

Linking Extroversion and Proactive Personality to Career Success: The Role of Mentoring Received and Knowledge

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Abstract

Although extroversion and proactive personality are related to career success, the mechanisms through which the relationships occur are unclear. Based on the contest- and sponsored-mobility processes, we examine a model linking extroversion and proactive personality to career success through the mediating effects of mentoring received and organizational knowledge. We also theorize that mentoring provides learning opportunities, which result in greater organizational knowledge, that contribute to career success. Results, from a sample of 333 employees with a diverse set of occupations, indicated that the relationships of proactive personality and extroversion with objective and subjective measures of career success were mediated by mentoring received and organizational knowledge. Additionally, mentoring received influenced organizational knowledge, and both were related to objective and subjective measures of career success. Our study provides insight into how personality influences career success and provides support for both contest- and sponsored-mobility models of career success.

Keywords

mentoring, personality, career success, organizational knowledge

What leads to a successful career is an important theoretical and practical question for scholars and employees. Theoretically, scholars, such as Turner (1960), argued that career success results from either individual characteristics, typically conceptualized as a *contest-mobility model*, or support and sponsorship from others in the work environment, aspects of a *sponsored-mobility model*. However,

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more recently, scholars noted that, “both the contest-mobility model and the sponsored-mobility model are useful in understanding career success” (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005, p. 393). Thus, career success is greater when individuals have certain characteristics and are sponsored by other individuals. Therefore, rather than comparing and contrasting each model, we integrate aspects of the contest- and sponsored-mobility models by theorizing that the personality characteristics of proactivity and extroversion influence whether a person develops mentoring relationships with others that will subsequently facilitate career success.

Although some evidence indicates that personality characteristics, such as extroversion and proactivity, are related to career success, scholars have called for research to understand how such effects occur (Ng et al., 2005). How personality influences career success is an important question because although one cannot quickly or easily change one’s personality, one may be able to change behaviors, related to personality, that influence career success. Consistent with prior research (Bozionelos & Bozionelos, 2010), we theorize that personality traits, specifically extroversion and proactivity, influence mentoring received, which in turn influences career success. We examine extroversion and proactivity as these are action-oriented personality characteristics that entail attributes such as ambition, sociability, and initiative and are theorized to influence the seeking and attaining of social resources (Lin, 2001). A desired outcome of mentoring relationships is that mentors pass along valuable knowledge to their protégés (Kram, 1985), and we theorize that organizational knowledge is a mechanism through which mentoring received is related to career success (Lankau & Scandura, 2002). Thus, we propose a mediated model in which extroversion and proactive personality are related to career success through mentoring received and organizational knowledge. By understanding how personality is related to career success, we provide insight into what actions proactive and extroverted people naturally take to be successful. Such insights can then be used by managers and practitioners to coach their employees and help them engage in similar success-contributing activities.

Theoretical Background

Much research examining career success has compared and contrasted contest- and sponsored-mobility models (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge, 2008; Ng et al., 2005; Turner, 1960). The *contest-mobility model* proposes that individuals compete with each other on a “level playing field” such that success depends on the person’s abilities, attributes, and effort. In the *sponsored-mobility model*, however, the existing elite select individuals deemed to have merit and provide them with opportunities (sponsorship) that prepare them for subsequent success. The sponsored-mobility model assumes talent can be recognized early and that talented individuals should receive developmental opportunities to enhance their careers. Thus, the contest-mobility model strives to treat individuals identically for as long as possible to see who succeeds, whereas the sponsored-mobility model selects the elite early, in order to develop them to fulfill their destined success. Although these two mobility models appear to suggest competing strategies for career success, they are not mutually exclusive and may work in a complementary manner (Ng et al., 2005; Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999).

Personality, Mentoring, and Organizational Knowledge

First, we examine aspects of the contest-mobility model and theorize that proactivity and extroversion lead to important social resources (Thompson, 2005), such as access to mentors, who in turn provide access to relevant information and knowledge. Additionally, we propose that the energetic aspects of proactive personality and extroversion lead to other situations beyond those provided by mentoring relationships that also provide learning opportunities. Consistent with recent theorizing, we expect that attaining organizational knowledge depends on the active involvement of the employee and is enhanced through interactions with others such as mentors (Noe, Clarke, & Klein, 2014). Thus, we

expect that proactivity and extroversion have a direct relationship with both mentoring received and organizational knowledge as well as an indirect (mediated) relationship with organizational knowledge through mentoring received.

Proactive personality. Proactive personality refers to individuals' dispositional tendencies to take action to influence their environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 1995, 2000; Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010). Proactive individuals tend to "scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change" (Bateman & Crant, 1993, p. 105). A recent meta-analysis suggested that proactive individuals had greater career success "because they utilize both contest-mobility and sponsored-mobility pathways to career success" (Fuller & Marler, 2009, p. 337).

Individuals with a proactive personality tend to be self-initiated, future oriented, and focused on improving themselves (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). We expect that people with a more proactive personality are more likely to seek out mentoring and to be seen as more deserving of mentoring (Liang & Gong, 2013). Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1a: Proactive personality is positively related to mentoring received.

We theorize that as proactive individuals attempt to influence their environment, they increase their organizational knowledge. Organizational knowledge is conceptualized as understanding the norms, values, and goals of how things "really work" inside an organization (Morrison, 2002). Individuals with greater organizational knowledge understand the organizational culture and how things work in an organization, such as who the influential people are (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Fang, Duffy, & Shaw, 2011). We posit that as proactive individuals attempt to make things happen in organizations, they put themselves in new situations that provide various learning opportunities, which translate into valuable resources and experiences.

Hypothesis 1b: Proactive personality is positively related to organizational knowledge.

Extroversion. Extroversion, which refers to the degree to which an individual tends to be warm, outgoing, energetic, and ambitious, influences interpersonal relationships (Goldberg, 1992; Watson & Clark, 1997). Furthermore, extroverts are more likely to seek out positive stimuli, to interpret events positively, and to have an approach motivation than are introverts (Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Watson & Clark, 1997). Some evidence indicates that extroverts are more likely to seek mentoring relationships and to engage in professional and developmental activities (Aryee, Lo, & Kang, 1999; Bozionelos & Bozionelos, 2010). We expect that extroverts' positive nature and high energy level will increase their attempts to seek a mentoring relationship and their likeability as protégés (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997), helping them receive more mentoring as a result.

Hypothesis 2a: Extroversion is positively related to mentoring received.

Extroverts tend to be energetic, achievement oriented, and goal directed (Major, Turner, & Fletcher, 2006; Minbashian, Bright, & Bird, 2009; Ng et al., 2005), characteristics that would lead them to seek learning opportunities. Because extroverts are more likely to have an approach motivation toward learning opportunities than introverts, they are more likely to learn from their experiences (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). Finally, extroverts tend to be more outgoing and sociable and thus are likely to interact with a broad range of individuals who provide resources for learning important organizational knowledge.

Hypothesis 2b: Extroversion is positively related to organizational knowledge.

Mentoring and Organizational Knowledge

We next examine aspects of the sponsored-mobility model and theorize that individuals who receive more mentoring have greater career success, in part, through increased organizational knowledge. Our focus is consistent with recent theorizing that social capital influences the learning of important organizational information, which subsequently influences career success (Fang et al., 2011; Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007). Kram (1985) theorized that mentoring will lead to learning, and some initial evidence supports this link (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Pan, Sun, & Chow, 2011). Notably, however, scholars have called for additional research to further examine whether learning is an outcome of mentoring and whether learning mediates between mentoring and career success (Noe et al., 2014).

Hypothesis 3: Mentoring received is positively related to organizational knowledge.

Organizational Knowledge and Career Success

Evidence indicates that factors beyond job performance, such as understanding organizational norms and values, influence career success (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewé, 2005). Accordingly, we expect that individuals with more organizational knowledge, such as who the key decision makers are and when to approach them, have valuable information that will enhance promotions, total income, and subjective success. Indirect support for this relationship is provided by evidence that individuals with more access to information and resources had greater career success (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Although Seibert, Kraimer, and Liden (2001) did not measure knowledge, presumably individuals with access to information and resources learned implicit and explicit rules about how to succeed in the organization (see Fang et al., 2011). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 4: Organizational knowledge is positively related to (a) the number of promotions received, (b) total income, and (c) subjective career success.

Mentoring Received, Career Success, and Organizational Knowledge

We expect that mentoring received will have a direct effect and an indirect effect through organizational knowledge on career success. Considerable evidence indicates that mentoring received is related to both extrinsic and intrinsic measures of career success (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Eby et al., 2013), although the mechanisms explaining the relationship are unclear. We hypothesize that organizational knowledge provides one such mechanism. However, we do not expect that organizational knowledge fully mediates the relationship of mentoring received with career success and thus propose both a direct and an indirect effect.

Hypothesis 5: Mentoring received is positively related to (a) number of promotions received, (b) total income, and (c) subjective career success.

Hypothesis 6: Mentoring received has an indirect effect, through organizational knowledge, on (a) number of promotions received, (b) total income, and (c) subjective career success.

As shown in Figure 1, we examine a causal model that proposes specific paths and indirect effects. Specifically, we expect that extroversion and proactive personality have an indirect effect on career success through mentoring received and organizational knowledge.

Hypothesis 7: Proactive personality has an indirect effect, through mentoring received and organizational knowledge, on (a) number of promotions received, (b) total income, and (c) subjective career success.

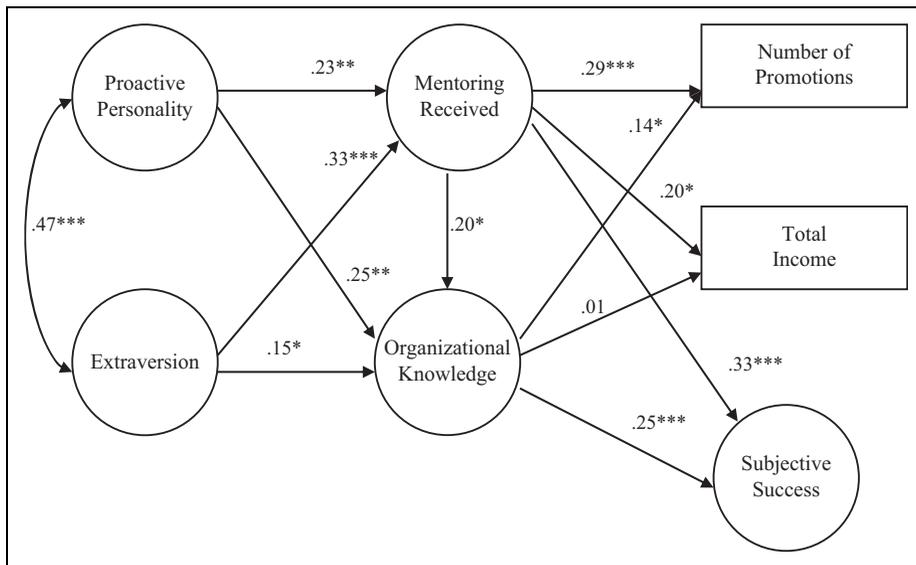


Figure 1. Structural model results. Final structural model of the hypothesized relationship. Circles present latent variables and rectangles are manifest variables. Path coefficients are standardized, where * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 8: Extroversion has an indirect effect, through mentoring received and organizational knowledge, on (a) number of promotions received, (b) total income, and (c) subjective career success.

Method

Procedure and Participants

A survey was mailed to the home of 1,500 randomly selected business school alumni (addresses obtained from an alumni association) from a large Midwestern university, who graduated with a bachelor of science in business administration 4–13 years before the date of the study. To increase the response rate, we followed Dillman's (1991) approach and offered a lottery drawing. Specifically, 2 weeks after the surveys were mailed, we sent out reminder postcards to nonrespondents. We then followed up with a second survey mailed a month after the original mail out, postcard reminders 2 weeks after the second mail out, and a third survey mailed a month after the second mail out. A total of 492 people responded to our study, which was a 33% response rate. Our response rate is comparable to other studies using mailed alumni surveys (i.e., Seibert & Kraimer, 2001—28%; Turban & Dougherty, 1994—36%). Following previous research (Turban & Dougherty, 1994), we removed respondents who were unemployed, self-employed, or working part time because factors leading to career success may differ for these individuals; thus, we had useable data from 333 respondents. The participants were primarily Caucasian (93%) and male (58%). Approximately 33% of the participants earned a graduate degree. The participants' age ranged from 25 to 49 with an average age of 30. On average, participants earned their undergraduate degree approximately 8.4 years prior to completing the survey and had worked for their current employer for almost 58 months.

Measures

Mentoring received. We used Dreher and Ash's (1990) 18-item measure of mentoring received, which had a Cronbach α of .88 in our sample. Participants were asked to think about those who facilitated

their career development and “indicate, in general, the extent to which these people have” Sample items include, “Given or recommended you for challenging assignments that present opportunities to learn new skills?” and “Shared personal experiences as an alternative perspective to your problems?” Consistent with prior research, we measured overall mentoring received, which captures the variability in mentoring provided across relationships (Bozionelos & Bozionelos, 2010). Previous research demonstrates that mentoring received is positively related with promotions and income (Dreher & Ash, 1990).

Organizational knowledge. We used two indicators of organizational knowledge, which we defined as knowledge of the norms, values, and goals of the organization and how things really work in the organization. Specifically, we used a 3-item Organizational Knowledge Scale (Morrison, 2002) and a 6-item Political Knowledge Scale (Chao et al., 1994). In our sample, these 9 items had an α of .82. A sample organizational knowledge item is “I feel very knowledgeable about the firm’s important norms and values.” A sample political knowledge item is “I know who the most influential people are in my organization.” These measures were combined to create a relatively broad measure of organization knowledge in order to be commensurate in breadth with the measures of mentoring received and career success. Evidence indicates that organizational knowledge is related to role clarity and social integration as well as income and perceived career success (Chao et al., 1994; Morrison, 2002; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001).

Extroversion. We used Goldberg’s (1999) 10-item measure, which is included in the international personality item pool (IPIP). The IPIP is a public domain website (<http://ipip.ori.org/>) that provides researchers with validated personality scales (see Goldberg et al., 2006). Sample items measured the extent to which respondents were, for example, “the life of the party,” “feel comfortable around people,” and “tend to start conversations.” Cronbach α was .92 for our sample.

Proactive personality. Consistent with other mentor scholars (Liang & Gong, 2013), we used the 10-item version of Bateman and Crant’s (1993) Proactive Personality Scale (see Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). In our sample, Cronbach α was .85. As noted by Fuller and Marler (2009) in their meta-analysis, most studies examining proactive personality use items from the Bateman and Crant (1993) Proactive Personality Scale. Sample items include “I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life” and “Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.”

Objective career success. We asked respondents their total income (including salary, commissions, and bonuses) from their current employer and the number of promotions received since graduation from the university. Promotions include more than one of the following changes in the participants’ status: (1) changes in offices, (2) significant increases in annual salary, (3) qualifying for a company incentive plan, (4) significant changes in the scope of the job, and (5) changes in the level in the company (Turban & Dougherty, 1994; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991). Tests for normality indicated that promotions and income were skewed. We normalized the distribution of both of these variables using a log transformation.

Subjective career success. Subjective career success was measured using the 5-item Career Satisfaction Scale (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), which is a commonly used measure of career success (Converse, Pathak, DePaul-Haddock, Gotlib, & Merbedone, 2012; Ng et al., 2005; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). A sample item is “I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.” In our sample, Cronbach α was .88.

Control variables. We controlled for education, years since obtaining undergraduate degree, gender, company tenure, and organization size based on the evidence that they are related to career success

Table 1. Reliabilities, Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the Study Variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Personality	3.68	0.50	(.85)										
2. Extroversion	3.47	0.74	.44	(.92)									
3. Mentoring received	3.82	0.56	.27	.32	(.88)								
4. Organizational knowledge	3.89	0.50	.31	.25	.23	(.82)							
5. Subjective success	3.65	0.74	.16	.20	.28	.22	(.88)						
6. Number of promotions	1.31	0.63	.18	.15	.23	.24	.24	—					
7. Total income	11.16	0.47	.14	.20	.13	.07	.40	.34	—				
8. Gender	1.59	0.49	.15	.00	-.10	.05	.03	.03	.25	—			
9. Years since degree	8.42	2.83	.00	-.02	.04	.16	.06	.38	.41	.09	—		
10. Education	1.36	0.57	-.03	-.09	.03	-.06	.05	.02	.13	.04	.12	—	
11. Organizational size	5.23	2.40	.06	.02	.02	-.08	.25	.06	.25	.11	.01	-.05	—
12. Tenure (in months)	57.90	39.64	-.06	-.07	-.01	.16	.06	.20	.17	-.02	.35	-.06	.30

Note. $N = 333$. We report coefficient α , from our sample, in the diagonal. Values above $|.11|$ are significant ($p < .05$). Number of promotions and total income underwent log transformation. Gender measured as 1 = female and 2 = male; education measured as 1 = bachelor's, 2 = master's, and 3 = doctoral or MD; and organizational size measured as 1 = 1–50 employees, 2 = 51–99 employees, 3 = 100–499 employees, 4 = 500–999 employees, 5 = 1,000–4,999 employees, 6 = 5,000–9,999 employees, 7 = 10,000–49,000 employees, and 8 = 50,000+ employees.

(e.g., Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Turban & Dougherty, 1994; Whitley et al., 1991). Consistent with prior research, we partialled out these control variables from the covariance matrix prior to the structural equation modeling analyses (e.g., De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Buysens, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

Results

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables. To provide additional validity information, we compared the pattern of correlations in Table 1 with prior studies (Allen et al., 2004; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fuller & Marler, 2009; Ng et al., 2005; Seibert Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Consistent with prior research, both proactive personality and extroversion were significantly (i.e., $p < .05$) correlated with the career success outcomes (e.g., promotions, total income, and subjective success) as well as with mentoring received and organizational knowledge. Mentoring received was positively correlated with organizational knowledge and the three career success indicators. Additionally, organizational knowledge was positively related with subjective career success and number of promotions but not with total income.

Before examining the hypothesized structural model, we examined the measurement model for the latent variables of proactive personality, extroversion, mentoring received, organizational knowledge, and subjective success. We used parcels rather than items as indicators for the latent constructs, except for career success, to maintain an adequate ratio of parameters estimated to respondents, and because parcels result in less biased path estimates (Hall, Snell, & Foust, 1999). For mentoring received, we created two parcels: one each for career-related and psychosocial functions. Similarly, organizational knowledge had two parcels: organizational knowledge and political knowledge. For subjective career success, we used the 5 items as indicators of the latent construct. We created three parcels for proactive personality and three parcels for extroversion by randomly grouping their respective items. We used random grouping, since there was no rational means for otherwise grouping the items (Hall et al., 1999). The measurement model fits the data well $\chi^2(80, N = 333) = 153.62$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .97, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = .96, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .05, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .05 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). We compared the

five-factor model with a single-factor model and with a three-factor model with the two personality variables loading on a single factor, the two mediating variables (i.e., mentoring and knowledge) loading on a single factor, and the subjective success factor by itself. The hypothesized five-factor model provided a significantly better fit than the alternative models, and all standardized coefficients were greater than .58 ($p < .01$).

We used structural equation modeling to examine the overall fit of the hypothesized model to the data and to test the hypothesized paths and effects. Similar to prior research (e.g., Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001), we allowed promotions and income to be correlated, although this path is not shown in the model as it is not of theoretical interest. The hypothesized model fits the data reasonably well, $\chi^2(108, N = 333) = 292.26$, CFI = .93, TLI = .91, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07. Although such results support our hypothesized model, we tested an alternative model that added direct paths from extroversion and proactive personality to the career success outcomes to examine whether personality has a direct effect on career success beyond the indirect effects hypothesized. The alternative model did not provide a better fit to the data ($\Delta\chi^2 = 11.48$, $\Delta df = 6$, *ns*), although the direct path from extroversion to total income was significant ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$). Since the hypothesized model was more parsimonious than the alternative model and fit the data equally well, we accepted it as the final model. The hypothesized model explained 13% of the variance in number of promotions, 10% of the variance in total income, and 23% of the variance in subjective success. Figure 1 presents the path coefficients.

Turning to specific paths, proactive personality was positively associated with both mentoring received and organizational knowledge ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$ and $\beta = .25$, $p < .01$, respectively), providing support for Hypotheses 1a and 1b. Additionally, extroversion was positively related to mentoring received ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$) and to organizational knowledge ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) in support of Hypotheses 2a and 2b. Such results indicate that individuals with more proactivity and extroversion received more mentoring and organizational knowledge. Hypothesis 3 also was supported as mentoring received was positively associated with organizational knowledge ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$). Thus, proactive personality and extroversion influenced organizational knowledge directly and indirectly through mentoring received.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 concerned the relationships of organizational knowledge and mentoring received, respectively, with career success. In support of Hypotheses 4a and 4c, organizational knowledge was positively related with the number of promotions ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$) and subjective success ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$). Organizational knowledge was not related to total income ($\beta = .01$, *ns*), however, and thus Hypothesis 4b was not supported. Results provided full support for Hypothesis 5, as mentoring received was positively related with the number of promotions ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$), total income ($\beta = .20$, $p < .05$), and subjective success ($\beta = .33$, $p < .001$).

We examined the significance of the indirect effects using bootstrapping (10,000 samples, 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Mentoring received had a significant standardized indirect effect through organizational knowledge on subjective success (.05, $p < .05$), approached significance for promotions (.03, $p < .10$) but had no indirect effect on income ($< .01$, *ns*). Such results provide support only for Hypothesis 6c. Proactive personality had significant standardized indirect effects, through mentoring received and organizational knowledge, on number of promotions (.11, $p < .01$) and subjective success (.15, $p < .01$), but was not significant for total income (.08, *ns*), providing support for Hypotheses 7a and 7c but not for 7b. Hypotheses 8a, 8b, and 8c were all supported as extroversion had significant standardized indirect effects, through mentoring received and organizational knowledge, on number of promotions (.13, $p < .01$), total income (.11, $p < .01$), and subjective success (.16, $p < .01$).

Finally, although we used objective verifiable outcomes, and the measurement model supported the discriminant validity of our measures, common method variance may have influenced our pattern of results. Thus, we examined an additional structural model that included a latent factor with paths to the indicators of each construct (i.e., a single unmeasured latent method factor, Podsakoff, MacKenzie,

Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Although the results were generally consistent, the direct path from extroversion to organizational knowledge and the indirect effect of mentoring received through organizational knowledge on subjective success only approached significance (i.e., $\alpha < .10$).

Discussion

We integrated components of the contest- and sponsored-mobility models (Turner, 1960), which are frequently seen as competing processes, and proposed a model explicating how extroversion and proactive personality, mentoring received, organizational knowledge, and career success are linked. Our study makes three contributions to the literature. First, we addressed calls to examine how personality is related to career success and found that extroversion and proactive personality were related to career success through mentoring received and organizational knowledge. Second, we found that organizational knowledge is one mechanism through which mentoring received is related to career success. Finally, our results fill a gap in the literature by providing insight into personality antecedents to mentoring received (Turban & Lee, 2007).

Our results were consistent with our theorizing that individuals high in proactive personality and extroversion would be more likely to seek mentoring and also would be perceived as more attractive potential protégés (e.g., Allen et al., 2004; Allen, Poteet, & Russell, 2000). Although we did not examine how personality leads to mentoring received, our results suggest that protégés can influence the amount of mentoring received (Aryee et al., 1999; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). We hope scholars continue to investigate how personality influences the attainment of resources that help employees succeed and examine other resources, beyond mentoring and organizational knowledge, that can be obtained with proactive behaviors.

Although evidence indicates that mentoring received is related to career success, we know little about the mechanisms for this relationship (Allen et al., 2004; Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007). We found that organizational knowledge partially mediated the relationship between mentoring received and career success. Although the mediation effect was relatively small, our results tentatively support the human capital model, which is one of five possible mechanisms through which mentoring provides benefits to protégés (Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007). We should note, however, that given the direct effect of mentoring on career success, there are other mechanisms beside organization knowledge through which mentoring influences career success. For example, perhaps mentors influence success by providing exposure and visibility to powerful others in the organization. In any case, we agree with Ramaswami and Dreher (2007) who noted that research is needed to examine how mentoring affects career success.

More broadly, we urge researchers to continue examining how mentoring influences protégé human capital. It is striking that although knowledge, especially tacit knowledge, is an important human capital resource, we know little about how developmental relationships facilitate learning (Noe et al., 2014). Nonetheless, much informal learning arises from interacting with others, suggesting the need for research examining how protégés learn from mentors. For example, perhaps coaching and assistance or role modeling provides protégés with insight into how best to interact with high-level executives. Furthermore, as mentoring is a mechanism for transferring knowledge, research might examine how mentoring enhances the learning for mentors as well as protégés (Noe et al., 2014).

Practical Implications

First, and consistent with considerable prior evidence (e.g., Allen et al., 2004; Ng et al., 2005), our results indicate that employees should pursue social resources (i.e., career and psychosocial assistance and organizational knowledge) to obtain greater career success. Specifically, employees should be encouraged to seek mentoring relationships and to establish developmental networks. Although

individuals high in extroversion and proactivity may be more likely to seek and receive such mentoring, employees lower in these traits may benefit from coaching and counseling focused on developing skills to help them establish mentoring and developmental relationships. Second, our results suggest that employees proactively attempt to learn the norms, values, and goals of the organization. Thus, employees (and future employees) should be given information and advice that helps them take responsibility for their own learning and development at work. Individuals need to understand the importance of developmental relationships and have the skills needed to develop such relationships.

Our results also suggest that organizations should utilize mentoring relationships to facilitate informal and personal learning of both mentors and protégés (Noe et al., 2014). For example, perhaps training programs can help mentors and protégés explicitly discuss what they want to learn from the other. More broadly, organizations can attempt to foster mentoring by cultivating a climate that encourages informal developmental relationships and continuous learning. In particular, organizations should attempt to develop a climate of psychological safety, which allows employees to take risks and ask questions without fear of recrimination, resulting in increased individual learning (Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

Limitations and Future Research

Despite these contributions, our study is not without limitations. One limitation is our reliance on surveys at a single point in time for data collection, which may result in common method variance (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Although we cannot discount the possibility of method variance influencing our results, it is unlikely to be an alternative explanation for the results, which included the objective and verifiable measure of the numbers of promotions and total income, which are considered relatively accurate measures of career attainment (Dreher, 1977; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). For example, Dreher (1977) found that self-reports of salary were strongly correlated ($r = .91$) with actual company records and Judge, Cable, Boudreau, and Bretz (1995) found less than a 1% difference between self-reported and archival measures of salary. Furthermore, our results were relatively consistent regardless of whether we included a latent method factor in the model.

Since we collected data at only one point in time, caution is needed when interpreting causal influences. Personality is relatively stable over time (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005; Maurer & Chapman, 2013), and thus it is unlikely that mentoring received and organizational knowledge influenced our personality variables. Nonetheless, future research could collect data longitudinally to examine whether and how personality influences career success. In addition, consistent with prior research, we measured mentoring received throughout one's career, whereas organizational knowledge was measured specific to the current organization. Although protégés can obtain knowledge from mentors outside of the organization, presumably only mentors inside the organization have first-hand knowledge of the organization's norms and values and how things really work in the organization. Thus, future research that measures mentoring received only in the current organization might find a stronger relationship of mentoring received with organizational knowledge and perhaps a stronger indirect effect of mentoring on career success.

Much of the research examining individual differences in mentoring research has focused on demographic characteristics such as gender, race, age, and nationality (Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). We agree with Wanberg, Welsh, and Hezlett (2003) who stated that research on protégé and mentor individual differences should be a research priority. We believe that our study provides additional evidence for the importance of personality in mentoring research and hope it serves as an impetus for more such research (Turban & Lee, 2007). For example, perhaps dispositional positive affectivity, through the broaden-and-build process (Fredrickson, 2001) allows individuals to develop greater resources at work that enhance their career success.

Although evidence indicates that happiness leads to success (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005), research is needed to examine mechanisms, such as developing mentoring opportunities, that explain this relationship.

In conclusion, we examined mechanisms through which extroversion and proactive personality are related to career success. Our results provide support for both the contest- and sponsored-mobility models as these personality characteristics were related to mentoring received, which in turn was related to organizational knowledge and career success. More broadly, our results provide additional insight into the precursors and outcomes of mentoring received. We hope our study will stimulate and encourage more research examining the effects of individual differences and learning in mentoring received and in career success.

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