.03 -0.05	0.28 0.39 0.08 -0.08	0.04 0.01 -0.06	0.09 0.43 0.29 0.41 0.16 (0.65)														

Note: The number in parentheses on the diagonal is coefficient alpha for the scale. Correlations  $\geq 0.10$  are significant at the  $p \leq 0.05$  level.



### *Control variables*

Several variables were included in this study to statistically control for factors that might confound the relationships under investigation. Our control variables represent a set of variables commonly used in studies of career progress (e.g., Dreher & Cox, 2000; Tharenou et al., 1994; Turban & Dougherty, 1994; Whitely et al., 1991) and help rule out third variable explanations when examining the relationships between networking behaviors and career outcomes. The control variables were grouped under human capital variables (degree, work experience, continuous work history, hours worked per week), job and organization variables (organization level, line or staff, industry, organization size), and demographic variables (marital status, socioeconomic background).

#### **Degree**

Respondents indicated their highest degree obtained. Degree was coded 1 for bachelor's degree and 2 for advanced degree.

#### **Work experience**

Respondents indicated their number of years of full-time work experience. Years of full-time work experience was converted to months. Because age was highly correlated with work experience ( $r = 0.97$ ), age was not included as a control variable.

#### **Continuous work history**

Continuous work history was coded 1 for respondents who reported no work interruptions for more than a 3-month period, and 2 for respondents who reported any work interruptions greater than 3 months.

#### **Hours worked per week**

Respondents provided an estimate of the average number of hours they worked per week.

#### **Organization level**

Organization level was measured by having respondents indicate on a 5-point scale which response best describes the level of their current position, where 1 = non-management/non-exempt, 2 = lower management level, 3 = middle management level, 4 = upper management level, and 5 = top executive level.

#### **Line or staff**

Position was coded as 1 for line and 2 for staff.

#### **Industry**

Industry was measured using 19 different categories. These categories were condensed into either manufacturing (coded as 1) or service (coded as 2).

#### **Organization size**

Organization size was measured using eight categories ranging from fewer than 50 employees to 50 000 or more employees.

#### **Marital status**

Marital status was coded 1 for married and 2 for single.

### Socioeconomic background

A scale by Whitely et al. (1991) was used to measure socioeconomic background. Respondents self-rated their family's social class when they were growing up using the following categories: 1 = under class, 2 = working poor, 3 = working class, 4 = middle class, 5 = upper middle class, and 6 = upper class. A definition of each category was provided.

## Results

Correlations, means, and standard deviations for the study variables are shown in Table 1. Respondents reported engaging in maintaining external contacts ( $M = 3.19$ ) and increasing internal visibility ( $M = 3.19$ ) the most, followed by socializing ( $M = 2.74$ ), participating in community activities ( $M = 2.36$ ) and engaging in professional activities ( $M = 1.95$ ). The correlations among the five networking behavior variables ranged from  $-0.03$  to  $0.43$ . Correlation analysis indicated that four of the five networking behaviors (all but socializing) were positively related to number of promotions ( $r = 0.13$  to  $r = 0.28$ ). Maintaining external contacts, engaging in professional activities, and increasing internal visibility were positively related to total compensation ( $r = 0.18$  to  $r = 0.29$ ), and all networking behaviors except participating in community activities were positively related to perceived career success ( $r = 0.20$  to  $r = 0.35$ ).

Multiple regressions were performed with the study variables entered simultaneously to examine the relationship between networking behaviors and the career success outcome variables. The results of the regression analyses are shown in Table 2. Hypothesis 1, that involvement in networking behavior will be positively related to number of promotions, received limited support. Of the networking behavior variables, only increasing internal visibility was significantly related to number of promotions. Multiple regression results showed that engaging in professional activities and increasing internal visibility were significantly related to total compensation, providing partial support for Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 dealt with perceived career success. Engaging in professional activities and increasing internal visibility showed significant relationships with perceived career success, and socializing was marginally related to perceived career success ( $p \leq 0.10$ ). These results provide partial support for Hypothesis 3.

Many of the control variables were significantly linked to the career success outcome variables in the correlation and multiple regression analyses. For example, regression results show that work experience, organization level, and organization size were positively related to number of promotions. Work experience, hours worked per week, organization level, and socioeconomic background also showed significant relationships with total compensation. Holding a bachelor's degree, having a continuous work history, occupying a higher organization level, holding a line job, and working for a larger organization were significantly related to perceived career success. Gender was not significant in the regression analyses.

The unique increment to  $R^2$  was calculated for the set of human capital variables, the job/organization variables, the demographic variables, and the networking behavior variables. An  $F$  value was computed to determine whether the change in  $R^2$  between the full regression model and the reduced model was significant. As shown in Table 2, the human capital variables and the job/organization variables each accounted for significant increments to  $R^2$  in examining their relationships with number of promotions, total compensation, and perceived career success. The set of demographic variables was not significantly related with any of the career success outcome measures. The networking behavior variables accounted for a statistically significant increment to the  $R^2$  for both total compensation

Table 2. Networking behaviors as predictors of career outcomes<sup>a</sup>

Predictors	Number of promotions	Unique $\Delta R^2$	Total compensation	Unique $\Delta R^2$	Perceived career success	Unique $\Delta R^2$
Human capital variables						
Degree	-0.02		-0.06		-0.09*	
Work experience	0.29**		0.22**		0.01	
Continuous work history	0.01		-0.09 <sup>†</sup>		-0.14**	
Hours worked per week	0.06	0.04**	0.11*	0.04**	0.09 <sup>†</sup>	0.04**
Job and organization variables						
Organization level	0.20**		0.20**		0.27**	
Line or staff	-0.00		-0.05		-0.12**	
Industry	0.06		-0.04		-0.04	
Organization size	0.11*	0.03*	0.02	0.03*	0.10*	0.06**
Demographic variables						
Gender	0.05		-0.01		0.03	
Marital status	-0.05		-0.05		0.00	
Socioeconomic background	0.01	0.00	0.10*	0.01	-0.01	0.00
Networking behaviors						
Maintaining external contacts	0.03		-0.07		0.05	
Socializing	0.07		0.04		0.09 <sup>†</sup>	
Engaging in professional activities	0.03		0.11*		0.14**	
Participating in community activities	0.01		-0.03		-0.07	
Increasing internal visibility	0.12*	0.02 <sup>†</sup>	0.13*	0.03*	0.13*	0.06**
$R^2$	0.25**		0.26**		0.31**	
Adjusted $R^2$	0.22		0.22		0.27	
$N$	363		363		363	

<sup>†</sup> $p \leq 0.10$ ; \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ .

<sup>a</sup>The regression coefficients shown are standardized.

and perceived career success, and marginally contributed to the  $R^2$  for number of promotions ( $p \leq 0.10$ ).

Hypothesis 4 specified that gender would moderate the relationships between involvement in networking behavior and objective career success outcomes, such that these relationships would be stronger for men than for women. To test Hypothesis 4, cross-product variables (i.e., gender \* maintaining contacts, gender \* socializing, gender \* engaging in professional activities, gender \* participating in community activities, and gender \* increasing internal visibility) were added one at a time to the full regression model to determine if gender moderated the relationships between networking behaviors and number of promotions and between networking behaviors and total compensation. Four of the ten interactions were significant: gender \* socializing was related to number of promotions; gender \* engaging in professional activities was related to total compensation; and gender \* increasing internal visibility showed relationships with number of promotions and total compensation.

To further investigate these findings, regression analyses were performed separately for males and females. As shown in Table 3, socializing was not significantly related to number of promotions for either males or females. Engaging in professional activities showed a marginal relationship with total compensation for both men and women. Interestingly, the relationship between engaging in professional activities and total compensation for females was negative, while for males the relationship was positive. Consistent with our hypothesis, increasing internal visibility was significantly related to number of promotions and total compensation for men, but not for women. These results provide partial support for Hypothesis 4.

Table 3. Examination of gender by networking behavior interactions<sup>a</sup>

Predictors	Number of promotions		Total compensation		Perceived career success	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Human capital variables						
Degree	0.01	-0.15	-0.05	0.01	-0.06	-0.18 <sup>†</sup>
Work experience	0.27**	0.33**	0.22**	0.21 <sup>†</sup>	0.03	-0.13
Continuous work history	0.03	-0.10	-0.10 <sup>†</sup>	-0.14	-0.09	-0.27**
Hours worked per week	0.05	0.09	0.11	0.16	0.08	0.19 <sup>†</sup>
Job and organization variables						
Organization level	0.20**	0.18	0.20**	0.36**	0.29**	0.28**
Line or staff	-0.00	-0.02	-0.07	0.08	-0.17**	-0.02
Industry	0.06	0.07	-0.03	-0.08	-0.05	-0.01
Organization size	0.10 <sup>†</sup>	0.09	0.00	0.14	0.16**	-0.02
Demographic variables						
Marital status	-0.06	0.01	-0.02	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01
Socioeconomic background	-0.00	0.11	0.10	0.18 <sup>†</sup>	0.01	0.02
Networking behaviors						
Maintaining contacts	0.01	0.09	-0.09	0.18	0.04	0.07
Socializing	0.10	-0.09	0.05	-0.12	0.09	-0.01
Engaging in professional activities	0.01	0.03	0.13 <sup>†</sup>	-0.20 <sup>†</sup>	0.19**	-0.06
Participating in community activities	-0.01	0.14	-0.07	-0.03	-0.07	-0.01
Increasing internal visibility	0.19**	-0.10	0.16*	-0.01	0.07	0.28**
$R^2$	0.28**	0.23 <sup>†</sup>	0.26**	0.38**	0.31**	0.41**
Adjusted $R^2$	0.23	0.09	0.21	0.27	0.27	0.30
$N$	265	100	265	100	265	100

<sup>†</sup> $p \leq 0.10$ ; \* $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ .

<sup>a</sup>The regression coefficients shown are standardized.

In addition, while we did not hypothesize that gender would moderate the relationship between networking behavior and perceived career success, we were interested in examining on an exploratory basis whether any significant relationships existed. To do so, cross-product variables were added one at a time to the full regression model. Only gender \* increasing internal visibility was related to perceived career success ( $p \leq 0.07$ ). Since this relationship was marginally significant, we computed separate regression equations for males and females. Results in Table 3 show that increasing internal visibility was significantly related to perceived career success for women, but not for men. Furthermore, engaging in professional activities was significantly related to perceived career success for men but not for women.

## Discussion

Our study set out to accomplish two objectives. First, we explored the relationship between involvement in networking behaviors and both objective and perceived career success outcomes. Second, we examined whether the relationships between networking behaviors and career success outcomes differ for men and women. The findings indicate that some types of networking behavior are related to career outcomes. Furthermore, gender differences do impact the utility of networking behavior as a career-enhancing strategy. Five different types of networking behaviors were used in this study: maintaining

external contacts, socializing, engaging in professional activities, participating in community activities, and increasing internal visibility. Increasing internal visibility and engaging in professional activities significantly influenced the career success outcomes in the multiple regression analyses, providing partial support for Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Our results suggest that it is important to distinguish among networking behaviors and their relationship to career outcomes.

Increasing internal visibility was significantly related to number of promotions, total compensation, and perceived career success. This particular networking behavior is the most oriented towards the internal organization, so it is perhaps not unexpected that it would also be the type of behavior most likely related to number of promotions and total compensation. Increasing internal visibility through such means as accepting highly visible work assignments or participating on task forces or committees at work provide managers and professionals with opportunities to prove their capabilities. Competently performing in these roles should be related to increases in compensation as well as consideration for promotion. Furthermore, managers and professionals who have increased their visibility in the organization by successfully tackling challenging assignments should perceive their careers are on track.

Engaging in professional activities was related to total compensation and perceived career success in the multiple regression analysis. One explanation may be that managers and professionals who engage in professional activities meet influential individuals in other organizations who offer them better-paying jobs. Alternatively, organizations may be financially rewarding managers and professionals for their involvement in professional activities. It may be that individuals who maintain high levels of professional activity are viewed as having high potential in their organizations, although engaging in professional activities was not related to number of promotions in the regression analysis. Not surprisingly, engaging in professional activities was related to perceived career success. Managers and professionals who take part in professional activities (e.g., accepting speaking engagements, participating in professional organizations) should be more likely to perceive their careers as successful since others recognize and seek their expertise.

Socializing was marginally related to perceived career success in the multiple regression analysis. Engaging in socializing activities (e.g., attending organizational social functions, participating in athletic activities, going out for drinks after work) may help build an individual's sense of belonging to the organization that enhances one's perceived career success. We find it somewhat unusual that socializing behaviors were not related with either of the objective outcome measures. Perhaps most of the socializing managers and professionals do in an organization is with peers who tend to have little influence on one's compensation or promotion decisions.

Maintaining external contacts was related to all three career success measures in the correlation analysis, but not when other variables were controlled in regression. We find this result interesting, particularly given the vast amount of practitioner advice to maintain contacts with individuals through such means as handing out business cards, sending newspaper clippings and e-mails, going to lunch with people outside one's company, or calling business contacts to keep in touch. One explanation is that these contacts are of such low intensity that they do not have an impact. If these are very superficial relationships, or relationships in which there is no reciprocity involved, they are probably not very satisfying or beneficial and unlikely to enhance objective or perceived career success. Finally, our correlation results showed that involvement in community activities was positively related to number of promotions. These results, however, were not significant in the regression. Although many organizations encourage their employees to play active roles in their communities, this behavior may not be rewarded in traditional ways such as through increases in compensation or promotions. Future research should explore how organizations reward participation in community activities, and examine whether some community activities are perceived as more important than others.

Next, consistent with research findings on male and female career attainment (e.g., Brett & Stroh, 1997; Dreher & Cox, 2000; Schmeer & Reitman, 1997; Stroh et al., 1992), involvement in networking

behavior was more beneficial for the career progress of males than of females, providing partial support for Hypothesis 4. Increasing internal visibility was significantly related to number of promotions and total compensation for men but not for women. One explanation might be that the work assignments, task forces, or committees the women were involved with were of a less prestigious nature than those of the men. While we are unable to ascertain this from our data, past research has found that women have less access to influential individuals and powerful coalitions in organizations (Brass, 1984, 1985; Dreher & Cox, 2000; Ibarra, 1993; Kanter, 1977; Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Although women may attempt to increase their internal visibility, they may be less able to infiltrate influential organizational circles than men. Meanwhile, exploratory regression results demonstrated that increasing internal visibility was significantly related to perceived career success for women but not for men. One explanation for this finding might be that women may have to more consciously strive to enhance their visibility in organizations than men. As such, the enhanced awareness of their efforts may contribute to their perceptions of career success.

In addition, we found that engaging in professional activities was positively related to total compensation for men, but the relationship was negative for women. Perhaps men's professional activities are more valued by organizations. Alternatively, it may be that men negotiate additional compensation for their professional involvement. According to Wellington and Catalyst (2001), men are more likely than women to request increases in pay when taking on additional responsibilities. The negative relationship with compensation (albeit marginal) for women is disturbing. Research is needed to examine the costs to women of engaging in professional activities. Involvement in professional activities was also significantly related to perceived career success for men but not for women. Professional activity may be more burdensome for women since it is frequently conducted outside of normal working hours. Women, already under the stress of a disproportionate share of family and household responsibilities (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000), may derive fewer tangible experiences contributing to their perceptions of career success than men. More research is needed to examine differences in men's and women's professional involvement and how it is perceived by themselves and by their organizations.

Results of our study indicate that some networking behaviors were more beneficial than others in advancing one's career. These findings emphasize the importance of using a measure of networking behavior that allows such distinctions to be made. We utilized the networking behavior measure developed by Forret and Dougherty (2001). The items in their networking behavior scale were based on semi-structured interviews, open-ended survey questionnaires, and scholarly as well as practitioner literatures. Factor analysis was used to determine the components of networking behavior. Our results show some moderately high correlations between some of the types of networking behavior (e.g.,  $r = 0.39$  between maintaining external contacts and engaging in professional activities), indicating a degree of overlap among the networking behaviors. However, the correlations are not overly high, providing some evidence of discriminant validity. Also, the correlations are similar in size to those found in research examining dimensions of mentoring (e.g., career-related, psychosocial), another form of developmental relationship (Mullen & Noe, 1999; Turban & Dougherty, 1994).

Our study set out to examine the relationship between engaging in networking behaviors and both objective and perceived measures of career success. Under the new psychological contract, where promises of upward mobility and steady increases in compensation are rare, the subjective career takes on an even greater significance (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996b; Hall & Mirvis, 1996). In this study, we utilized a perceived career success measure that takes into account how individuals evaluate their career success relative to their own aspirations and relative to the achievements and beliefs of others. Recent research by Heslin (2003) has found that both self-referent as well as other-referent criteria account for unique variance in one's evaluation of career success. However, we recognize that subjective career success is a complex construct with deeper meanings that extend beyond our measure of perceived career success. Many researchers (e.g., Arthur & Rousseau, 1996b; Hall & Mirvis, 1996;

Heslin, 2003; Valcour, 2003) have been calling for updated models of career success. Future research exploring the link between engaging in networking behaviors and more sophisticated measures of subjective career success would be beneficial in better understanding how networking behavior can enhance one's career.

### *Limitations of study*

We recognize a number of limitations to this study. This was a sample of highly educated, full-time managerial and professional employees. Whether the results would generalize to less educated individuals, individuals working part-time, or individuals not in managerial or professional work is unknown. In addition, since our sample was 98 per cent Caucasian, we cannot generalize our results to members of different racial and ethnic groups. While we did achieve a 50 per cent response rate, we were unable to compare survey respondents with non-respondents. At least as far as gender is concerned, our analysis sample appears representative. In our study, 25 per cent of those originally mailed a survey were female, and the resulting analysis sample consisted of 27 per cent female respondents.

Common method variance is a concern due to the use of a self-report survey. Furthermore, since this was a correlational field study, we cannot make statements about direction of causality. For example, does involvement in networking behavior lead to career success or does career success lead to involvement in networking behavior? Achieving career success may foster organizational pressures for managers and professionals to become more involved in networking behavior. Forret and Dougherty (2001) found that organizational level was correlated with maintaining external contacts, engaging in professional activities, and increasing internal visibility. On the other hand, engaging in networking behaviors facilitates developing and maintaining relationships that can provide individuals with needed information, resources, and opportunities to help them achieve career success. Future studies are needed to explore the direction of causality.

### *Implications and directions for future research*

Numerous suggestions for networking behavior are included in the growing body of practitioner literature (e.g., Barton, 2001; Fisher & Vilas, 1991; Kramer, 1998; RoAne, 1993; Wellington & Catalyst, 2001). Our results indicate that only some forms of networking behavior were related to longer-term career outcomes. In this study, the two most career-enhancing types of networking behavior were increasing internal visibility and engaging in professional activities. But these networking behaviors were related to objective career success outcomes for men only. While engaging in networking behavior might be viewed as a promising career management strategy for women, our results show that networking behaviors are not as advantageous for women as for men.

To help address the question of why networking behaviors are less beneficial for women, many avenues for future research exist. It may be that women build less effective networks than men. We were unable to ascertain the size and composition of the networks of the men and women in our study. Even if women built similar-sized networks as men, perhaps the women's contacts are not in strong enough positions to exert influence on their behalf. Future research should examine how networking behaviors shape the structure of an individual's social network, and how this, in turn, influences career outcomes. Moreover, women may be at a structural disadvantage to build effective networks. To illustrate, mentoring studies have found that women are less likely to have access to powerful, white male mentors (Dreher & Cox, 1996; Dreher & Dougherty, 1997). Studies are needed to examine structural barriers that may prevent women from engaging in cross-gender networking behaviors, thereby impeding

women's networking success. In addition, future research should explore the effectiveness with which men and women utilize their contacts. It may be that women are less comfortable asking their contacts for career assistance, thus inhibiting the value of their networking behavior. Furthermore, networking behaviors may benefit women in ways that were not examined in this study. For example, socializing or engaging in professional activities may provide women with valuable sources of social support. Studies are needed to investigate alternative types of career assistance women receive as a result of their networking behavior. Finally, future research should explore how organizations value the professional activities of men and women. Do men receive additional compensation for their professional involvement? For women, does involvement in professional activities signal that they are less committed to their jobs and organizations? Increased research in these areas should be beneficial for understanding and improving the effectiveness of networking behaviors for both men and women.

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