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Proactive Personality Benefits: The Role of Work-Life Saliency, Career Encouragement, and Career Satisfaction

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PROACTIVE PERSONALITY BENEFITS: THE ROLE OF WORK-LIFE SALIENCE,
CAREER ENCOURAGEMENT, AND CAREER SATISFACTION

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Mariah N. Patterson

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ABSTRACT

PROACTIVE PERSONALITY BENEFITS: THE ROLE OF WORK-LIFE SALIENCE, CAREER ENCOURAGEMENT, AND CAREER SATISFACTION

by Mariah N. Patterson

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between employees' proactive behaviors in the workplace and their subsequent career satisfaction. In addition to the direct effects, career identity salience and career encouragement were explored as mediators and gender was explored as a moderator. Responses to an online survey from 1,388 employees were analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression modeling. Results showed that there was a strong direct relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction. The addition of career identity salience and career encouragement as mediators in the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction yielded significant results, while the addition of gender as a moderator in the relationship between proactivity and career encouragement did not produce significant results. It is concluded that career satisfaction is heavily influenced by the amount of encouragement an employee receives at work as well as the degree to which an employee has a balanced work and family life. Explanations and implications of these findings are discussed.

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Introduction

Over the past twenty years, organizations have shifted to become known as “boundaryless,” meaning that employees have less certainty of remaining at one organization for their entire careers and are more likely to hold a myriad of careers in a lifetime (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). The decentralization of organizations has led to increased pressure placed upon employees to take initiatives at work to meet the needs of the company (Kim, Hon, & Crant, 2009; Schmitt, Den Hartog, & Belschak, 2016; Van Dyne, Vandewalle, Kostova, Latham, & Cummings, 2000). With these changes, leadership began to view proactive behaviors as an essential function for employees to exhibit on the job (Ashford, Blatt, & Vandewalle, 2003; Frese & Fay, 2001). In response to organizational changes and demands from leadership, employees have increased their initiative-taking behaviors to secure their jobs, gain promotions, and help their organizations succeed (Frauenheimer, 2011; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999; Strauss, Griffin, Parker, & Mason, 2013).

As a result, the term “proactivity” has begun to receive more attention in organizations and literature. Proactivity is a construct in which employees emit initiative-type behaviors that, in turn, seek to benefit the organization in which they are employed (Crant, 2000; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006; Strauss, Griffin, Parker, & Mason, 2013). Current literature on this topic indicates that proactivity is positively related to many beneficial outcomes at the individual and organizational level (Crant,

2000; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999; Strauss & Parker, 2014). For instance, employees who exhibit proactive behaviors have been found to increase their organizational citizenship behaviors (Parker, 1998) and job performance (Crant, 1995). In addition, organizations with employees who exhibit more frequent proactive behaviors have been found to show increases in the overall leadership performance in the company (Crant & Bateman, 2000), higher profitability (Baer & Frese, 2003), and more organizational success (Strauss, Griffin, Parker, & Mason, 2015).

A recurrent theme in the proactivity literature is its positive link to career success (Crant, 2000; Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Career success refers to positive objective and subjective work-related outcomes experienced by an employee (Judge & Bretz, 1992). Objectively, career success is defined by the number of promotions or raises an employee receives, while subjectively, career success is defined by an employee's self-perceptions of how satisfied their careers make them feel (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). While the literature surrounding career success is growing, the research on career satisfaction, the subjective form of career success, is less abundant. Career satisfaction refers to the extent to which employees feel long-term contentment in their careers (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990).

There is a scarce amount of literature surrounding the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction, with even fewer studies investigating career satisfaction as an outcome of proactivity (Gevorkian, 2011; Kim, Hon, & Crant, 2009). The most notable research on this topic comes from Seibert, Kraimer, and Crant (2001),

who found that career satisfaction is an outcome of proactivity and that proactivity has positive outcomes for both the organization and the individual (Crant, 2000). The most recent literature on the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship has mostly focused on creativity (Kim, Hon, & Crant, 2009), race (Yap, Cukier, Holmes, & Hannan, 2010), career management behaviors (Barnett & Bradley, 2007), self-efficacy (Jawahar & Liu, 2016) and supervisor abuse (Jiang, Wang, & Lin, 2016). However, there are three main areas in which there is a lack of empirical research on the potential negative outcomes that may arise from proactivity in the workplace (Ashford & Black, 1996; Crant, 2000): career identity salience, career encouragement, and gender.

Career identity salience, defined as the extent to which one is career-focused rather than family-focused (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992; Lodahl & Kejner, 1965), is the first of the three areas in which there is a lack of empirical research on the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship. This study explores how employees aim to control their behaviors when faced with difficult or challenging situations (Bateman & Crant, 1993), or simply the degree to which the individual is involved in his or her job (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). For instance, would employees who are very involved in their careers find it easier to exhibit proactive behaviors compared to those who are more focused on their family life (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965)?

Career encouragement, defined as the amount of support given to an employee in his or her career (Morrison, White, & Von Velsor, 1987), is the second area in which there is a lack of empirical research on the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship. The present study explores how employees react when they either receive or are faced with a

lack of support and encouragement from others (Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994). For instance, would a lack of support from supervisors be extremely discouraging to proactive employees (Frese & Fay, 2001; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Grant, Parker, & Collins, 2009), thus decreasing their overall career satisfaction?

Gender is the third area in which there is a lack of empirical research on the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship. While there have been numerous studies on gender differences in the workplace, none have explored how gender affects the strength of the relationship between the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship. For instance, could proactive employees' satisfaction in their careers be influenced by their gender, as it has in previous studies with other demographic variables, such as race (Yap, Cukier, Holmes, & Hannan, 2010)?

The current study aims to investigate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction, specifically to address gaps in why and how the relationship between proactive personality and career satisfaction occurs. In the following sections, a review of the current literature surrounding proactivity, career satisfaction, career identity salience, career encouragement, and gender will be discussed. First, a discussion of the history and theory of Personal Control (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986) will assist in the conceptualization of proactivity. Second, following a similar pattern, career satisfaction will be discussed through the support of Holland's Vocational Theory (Holland, 1997). Third, career identity salience and career encouragement will be presented as two potential mediators in the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction.

Fourth, gender will be introduced as a potential moderator in the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction.

The primary contribution that this study makes to the literature is the examination of the mediating effects of career identity salience and career encouragement on the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction. Another key contribution of this study is the examination of the moderating effects of gender on the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction.

Proactivity Defined

Proactivity is understood to be a dynamic relationship (Bowers, 1973) in which individuals influence their environments to create change or alleviate problems (Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). The increase in research on proactivity is a result of organizational changes in which proactive employees became viewed as a structural necessity rather than as “nice-to-have” (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2007; Thomas, Whitman, Viswesvaran, 2010). Over time, several positive outcomes have been linked to proactivity, such as career adaptation (Wang, Zhang, Thomas, Yu, & Spitzmueller, 2017) and having an overall sense of positive job-related attitudes (Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010). Unassociated with the Big Five personality traits (Jawahar & Liu, 2015; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010), proactive personality is a unique construct that assists in predicting helping behaviors (Jawahar & Liu, 2015).

To understand why some employees attained more success in their careers than others, researchers have studied the underpinnings of proactive personality in the

workplace. Proactive personality is defined as the tendency to make meaningful personal change to achieve a desired outcome (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Grant & Ashford, 2008) and is one of the many components of “overall proactivity” (Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010).

When faced with challenging situations, a proactive employee attempts to control the environment by engaging in feedback-seeking behaviors (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Bateman & Crant, 1993; Greenberger & Strasser, 1986). Proactivity in organizational settings, in this instance, can be explained through Personal Control Theory (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986). Personal Control Theory reflects the beliefs in an individual’s ability to change the current environment. The underlying theory of personal control is the notion that an employee who can control his or her behaviors at work is a more satisfied and motivated employee (Deci, 1975). Unlike employees who react to situations as they arise, proactive employees anticipate and actively work towards a desired outcome or seek to remedy an outcome that is not ideal (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Parker, Bindl, & Stauss, 2010). Therefore, employees who tend to “persist in their attempts to restore a balance in their control perceptions, even when desired outcomes may not be attainable” (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986, p. 164), are considered proactive individuals. In addition, employees who frequently set goals and takes active steps to control their careers are more likely to hold positive job attitudes (Campbell, 2000).

Prior literature suggests that understanding personality is best based on a person-environment relationship (Buss & Finn, 1987) involving a person, environment, and their behaviors. The relationship refers to the extent to which a person and their environment

“fit” together (Caplan, 1987). For example, a person could actively seek to adapt to the environment they are in to achieve this fit, or they could actively seek out a new environment that better aligns with their needs (Zhu, Frese, & Li, 2014). As such, employees who engage in proactive behaviors are said to be predisposed towards the idea of actively controlling their environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). The stability of an employee’s tendency to act in a “foreactive” (i.e. proactive) rather than “counteractive” (i.e. passive) manner not only promotes positive outcomes for the employee, but for the organization as well (Bateman & Crant, 1993, p. 105). Therefore, in order for organizations to flourish, certain actions can be taken to reduce passive (i.e. counteractive) behaviors and increase proactivity (i.e. foreactive behaviors) at work (Bjorkelo, Einarsen, & Matthiesen, 2010).

Career Satisfaction Defined

Experts have suggested organizations will have greater success in connecting with external customers if they focus more on internal customers – their employees (McKinsey & Company, 2017). Increasing demand for organizations to review their pay and hiring practices allows for the re-introduction of the discussion of employees’ career satisfaction. Career satisfaction refers to the extent to which an employee is content with their career goals (Barnett & Bradley, 2007; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990) and the degree to which they agree with the culture and managerial relationships (Joo & Ready, 2012; Spurk, Abele, & Volmer, 2011). Career satisfaction is not defined by one’s rank at an organization, but rather the accumulation of positive work-related outcomes over time (Hall, 2002, Hall & Chandler, 2005, Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). Career

satisfaction has been found to be related to employee citizenship behaviors (Jawahar & Liu, 2015), customer satisfaction (Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes, 2002), employee engagement (Peluchette, 1993), career success (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988, 1989), and turnover intentions (Cramer, 1993).

With a plethora of positive outcomes associated with career satisfaction, the construct has also been theorized to be an indicator of perceived person-career fit (Holland, 1997; Sundstrom, Lounsbury, Gibson, & Huang, 2015). This notion stems from Holland's 1997 Vocational Theory which states that the fit between an employee's personality and the work environment determines whether the employee has a stable, performance-driven, and satisfied career (Holland, 1997; Sundstrom, Lounsbury, Gibson, & Huang, 2015). When an employee is faced with the opportunity to increase productivity and output, the ability to synchronize their behavioral tendencies to the job increases the likelihood of having a more satisfactory career in the long run (Lounsbury, Steel, Gibson, & Drost, 2008).

With the rise in "boundaryless" careers, researchers have examined how proactive and initiative-related behaviors directly relate to career satisfaction (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). But not only is there limited research investigating this direct relationship, there is even less known about the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction (Crant, 2000; Joo & Ready, 2012). This study will explore the degree to which an employee is proactive and the subsequent satisfaction in their career. Further, I propose that the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction is indirect meaning it is mediated by other constructs.

The Mediating Effect of Career Identity Salience

Career identity is defined as how people see themselves in their careers which acts as a, “cognitive compass used to navigate career opportunities” (Ngoma & Ntale, 2016, p. 128). Salience is the way in which a person adjusts perceptions based upon the environment (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986). Defining oneself as either a career-centered or family-centered individual on the job is the key component of career identity salience (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992; Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). Although the literature on career identity salience is limited, current research indicates this construct is gaining more traction. Career identity salience is important when examining employees’ effort expended at work as well as the opportunities for employees to receive raises and promotions (Lobel & St. Clair, 1992).

There is conflicting research on the relationship between career identity salience and career satisfaction. Early literature suggests that just because employees have salient career identity, they are not necessarily happy or satisfied with their jobs (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). In fact, there are many employees with salient career identities who are unhappy, even angry, in their current positions compared to those with more family-centered identities (Lobel & St. Clair, 1992; Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). More current research has indicated, however, that when career-salient employees recognize their environment, control their attitudes and behaviors, and set career goals, they are more likely to be focused on long-term career outcomes and are future-oriented (Parker & Collins, 2010). The ability to take control of the situation and engage in what is known

as a “future work self” can help employees increase their hope in the organization they work for and motivation within their careers (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012).

While the literature on the relationship between career identity salience and career satisfaction is not abundant, there is more research on the relationship between career identity salience and proactivity. Strauss, Griffin, and Parker (2012), proposed proactive personality is related to career identity salience, such that those who behave more proactively at work are considered to have higher career identity salience (Parker, Bindle, & Strauss, 2010). In addition, these researchers also found that when career salient employees are focused on future-oriented goals, they exhibit more proactive behaviors to ensure long-term change (Parker & Collins, 2010; Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012). Drawing on the theoretical foundation of Personal Control Theory, researchers have also found that employees with salient career identities have an increased desire to “expend extra effort at work” in order to overcome uncertainty and to specifically gain control in their environments (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992). Personal Control Theory suggests that individuals who believe in their ability to effect change will be more content employees (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986). Therefore, it makes sense that employees with a salient career identity are more inclined to engage in forward thinking, proactive behaviors which motivate themselves to effect a positive change in the workplace.

With all the research on career identity salience and its connection to both career satisfaction and proactivity, there has not been any research, to date, in which career identity salience is the proposed mediator of the proactivity-career satisfaction

relationship. It is possible that a more career-focused individual will choose to control their environment by engaging in more proactive behaviors at work in order to have a more satisfied career. With the current literature indicating the positive relationship between exhibiting proactive behaviors and a highly salient career identity (Ngoma & Ntale, 2016), in addition to the relationship between career salience and career satisfaction (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999), it makes sense to examine the gap that connects career identity salience and career satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is made:

Hypothesis 1: Career identity salience will mediate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction, such that higher amounts of proactive behaviors will be related to stronger career identity salience, which in turn will be associated with a higher sense of career satisfaction.

The Mediating Effect of Career Encouragement

Career encouragement refers to how much support employees are given to advance in their careers (Nikandrou, Panayotopoulou, & Apospori, 2008). Career encouragement is also when a supportive organizational climate influences an employee's success and performance (Morrison, White, & Von Velsor, 1987) and can be received through supervisors, peers, or other individuals (South, Markham, Bonjean, & Corder, 1987; Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994). Like career identity salience, the research on career encouragement is scarce, but has been steadily increasing because of organizational leaders taking initiatives to reach gender parity in pay and career advancement.

The research examining the relationship between career encouragement and career satisfaction has been growing. Prior research has indicated that when employees received career encouragement, they were more likely to advance in their careers (Tharenou, 2001). Nikandrou, Panayotopoulou, and Apospori (2008) suggested that career encouragement is one form of a mentorship-type process which can increase self-efficacy. The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT; 1986), developed as an adaptation to Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), seeks to explain how self-efficacy can motivate an individual to pursue a critical task (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). SCCT attempts to explain outcomes and variations in an employee's career development (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). Drawing on SCCT, the framework of encouragement in the organizational setting begins to make sense. For example, Nikandrou, Panayotopoulou, and Apospori (2008) found that when an employee received more encouragement at work, they experienced less work-family conflict and more self-confidence, which had a positive impact on their career satisfaction.

Most of the research on career encouragement has examined pathways to advancement (Morrison, White, & Von Velsor, 1987; Tharenou, 2001), training and development (Tharenou & Terry, 1998), or the quality of work life and career attitudes (Trau & Hartel, 2007). In each of these studies, when career encouragement was higher, there were more pathways to advancement, greater participation in training and development, and greater acknowledgement that contextual factors play a significant role in work and career attitudes. In addition, there has also been research on how increasing diversity and inclusion initiatives (McKinsey & Company, 2017) and enacting mentoring

relationships (Catalyst, 2017; Mazarolle, Burton, & Cotrufo, 2015) increases career encouragement. Each of these studies suggest that greater career encouragement leads to more positive outcomes, such as self-efficacy and career satisfaction, at the organization and individual levels.

While there are many studies that have examined the positive relationship between career encouragement and career satisfaction (Morrison, White, & Von Velsor, 1987; Nikandrou, Panayotopoulou, & Apospori, 2008), career encouragement and proactivity is a less researched area. For example, although researchers have found that a lack of support can lead to discouragement (Frese & Fay, 2001; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Grant, Parker, & Collins, 2009), there has been little research examining the long-term effects of career satisfaction on proactive employees. Ramus and Steger (2000) found that employees will engage in more creative and forward thinking when they perceive support and encouragement from others, but there has not been any research exploring how proactivity and career encouragement are related. From previous research it is understood that career encouragement has positive outcomes such as organizational commitment (Ramus & Steger, 2000) and managerial advancement (Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994), especially relating to career satisfaction. I propose that proactivity will be related to career satisfaction by the extent to which an employee receives encouragement at work. Therefore, the following hypothesis is made:

Hypothesis 2: Career encouragement will mediate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction, such that individuals that display proactive

behaviors will receive greater career encouragement, which will then lead to a higher sense of career satisfaction.

As both career identity salience and career encouragement have not been tested in the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship together, the current research study will use exploratory analysis involving both constructs. Career satisfaction is a common positive outcome between career identity salience and career encouragement. Therefore, I propose that both constructs would mediate the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship through a double mediation model. Therefore, the following hypothesis is made:

Hypothesis 3: Both career identity salience and career encouragement together will mediate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction.

The Moderating Effect of Gender

Research on the differences between men and women in the workplace is abundant. Though women are making strides within the workplace, the cultural expectation of childrearing tends to overshadow women's strengths at work (Armstrong, Riemenschneider, Nelms, & Reid, 2012). Women who have children, take time to raise their children, and then return to the workforce are more likely to experience the 'motherhood penalty' for taking time off from work to raise their family, whereas men face no such penalty (AAUW, 2016; Armstrong et al., 2012). Moreover, research indicates that men who have children tend to have higher salaries than women who have children (AAUW, 2016). When men who have children and women who have children

apply for leadership positions, companies are more likely to hire men than women (AAUW, 2016).

The literature surrounding gender differences and job satisfaction indicates that women may develop work-family conflict if they feel an organization is not being supportive (Luo, 2014), which can lead women to choose their home life and quit working altogether (Armstrong, Riemenschneider, Nelms, & Reid, 2012). Compared to men, women face greater work-role stressors such as feeling work exhaustion (burnout) and role conflict if the organization they work for is not forthright with women employees about certain expectations (Armstrong, et al., 2012). Staying late, coming in early, doing more around the office, or picking up more projects are examples of expectations, often considered to be “unwritten rules” (Armstrong et al., 2012; Evans, 2013). With the shift in organizational structure and the increased pressure to succeed, organizational leaders have recognized the inequality many women face and are starting to provide gender-friendly services at work (Kim, Hon, & Crant, 2009; McKinsey & Company, 2017). Research has shown that when men and women are in parity, social and economic benefits occur (McKinsey & Company, 2017).

The literature on gender acting as a moderator for various relationships is also abundant. For example, Pons, Ramos, and Ramos (2016) found that gender explained the relationship between the creation of new ideas and organizational commitment, such that the relationship between innovation and organizational commitment was strongest for women who received social support and weakest for men who received social support. The researchers also found that gender explained the relationship between job demands

and the promotion of new ideas, such that men produced more ideas with increased job demands than did women (Pons, Ramos, & Ramos, 2016). Other research has suggested that gender moderates the relationship between individual goals and aspirations and subsequent career success, such that men who have higher career aspirations will have greater career success compared to women (Dolan, Bejarno, & Tzafrir, 2011).

When examining previous literature regarding the relationship between proactive behaviors at work and career satisfaction, there is a lack of demographic variables such as gender being explored. Prior research on gender suggests that men tend to require less and perform more compared to women. For instance, Thomas, Whitman, and Viswesvaran (2010) suggested that gender and personal initiatives like proactive personality are related. Additionally, research has shown that men have greater career success than women (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Spurk, Meinecke, Kauffeld, & Volmer, 2015) and women have lower expectations regarding pay and advancement than men (Greenberg & McCarty, 1990). Contradicting Judge, Cable, Boudreau, and Bretz (1995), women have also been found to have higher career satisfaction than men (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). However, no prior research has examined gender as a moderator in the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship.

Due to the myriad of studies indicating that men have more success in their careers (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Lyness & Thompson, 2000; Spurk, Meinecke, Kauffeld, & Volmer, 2015) are more proactive (Lang & Zapf, 2015; Pons, Ramos, & Ramos, 2016), and have greater career aspirations (Dolan, Bejarno, & Tzafrir, 2011), it is

hypothesized that men will have higher career satisfaction when exhibiting more proactive behaviors compared to women. Therefore, the following hypothesis is made:

Hypothesis 4: Gender will moderate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction such that, the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction will be stronger for men and weaker for women.

Method

Participants

The 1,388 participants from this company comprised of 1,038 males (74.80%) and 346 females (24.90%). The ages of the participants ranged from 23 to 70, with about half of the sample (52.10%) between the ages of 40 and 50 years old. The majority of the participants were White (77.50%), 12.80% were Asian, 3.20 % were Hispanic/Latino, 2.50% were African American, .30% were Native American, and 3.20% identified as “Other.”

Measures

Proactive personality. Proactive personality refers to an employee’s efforts to initiate positive change in an environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Proactive personality was measured using a modified version of Bateman and Crant’s (1993) 17-item Proactive Personality Scale (PPS) created by Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer (1999). The modified version consisted of 10 items (see Appendix for the full listing of the items used in this study). Responses were recorded on a seven-point Likert-type scale (*1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Slightly Disagree, 4=Undecided, 5=Slightly Agree, 6=Agree, 7=Strongly Agree*) with items including, “I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others’ opposition” and “I am always looking for the better way to do things.”

To confirm that the PSS is unidimensional, an exploratory factor analysis utilizing principal component analysis was conducted on the 10 items measuring proactive personality (see Table 1). Varimax rotation and Kaiser normalization were used and

factors with eigenvalues of 1.0 or higher were retained. Analysis of the ten items loading onto a single factor explained 47.43% of the variance. Factor loadings and eigenvalues are displayed in Table 2. Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the PPS. In line with Bateman and Crant (1993), the scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$) with all ten items and the removal of any single item did not reveal an increase to the scale's reliability. Means were calculated for each of the ten items to create an employee's proactive personality score, in which higher scores indicated that the employee exhibited a more proactive personality at work.

Table 1

Factorial Analysis of Proactive Personality Items: Factor Loadings

Items		Factor Loadings
		1
7	I excel at identifying opportunities.	.778
10	I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.	.737
5	No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.	.735
9	If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.	.733
2	Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.	.721
6	I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.	.704
4	If I see something I don't like, I fix it.	.673
8	I am always looking for better ways to do things.	.648
3	Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.	.634
1	I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.	.476
Percent of Variance		47.43
Eigenvalue		4.74

Note. N=1338 Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax.

Total Variance = 47.43%

The scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$) and the removal of any single item did not reveal an increase to the scale's reliability. The mean of the ten items was calculated to create an employee's proactive personality score, in which higher scores indicated that the employee exhibited a more proactive personality at work.

Career satisfaction. Career satisfaction refers to the extent to which employees are content with their career over a long duration of time (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Lounsbury, Steel, Gibson, & Drost, 2008; Siebert & Kraimer, 2001). Career satisfaction was measured using a five-item scale developed by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). Example items included, "I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career" and "I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement." Participants responded to the items using a five-point Likert-type scale for measurement of career satisfaction for ease of participation (*1=Very Dissatisfied, 2=Dissatisfied, 3=Neutral, 4=Satisfied, 5=Very Satisfied*). Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the career identity salience scale, and the scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$). The mean of the five items was calculated to create a single score of the employee's career satisfaction in which high scores represented a greater sense of feeling satisfied in one's career.

Career identity salience. Career identity salience refers to the extent to which one defines oneself as career-minded or family-centered in relation to one's career (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992; Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). Career identity salience was measured using a five-item scale developed by Lobel and St. Clair (1992). The first

item was, “Select the response which best describes you and your day-to-day priorities” and participants responded using a five-point Likert-type scale (*1=I am primarily a family person, 2=I am a family and career person but lean a bit more towards family, 3=I am a career and family person, 4=I am a career and family person but lean a bit more towards career, 5=I am primarily a career person*). The last four items were adapted from Lodahl and Kejner (1965). An example item was, “The major satisfactions in my life come from my family.” Participants responded using a five-point Likert-type scale (*1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree*). Two items were reverse coded indicates a higher score meant a stronger career orientation. Cronbach’s alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the career identity salience scale. The scale demonstrated moderate internal consistency ($\alpha = .65$) and the removal of any single item did not increase the scale's reliability. The mean of the five items was calculated to create a single score of the employee’s career identity salience.

Career encouragement. The term career encouragement refers to the extent to which one is encouraged to pursue advancement in one’s career through supervisors, peers, or other individuals (Morrison, White, & Von Velsor, 1987; South, Markham, Bonjean, & Corder, 1987; Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994). Career encouragement was measured using a shortened three-item scale developed by South, Markham, Bonjean, and Corder (1987) cited in Tharenou, Latimer, and Conroy (1994). An example item was, “To what extent within your organization has a person more senior in position than yourself encouraged you in your career development (e.g., in promotion or advancement within your organization)?” Participants were asked to respond using a

seven-point rating scale for measurement of career encouragement for ease of participation (*1=Never, 2=Once, 3=Twice, 4=3 Times, 5=4 Times, 6=5 Times, 7=6 or More*). Cronbach's alpha was used to estimate the reliability of the career encouragement scale. The scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = .76$) and the removal of any single item did not reveal an increase to the scale's reliability. The mean of the three items was calculated to create a single score of the employee's career encouragement in which higher scores represented more encouragement.

Procedure

The data were collected from a technology company as part of a larger online survey that was administered in-house, in the southern region of the United States. Of the 6,467 employees who were sent the survey, 1,388 responded (21% response rate). Respondents received the online survey and were prompted to provide their consent in order to complete the survey.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

A summary of the means, standard deviations, and ranges for the primary variables predicting career satisfaction are listed in Table 2. The self-reported ratings of the respondents' proactivity were fairly high ($M = 5.37, SD = .75$). Respondents indicated only receiving encouragement to pursue career development or promotional opportunities fewer than two times in their current career on average ($M = 2.64, SD = 1.49$). The five items measuring career identity salience indicated a balance of career and family-focused ($M = 2.51, SD = .51$). Respondents' ratings of their overall career satisfaction were moderately high ($M = 3.30, SD = .74$).

Pearson Correlations

In Table 2, the correlations of the primary variables are listed. There was a significant, positive relationship between proactivity and the two mediated variables (career identity salience and career encouragement) as well as the outcome variable, career satisfaction. Proactivity had strong, positive relationships with both career identity salience ($r = .14, p < .01$) and encouragement received at work ($r = .18, p < .01$). The degree to which one is proactive in a work environment and the overall satisfaction with one's career were positively, albeit weakly, related ($r = .06, p < .05$).

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations among Studied Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Independent Variable							
1 Proactivity	5.37	.75	(.87)				
Mediators							
2 Career Identity Salience	2.51	.51	.14**	(.65)			
3 Career Encouragement	2.64	1.49	.18**	.04	(.76)		
Moderator							
4 Gender (0=Male, 1=Female)	-	-	-.03	-.02	.03	-	-.03
Dependent Variable							
5 Career Satisfaction	3.30	0.74	.06*	.03	.22**	-	(.85)

Note. Reliability coefficients are in parentheses along the diagonal, $n = 1338$. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The strongest relationship occurred between the mediator variable, career encouragement, and career satisfaction ($r = .22, p < .01$) indicating that employees who receive encouragement to advance or develop their careers will be more satisfied in the long-run. Therefore, the extent to which employees defined themselves in their career context and the extent to which they received encouragement to advance or develop their careers did not have a significant relationship. Gender did not have significant relationships with any of the other variables.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 stated that an employee's career identity salience would mediate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 stated that career encouragement would mediate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction. Similarly, Hypothesis 3 stated that both career identity and career encouragement would mediate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction. To test these hypotheses, mediation analyses were conducted as an exploratory analysis. Mediation variables improve the understanding of relationships by explaining how the predictor (independent variable) works indirectly through a direct cause (mediator) to transfer its effect onto the outcome (dependent variable) (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2013; MacKinnon, Fairchild & Fritz, 2007). Figure 1 shows the proposed mediation model.

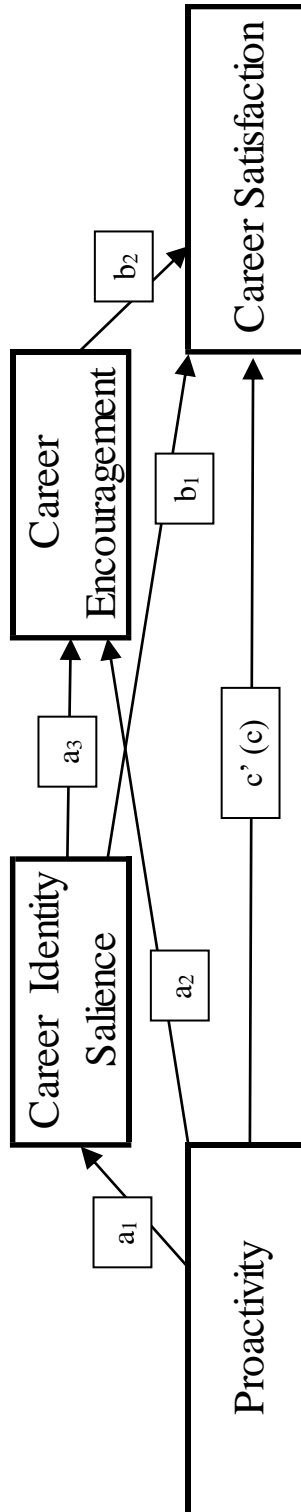


Figure 1. Diagram of proposed hypotheses.

To test for mediation, multiple regression analyses were conducted with the **MEDIATE** macro in SPSS. The **MEDIATE** macro is regarded as an efficient method for mediation due to its speed and greater statistical power compared to other earlier methods (e.g., Baron & Kenny) (Hayes & Preacher, 2014). The **MEDIATE** macro conducts analyses according to the four steps from the Baron and Kenny method and tests for the indirect effect through the Sobel test and the direct effect through bootstrapping (Hayes, 2013). To estimate the variability of the indirect coefficients (Path *ab*), bootstrapping was used to calculate the confidence interval of the direct effect (Hayes, 2013). Bootstrapping was utilized because it is regarded as one of the more powerful methods to obtain confidence limits (MacKinnon, Fairchild & Fritz, 2007; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). For this analysis, the bootstrapping confidence intervals were set at 95% with 10,000 bootstrap samples. A significant indirect effect (mediation) occurs when the value of zero for path *ab* does not fall within the confidence interval (Hayes, 2013; Hayes & Preacher, 2014).

Mediating effect of career identity salience. In step one of the mediation model, the regression of career satisfaction on proactivity (Path *c*), without the mediator of career identity, was significant, $\beta = .17$, $t(1385) = 10.98$, $p < .001$. In step two, the regression of proactivity on the mediator career identity (Path *a₁*) was also significant, $\beta = .14$, $t(1384) = 3.02$, $p < .001$. In step three of the mediation process, the mediator (career identity), controlling for proactivity, was significant (Path *b₁*), $\beta = .06$, $t(1385) = 2.32$, $p < .05$. In addition, proactivity was also found to no longer be significant when accounting for career identity in step two (Path *c'*), $\beta = .04$, $t(1384) = 1.38$, $p = .17$. A Sobel test was

conducted and full mediation was found ($z = 2.90, p = .004$). Using bootstrapping, the 95% confidence interval was .01 to .04 for the ab coefficient. It should be noted zero does not fall within the confidence interval. In summary, these analyses indicate that career identity fully mediated the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction.

Mediating effect of career encouragement. In step one of the mediation model, the regression of career satisfaction on proactivity (Path c), without the mediator of career encouragement, was significant, $\beta = .17, t(1382) = 6.62, p < .001$. In step two, the regression of proactivity on the mediator career encouragement (Path a_2) was also significant, $\beta = .10, t(1381) = 7.91, p < .001$. In step three of the mediation process, the mediator (career encouragement), controlling for proactivity, was significant (Path b_2), $\beta = .06, t(1382) = 2.36, p < .05$. In addition, proactivity was also found to no longer be a significant predictor when accounting for career encouragement in step two (Path c'), $\beta = .03, t(1382) = .98, p = .33$. A Sobel test was conducted and full mediation in the model was found ($z = 5.05, p = .001$). Using bootstrapping, the 95% confidence interval was .02 to .05 for the ab coefficient. It should be noted zero does not fall within the confidence interval. In summary, these analyses indicate that career encouragement fully mediated the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction.

Mediating effects of career identity salience and career encouragement. In step one of the mediation model, the regression of proactivity on career satisfaction (Path c), ignoring the mediators of both career identity (Path a_1), $\beta = .17, t(1382) = 10.96, p < .001$, and career encouragement (Path a_2), $\beta = .31, t(1381) = 5.63, p < .001$, was significant. In step two, the regression of proactivity on the mediator, career identity and

career encouragement, was also significant (Path a_3), $\beta = .24$, $t(1381) = 2.61$, $p < .01$. In addition, proactivity was also found to no longer be significant when accounting for career identity and career encouragement in step two, $\beta = .01$, $t(1380) = .28$, $p = .78$. In step three of the mediation process, the mediators (career identity and career encouragement), controlling for proactivity, were significant, $F(2, 1381) = 25.43$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .04$. In step four, the first mediator (career identity) significantly predicted career satisfaction (Path b_1), $\beta = .11$, $t(1380) = 2.48$, $p < .05$. Additionally, the second mediator (career encouragement) significantly predicted career satisfaction (Path b_2), $\beta = .10$, $t(1380) = 7.73$, $p < .001$. In step five, the overall relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction was significant (Path c), $\beta = .06$, $t(1382) = 2.40$, $p < .05$. A Sobel test was conducted and full mediation was found in the model ($z = 5.05$, $p = .001$). Using bootstrapping, the 95% confidence interval was .03 to .08 for the ab coefficient. It should be noted zero does not fall within the confidence interval. It was found that both career identity and career encouragement fully mediated the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction, and the indirect effects of proactivity on career satisfaction (.55) are the strongest for the career encouragement mediator. The results of all three analyses were significant, indicating both career identity and career encouragement fully mediate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction. Figure 2 shows the final model.

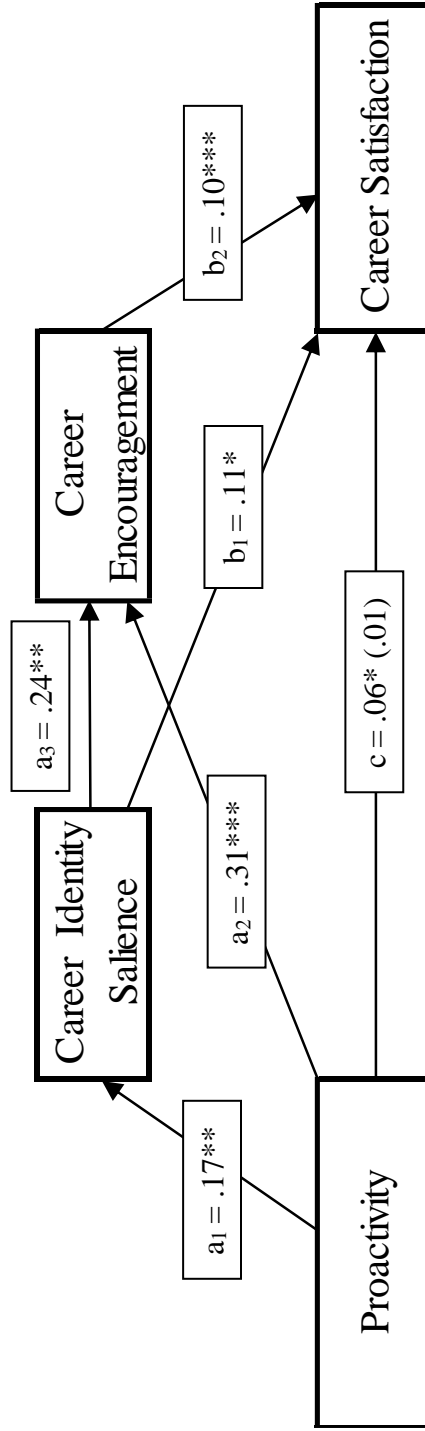


Figure 2. Mediation model for career satisfaction using career identity saliency and career encouragement as mediators and proactivity as a predictor.
 Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Moderating effect of gender. Hypothesis 4 proposed that gender would moderate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction, such that males who exhibit more proactive behaviors will have stronger career satisfaction and women who exhibit more proactive behaviors will have weaker career satisfaction. Figure 3 displays the proposed moderated role of gender for proactivity on career satisfaction.

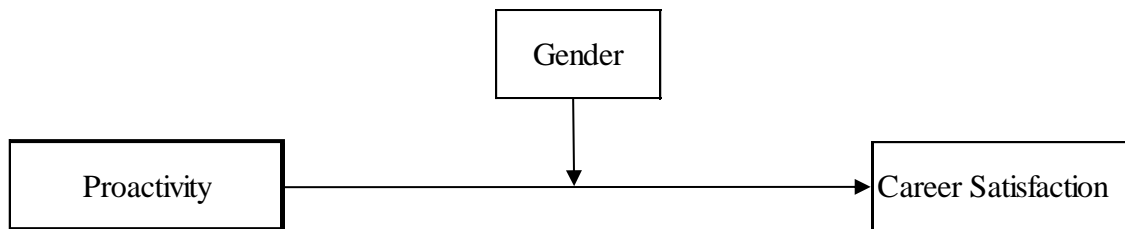


Figure 3 Diagram of proposed hypothesis.

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to test this hypothesis and examine the predictive value of gender, above and beyond proactivity (see Table 3).

Table 3
Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for the Moderating Effect of Gender

Predictor	Career Satisfaction		
	R^2	ΔR^2	β
Step 1: Proactivity	.0036*	.0036*	.06*
Gender			-.03
Step 2: Proactivity X Gender	.0045	.0009	.08

Note. * $p < .05$

To account for and reduce multicollinearity errors, all variables were mean-centered. The overall model was not significant, $R^2 = .0036$, $R^2_{adj} = .0023$, $F(3, 1379) = 2.06$, $p > .05$.

In step one, gender and proactivity were entered in the regression analysis. These two variables accounted for a significant amount of variance in career satisfaction, $R^2 = .0036$, $R^2_{adj} = .0029$, $F(2, 1380) = 3.01$, $p < .05$. From the results in the first step, proactivity ($\beta = .06$, $t = 2.23$, $p < .05$) was significant, thus indicating a direct relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction. Gender ($\beta = -.03$, $t = -1.02$, $p > .05$) was not significantly related to career satisfaction and did not add any predictive value to the relationship (see Table 3). Therefore, employees who exhibited more proactive behaviors at work were more satisfied in their careers compared to the employees who exhibited less proactive behaviors at work.

In step two, the interaction term between gender and proactive behaviors was added to the regression analysis. No significant incremental value was added from the cross product of gender and proactive behaviors on career satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .0009$, $\Delta F(1, 1379) = .16$, $p > .05$). This suggests that gender did not moderate the relationship

between proactive behaviors and career satisfaction, thus providing no support for Hypothesis 4.

Discussion

Overall Findings

The purpose of this study was to address the gaps surrounding the relationship between proactive personality and career satisfaction. As a result, this study provides valuable contributions to the current literature regarding what makes a career “successful.” At a general level, the results suggest that employees will feel the most satisfied in their careers when they engage in proactive behaviors and receive encouragement from others (whether it be from their peers, coworkers, or supervisors) while having a balanced identity salience (indicating they prioritize both their career and family commitments). Hypothesis 1 stated that an employee’s career identity salience would mediate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction. Hypothesis 2 stated that career encouragement would mediate the relationship between employee’s proactivity and career satisfaction. Hypothesis 3 stated that both career identity and career encouragement would mediate the relationship between employee’s proactivity and career satisfaction. These results fully support the first three hypotheses made in this study and support previous research (e.g. Lobel & St. Clair, 1992; Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012).

Hypothesis 4 stated that gender would moderate the relationship between proactivity and career satisfaction. Gender did not moderate the relationship between proactive personality and career satisfaction, indicating that the relationship between proactive personality and career satisfaction was similar for males and females. Gender does not directly influence any differences in predicting career satisfaction (Nyberg, Magnusson

Hanson, Leineweber, & Johansson, 2015). Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was not supported. This contradicts previous findings regarding the role gender plays in moderating relationships involving proactivity or career satisfaction (Ouyang, Lam, Wang, 2015; Zhu, Konrad, & Jiao, 2016).

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study makes three contributions. First, this study builds upon prior literature regarding the relationship between career satisfaction and career success through the concept of Holland's Vocational Theory (Holland, 1997). Holland's Vocational Theory helped explain how employees have more satisfied careers when there is alignment between the employee's personality and their work environment (Holland, 1997; Sundstrom, Lounsbury, Gibson, & Huang, 2015). Second, the concept of personal control (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986) was introduced to interpret the link between "boundaryless" careers and how employees increased their proactivity to improve their careers. In alignment with Personal Control Theory, the findings from this study indicate that proactive employees have much higher levels of career satisfaction when the organization they work for provides them with the ability to control their environment, they receive support from others, and they have the ability to utilize their resources. The mediation effect of career identity salience found in this study builds upon the research from Parker and Collins (2010), which found that career-salient employees who recognize and take control of their environments are more future-oriented employees, indicating the importance of theory of personal control in the workplace. Third, the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) helped explain how the career

development of employees can vary based upon the motivation of the individual (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). The mediation effect of career encouragement found in this study builds upon the research from Nikandrou, Panayotopoulou, and Apospori (2008), which found that employees experience more self-confidence when they receive more encouragement at work, indicating the importance of an employee receiving encouragement in order to advance in his or her career.

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the results of this study have strong implications for identifying predictors to career success. Previous literature has investigated the role that proactive personalities play in an individuals' career satisfaction (Jawahar & Liu, 2015; Lounsbury, Moffitt, Gibson, Drost, & Stevens, 2007), and what the most common predictors to career success are (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). However, relatively little research has explored why certain individuals with proactive personalities are more satisfied in their careers based upon the support and encouragement they receive at work (Morrison, White, & Von Velsor, 1987) and their motivated attitudes and behaviors in support of either a career-centered or family-centered identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Leondari, Syngollitou, & Kiosseoglou, 1998).

To utilize the findings in this study in the workplace, organizations can in turn take three proactive actions. First, organizations can expend more time hiring employees who align with the company philosophy. This can be done by utilizing personality indices in order to hire more proactive rather than reactive employees. Second, creating a climate that is supportive towards all employees would help employees feel encouraged to

advance in their careers. Third, organizations can take steps toward becoming a more work-life balance-friendly work environment.

Strengths of the Study

This study had multiple strengths, one of which included the demographics of the participants. Over 50% of the participants were between the ages of 40 and 50 years old, suggesting that the employees were well into their careers. Further, these employees were all full-time workers. In addition, with over 6,000 employees invited to participate, a large number of them (1,388) completed the survey.

Another strength of this study was related to the survey inventories used. All four survey scales (i.e., career identity salience, career encouragement, career satisfaction, and the proactive personality scale) had high reliability. Not only was the Proactive Personality Scale the most reliable of the four inventories, but it also reaffirmed the strength of the measure that was originally constructed from Siebert, Crant, and Kraimer (1990).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As with most research, the present study had a few limitations. While examining the demographic results, four limitations became apparent. One limitation was the fact that over 75% of the participants identified themselves as White. In accordance with previous research (e.g. such as Emmerik, Euwema, Geschiere, & Schouten, 2006; Yap, Cukier, Holmes, & Hannan, 2010), a more diverse mix of ethnicities would be ideal as White employees tend to be more satisfied in their careers compared to minorities (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Yap, Cukier, Holmes, & Hannan, 2010). Previous

research even indicates that minorities tend to have less than ideal satisfaction in their careers overall (Yap, Cukier, Holmes, & Hannan, 2010). Therefore, it would be beneficial for future researchers to sample a more diverse mix of working individuals as well as investigate ethnicity as a potential moderator in the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship.

As the sample came from an information technology company, it is less surprising that there were nearly three times as many male participants compared to females. Though gender was not supported as a moderator for the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship in this study, the addition of more women could potentially alter these findings. Future research should aim to achieve a more balanced mix of male and female respondents.

Although the results from this study are beneficial for technology-based companies located in the southern region of the United States, the results are not generalizable. As identity salience was a key construct in this study, perhaps the region in which an employee resides could vastly influence the views and beliefs about work and family balance. The industry an employee works in could also greatly influence his or her identity salience as some jobs simply demand more time and energy at work than others. Therefore, future research should consider surveying not only multiple regions within the United States, but also other countries and study other industries like the life sciences, sales, or retail to achieve more generalizable results.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to understand the relationship between employees demonstrating proactive behaviors in the workplace and their resultant satisfaction in their overall careers. Career identity salience and career encouragement were potential mediators and gender was a potential moderator explored in this study. The overall findings indicate that career satisfaction is heavily influenced by the amount of encouragement an employee receives at work from colleagues, supervisors, and others. Career satisfaction was found to be influenced by the identity salience of the employee, such that employees with a balanced work and family life tend to have a more satisfactory career. Additionally, the results indicate that gender does not moderate the proactivity-career satisfaction relationship. This unsupported finding can be viewed as a positive for organizations, because it suggests that both genders who are proactive will experience similar career satisfaction outcomes. Male and female workers may have differing reasons to be proactive in the workplace, which are heavily dependent and subjective to an employees' ultimate career goals.

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Appendix

Survey Items

Career Encouragement (Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy, 1994)

1. To what extent within your organization has a person more senior in position than yourself encouraged you in your career development (e.g., in promotion or advancement within your organization)?
2. To what extent within your organization have colleagues at the same level as yourself encouraged you in your career development (e.g., in promotion or advancement within your organization)?
3. To what extent within your organization have you been encouraged by others to apply for, or express interest in, promotion when opportunities become available?

Career Identity Salience (Lobel & St. Clair, 1992)

1. Select the response which best describes you and your day-to-day priorities: I am primarily a family person; I am a family and career person but lean a bit more towards family; I am a career and family person; I am a career and family person but lean a bit more towards career; I am primarily a career person.
2. The major satisfactions from my life come from my family.
3. The major satisfactions from my life come from my job.
4. The most important things that happen to me involve my family.
5. The most important things that happen to me involve my job.

Career Satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley, 1990)

1. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.
2. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals.
3. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income.
4. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.
5. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.

Proactive Personality Scale (Siebert, Crant, Kraimer, 1999)

1. I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.
2. Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.
3. Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.

4. If I see something I don't like, I fix it.
5. No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.
6. I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.
7. I excel at identifying opportunities.
8. I am always looking for better ways to do things.
9. If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.
10. I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.