

**SEX DIFFERENCES IN MANAGERS'
EXPLANATIONS FOR CAREER
PROGRESS: A TEST OF SOCIAL
ROLE THEORY**

Glenice J. Wood & Margaret Lindorff

*Working Paper 10/00
February 2000*

Abstract

This study tested the prediction that there will be sex differences in how middle managers perceive promotion requirements, and that such differences will be influenced by societal expectations of gender appropriateness in which women are expected to display communal (nurturing, interpersonally sensitive) and men agentic (independent, assertive and ambitious) qualities and behaviour. Results from 351 male and 156 female managers indicated that sex does not strongly influence the belief that every manager receives the same opportunities for advancement. However, there were sex differences in the reasons given for unequal career advancement, personal career progress, achievement of the last promotion received, and why a future promotion may not occur. Additionally, although male and female managers have similar aspirations to obtain a senior management position, women are less likely to expect a promotion. The results partially support the predictions of Social-Role theory.

SEX DIFFERENCES IN MANAGERS' EXPLANATIONS FOR CAREER PROGRESS: A TEST OF SOCIAL ROLE THEORY

Over the last two decades, a considerable amount of research has focused on the career progress of women in organisations. It has been claimed that attitudinal, behavioural, and structural barriers that hinder career advancement for many women existed (Adler & Izraeli, 1988), and persist today (Still, 1997). Although women are now graduating in higher numbers than men from educational institutions (Fagenson & Jackson, 1994) and more women are entering the paid workforce (Hind & Baruch, 1997) and taking up managerial roles (Parker & Fagenson, 1994), the poor representation of women at senior management level continues. For example, in America women fill less than 5% of top management positions (Aguinis & Adams, 1998), in England the figure is estimated to be less than 4% (Davidson, 1996) and in Australia the figure is approximately 3% (Uren, 1999). It appears that sex differences exist in promotions to senior management, and this occurrence is noted worldwide.

Two major theoretical perspectives have been proposed to explain this phenomenon. Firstly, the gender-centered perspective postulates that intrinsic differences between men and women account for the differences in the number of men and women in senior management. For example, Morrison and van Glinow (1990) suggest "women's traits, behaviours, attitudes, and socialization are said to make them inappropriate or deficient as managers" (p.201). Alternatively, the situation or organisational structure perspective states that organisational factors, such as holding positions of limited power, affect women's behaviour. Such behavioural differences then reduce women's chances of career advancement (Parker & Fagenson, 1994). However, research has not provided categorical support for either explanation. There is little evidence of gender-based deficits in skills, abilities and application of a magnitude that would account for women's relatively poor career progress (Hind & Baruch, 1997). Similarly, research into organisational factors such as environment and culture has not entirely supported the organisational structure perspective (Aguinis & Adams, 1998). There is thus a need for alternative explanations for the differences in the number of men and women in senior management.

One explanation is that men and women have different beliefs, attitudes and values, and that these affect their promotion-seeking behaviour. Sex differences have been reported in personality traits (Feingold, 1994), aggressive behaviour (Eagly & Karau, 1991), and cognitive abilities (Feingold, 1993). Sex differences have also been reported in perceptions of organisational opportunities (Reynolds & Associates, 1990), intraorganisational communication, organisational support (Amason & Allen, 1997), and evaluations of performance appraisal (Hind & Baruch, 1997).

There may also be sex differences in perceptions of the requirements for promotion. Such perceptual differences may influence promotion-seeking behaviour, as the behaviour of individuals seeking promotion is likely to be affected by their perceptions of promotion requirements. To illustrate, a person is unlikely to apply for promotion if she or he believes that a certain level of experience or education is required, and if she or he does not have these qualifications. Thus women and men may have different promotion-seeking behaviours if they differ in their perceptions of development issues and promotion requirements. Furthermore, their different promotion-seeking behaviour may be differentially rewarded by organisations.

In addition, women and men may differ in their perceptions of opportunities for advancement, their attributions for past career progress and the reasons for a promotion, their expectations of, and aspirations to, obtain a senior management position, and their explanations for why promotions may not be achieved. Differences in the attributions for career progress and explanations for why a promotion may not be received may play a role in future promotion-seeking behaviour, and may go some way toward explaining sex differences in management achievement. Therefore the process of self-selection, which is in part based on the individual's perceptions of the requirements for promotion, may partly explain the different career advancement rates of men and women. However, this area has not received research attention. This study therefore uses social-role theory to test the prediction that there are sex differences in how middle managers perceive aspects of management progression.

SOCIAL-ROLE THEORY

Social-role theory (Eagly, 1987) proposes that women and men fill certain gender and social roles, and that their beliefs and behaviour will be dictated by the stereotypes that are attached to these roles (Franke, Crown & Spake, 1997). These gender roles are formed in part through shared societal expectations about how individuals of each sex should behave, and the qualities they should possess (Eagly, 1987). Women are believed to manifest communal type beliefs and behaviours such as caring and nurturing, interpersonal sensitivity, and emotional expressiveness (Eagly & Wood, 1991). This may be manifested as concern with others' wellbeing, a selfless attitude, and enjoyment at working closely with others (Eagly, 1987). Such communal behaviours exemplify interdependence, co-operation, an emphasis on relationships, and an acceptance of change (Marshall, 1984). On the other hand, men are believed to manifest agentic type beliefs and behaviours, such as ambition, assertion, control, and independence from other people. These behaviours may be characterised by the urge to master others, and a desire for self-expansion (Bakan, 1966). Agentic behaviours therefore exemplify independence, assertion, mastery and change-resistance (Marshall, 1984). Social-role theory suggests that the stereotypes attached to gender roles create different expectations of, and socialisation experiences for, males and females, and that these then lead to differences in attitudes and behaviour. Such differences may occur in relation to the career progress issues mentioned above. The following section examines the evidence for this.

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS RELATING TO CAREER PROGRESS

Perceptions of Opportunities for Advancement

Social-role theory suggests that the socialisation of women may leave them with a perception that they have fewer opportunities than men for advancement to senior levels of management. Some empirical evidence supports this theory. For example, women managers report that lack of career development opportunities have created problems in their careers (Rosen, Miguel & Peirce, 1989). They also perceive that they have fewer opportunities than men for promotion to senior management (Parker & Fagenson, 1994). Additionally, two-thirds of women executives surveyed by Reynolds and Associates (1990) said they were not actively encouraged to participate in career development activities. In contrast, 75% of men in the same study believed that women executives were actively encouraged to participate in such activities. Lack of career development opportunities has also been cited as a problem encountered by Australian managerial women (Smith, Crowley & Hutchinson, 1993). Thus it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 1: Fewer women than men will perceive that all middle managers get the same organisational opportunities for advancement.

Hypothesis 2: There will be sex differences in the explanations given for unequal advancement.

Attributions for own Career Progress

Social-role theory predicts that the communal tendencies of women will influence them to act in a nurturing, participative team style when working with others. It may be therefore that women who achieve success in their management careers attribute this to such behaviour. Conversely, it is predicted that the agentic tendencies of men will influence them to act in ambitious, assertive and independent ways, and hence men may attribute their success to these styles of behaviour. Some evidence supports these differences. For example, twice as many female managers as male colleagues report enthusiasm, mentors and luck as contributing to their present success (Pringle & Goyma, 1989). Additionally, there is evidence that women believe that career encouragement furthers their advancement, whereas men attribute it to education and work experience (Tharenou, Latimer & Conroy, 1994). In addition, it has been reported that both men and women believe that gender is a factor in decisions regarding personnel selection (Hede & Dingsdad, 1994), and that women's lack of self-confidence has held them back (Still, 1993).

Hypothesis 3: There will be sex differences in the attributions made by managers for their own career progress.

Attributions for Achievement of Last Promotion

Social-role theory suggests that the expectations that women will exhibit communal qualities and men agentic qualities (Eagly, 1987) may influence a person's attributions relating to previous promotion success. Congruent with this, it has been found that women perceive that opportunity to act in a position (Still, 1997), hard work, industriousness, and being task-oriented (Still, 1996) are important factors in senior management promotions. Past performance and networks are also considered important (Gold & Pringle, 1988). This suggests a communal tendency for interdependence and co-operation and enjoyment at working closely with others. In contrast, male managers perceive that education is a more important factor in senior management promotion (Still, 1997). Furthermore, more men than women believe that a willingness to be mobile is an influential factor in gaining promotion (Gold & Pringle, 1988). These attributions suggest agentic tendencies, such as a desire for self-expansion and independent behaviour. In summary, there appear to be some communal and agentic gender role influences in the factors identified as facilitating promotion.

Hypothesis 4: There will be sex differences in the reasons given for the last promotion achieved. Women will give communal-based attributions, and men will give agentic attributions.

Aspirations to Obtain a Senior Management Position

Social-role theory suggests women will be less likely than men to aspire to a senior management position. This is due to the gender incongruence that occurs when women depart from their normative nurturing and caring roles to take up managerial positions. Empirical research supports this view that management roles are seen as male domains (e.g., Orser, 1994; Schein & Mueller, 1992; Schein, 1994). Research also suggests sex differences in career aspirations. Women appear to have a tendency to accept a job rather than seek a career (Still, 1993), and are more likely to enter "...service areas which 'satisfices' their career aspirations, but does not 'maximise' them" (Still, 1993, p.86). Additionally, some research indicates that female managers are less likely than their male counterparts to aspire to a position in senior management (Hede & Ralston, 1993).

Hypothesis 5: More male managers than female managers will aspire to a senior management position.

Expectations of Obtaining a Senior Management Position

According to social-role theory, people have a tendency to prefer occupations that favour qualities thought to be typical of their own gender (Cejka & Eagly, 1999). As managerial occupations may require women to exhibit male-stereotypic qualities (Cejka & Eagly, 1999) women may theoretically have less expectation than men of their ability to exhibit these qualities, and thus to obtain such positions. This explains the finding that women are less likely than their male colleagues to expect an executive position prior to retirement (Hede & Ralston, 1993).

In addition, it has been found that age has a negative influence on expectations and achievement of promotion (Fielden & Davidson, 1999; Tolbert & Moen, 1998). Similarly, it is expected that length of time in a position will be negatively associated with a belief that promotions will be achieved. As women managers, on average, are younger and less experienced than their male colleagues (Hersch & Viscusi, 1996) tests for sex differences in expectations need to control for age and length of time in a position.

Hypothesis 6: Fewer female managers than male managers will expect to obtain a senior management position when age and length of time in middle management are controlled.

Explanations for Why a Promotion May Not be Achieved

Social-role theory predicts that gender-specific socialisation experiences may influence an individual's explanations for why she or he has not achieved a promotion. There is evidence that women feel they are often unfairly by-passed for promotions, and one reason given is that older men in the organisation would not want to report to a woman (Bellamy & Ramsay, 1994). The absence of opportunity for advancement that

this creates, and a perceived male-dominated culture (Sinclair, 1994) are also given by some women as the reasons for their resignation from management roles in organisations (Marshall, 1984; Stroh & Senner, 1994). In contrast, there is evidence that male managers believe that their own attitude to work has hindered their personal success (Pringle & Goyma, 1989).

Hypothesis 7: There will be sex differences in the explanations given for why a possible future promotion may not be achieved.

METHOD

Sample and Procedures

Copies of the survey instrument were sent to 24 organisations in each of the 11 Australian industry classifications (ABS, 1996). These surveys were distributed to 1150 middle managers within these organisations. Five hundred and seven middle managers (351 men and 156 women) completed and returned the questionnaires. This was a response rate of 44%. Middle managers were defined as managers who implemented senior management policies, and were responsible for the work of lower-level managers (Wentling, 1996).

Details of the sample are given in Table I. A significant proportion of female managers (57%) were younger than the male managers (25%), whereas a greater proportion of male managers were between the ages of 50-64 (16%) compared to female managers (5%) ($\chi^2 = 53.100$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). In addition, fewer female managers were either living in a couple relationship or supported dependent children at home.

Table I.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample by sex.

	Male (n = 351)	Female (n = 156)	Total (n=507)	χ^2	df
Age:					
34 and under	25%	57%	35%		
35-49	59%	38%	53%		
50-64	16%	5%	13%	53.10***	2
Highest level of Education:					
University degree	50%	52%	51%	ns	4
Living in a couple relationship	89%	66%	82%	41.19***	2
Dependent children at home	66%	21%	52%	85.41***	1

*** $p < .001$

MEASURES

The results of this study are taken from part of a larger survey into managers' attitudes towards promotion. Measures relating to this study are outlined below.

Perceptions of Opportunities for Advancement

Based on Reynolds and Associates (1990), respondents were asked if they felt all middle managers in their organisation had the same opportunity for advancement. Responses were categorical (Yes, $n = 204$; or No, $n = 282$).

Explanations for Advancement

Respondents were then asked "If no, who gets the opportunities, who doesn't, and why?" Of the 282 managers who reported that there were inequalities in advancement opportunity by sex, 211 respondents expanded on this question. Their responses were coded into seven themes. These were:

It's who you know ($n = 91$). For example, "Unfortunately, there seems to be an underlying attitude of 'jobs for the boys' in my organisation. Many positions especially senior ones, are not advertised and are given to 'mates' thereby making it very difficult to achieve more senior executive positions".

Depends on the area of management you are in (or geographic location) ($n = 48$). For example, "Opportunities can be affected by geography - those closer to Head Office seem to have more chance to be noticed. Middle managers in bigger cities get all the opportunities," and "Not all middle manager positions give the same opportunity to demonstrate capabilities. The focus is on production managing rather than support functions".

You have to be in the right place at the right time ($n = 8$). For example, "There is some element of right place at the right time," and "It's a matter of timing, being at the right place at the right time".

Bias and discrimination ($n = 18$). For example, "Specific males are chosen and subsequently trained for better positions. Generally, females don't seem to be offered same training opportunities," and "Like most large companies, men are often chosen over women of similar performance levels".

Personal style is important, not merit ($n = 14$). For example, "There is a preferred personal style that appears more important than performance," and "Opportunities given to those whose style fits more closely with the style of general managers...".

Political know-how ($n = 17$). For example, "Depends on political orientation, time in business, sex, age and how good at playing the game you are," and "Some opportunities are given to those with the strongest political links, as opposed to the appropriate skills and qualifications".

Inappropriate selection/recruitment policies ($n = 15$). For example, "We tend to promote those like us, i.e. male, heterosexual, married, children, white, western...".

Career Progress Attributions

Attributions for career progress were assessed by asking respondents to "Please indicate how important the following factors have been in developing your career to date". A 5-point response scale (1 = hindered a lot to 5 = helped a lot) was provided. The 14 items were drawn from previous research into career development. They were political awareness (Mainiero, 1994), doing the job well (Marshall, 1984; Reynolds & Associates, 1990), being a team player (Kakabadse & Margerison, 1987), determination to succeed (Still, 1993; Sinclair, 1994), communication skills (Ruderman et al., 1995), integrity, (Kisch & Ryan, 1991), self confidence (Snyder, 1993), role models (Gold & Pringle, 1988), stereotyping (Bellamy & Ramsay, 1994), parental role, ability to relocate (Davidson & Cooper, 1992), gender (Hede & Dingsdad, 1994), formal organisational policies, and informal organisational policies (Stewart & Gunykunst, 1982). A principal factor analysis with

varimax rotation was performed on the items. However, as the component transformation matrix indicated some degree of correlation between two of the factors, an oblique rotation was carried out. The four-factor solution was the most interpretable. The factors were:

Personal qualities (6 items). Consisted of doing the job well, being a team player, determination to succeed, communication skills, integrity and self confidence. Cronbach alpha = .74.

Gender-based policies (4 items). Consisted of stereotyping, gender, formal organisational policies, and informal organisational policies. Cronbach alpha = .60.

Social Network resources (3 items) Consisted of parental role, ability to relocate, and role models. Cronbach alpha = .44.

Political awareness (single item).

The three multi-item career progress variables were obtained by calculating the mean of responses in the appropriate factor.

Attributions for Achievement of Last Promotion

Attributions for achievement of last promotion were assessed by asking respondents to "Please indicate how important a role the following factors played in your last promotion". A 5-point response scale was provided (1 = Very unimportant, to 5 = Very important). Items for this question were drawn from previous research into explanations for promotion achievement. They were: strategic vision (Reynolds & Associates, 1990), years of experience (Stroh *et al.*, 1992), range of experience (Kakabadse & Margerison, 1987; Still, 1993), personality (Davidson & Cooper, 1992), potential for development (Ruderman *et al.*, 1995), mentoring relationship (Pringle & Goyma, 1989; Reynolds & Associates, 1990), educational qualifications (Still, 1990), specific training (Tharenou *et al.*, 1994), gender (Hede & Dingsdad, 1994), luck (Pringle & Goyma, 1989), industriousness, and success in a previous project (Reynolds & Associates, 1990).

A principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the 12 items. As the component transformation matrix indicated a relatively high correlation between some factors, an oblique rotation was then performed. Based on scree tests and extracting variables with loadings higher than .5, the following factors emerged.

Experience (2 items). Consisted of years of experience and range of experience. Cronbach alpha = .61.

Individual qualities (3 items). Consisted of potential for development, personality, and presence of a mentoring relationship. Cronbach alpha = .46. Qualifications (2 items). Consisted of qualifications and specific training. Cronbach alpha = .51.

The Strategic Vision, Gender, Luck, Industriousness, and Success due to previous project variables each consisted of a single item. The three multi-item variables were obtained by obtaining the mean of items in the appropriate factor.

Aspirations to Obtain a Senior Management Position

The promotion aspirations measure was a single question based on Hede and Ralston (1993). Respondents were asked: "Do you want to obtain a senior management position during your managerial career"? A categorical Yes/No answer was required. (Yes, $n = 397$; No, $n = 94$).

Length of time in management

Based upon Stroh *et al.* (1992), respondents were asked: "How long have you been in your present [management] position in this organisation?" Responses were rounded to the closest year.

Expectations of Obtaining a Senior Management Position

The promotion expectations measure was a single question based on Hede and Ralston (1993). Respondents were asked: "How confident are you that this [promotion] will happen?" A 5-point response scale was provided (1 = Not confident, to 5 = Very Confident).

Explanations for Why a Promotion May Not be Achieved

Respondents were then asked to describe "If such a promotion is not received, why do you think this will be?" Three hundred and sixty two responses were given. They were content analysed into six categories:

These were:

Politics (n = 36). For example, "Because I'm not one of the boys. Jobs being advertised internally is a joke. In most instances people are chosen prior to job being advertised. This has happened to me several times!".

Personal inadequacy (n = 128). For example, "(I have) insufficient tertiary qualifications," and "Company want younger people with very high educational qualifications".

No opportunities (n = 95). For example, "Change in the structure of the organisation," and "Continual downward pressure to reduce staff numbers".

Not interested (n = 63). For example, "Personal choice not to drive for the opportunity," and "Will move into my own business".

Family reasons (n = 25). For example, "Currently pregnant, wanting to wait a few years," and "Because I have made a conscious decision to spend more time with my wife and children, and less time/commitment to work".

Negative Stereotyping (n = 15). For example, "Even if women still prove they want promotion after having children, employers (even with EEO policies) do not promote them," and "Part-time women are not seriously considered for promotions to senior ranks".

RESULTS

Perceptions of Opportunities for Advancement

Hypothesis 1 predicted that fewer women than men will perceive that all middle managers get the same organisational opportunities for advancement. A chi-squared test compared the percentages of male (45%) and female (36%) managers who believed that there was equal opportunity. There was no significant difference by sex ($\chi^2 = 3.31$, $p = ns$). Hypothesis 1 was therefore not supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that there will be sex differences in the explanations given for unequal advancement. A χ^2 test compared the percentage of males and females who provided each explanation. Males and females differed on the reasons they gave for unequal opportunities ($\chi^2 = 10.18$, $df = 4$, $p < .05$). Of those who responded to this question, more female managers (68%) than male managers (54%) believed who you knew was an explanation. More females (13%) than males (6%) also believed that bias and discrimination were important. In contrast, more male (26%) than female (16%) managers believed that it depends on the area of management, that style is important, not merit (9% compared to 3%), and that not being in the right place at the right time (5% compared to 1%) were the reasons for unequal advancement. Hypothesis 2 was therefore supported.

Attributions for Own Career Progress

Hypothesis 3 predicted that there would be sex differences in the attributions made by managers for their own career progress. A discriminant analysis tested for the ability of the career progress attributions to separate male and female managers (Table II). A significant sex difference was found for personal qualities (Wilks' Lambda = .975, $p < .001$) and gender-based policies (Wilks' Lambda = .946, $p < .001$). Females were stronger on the belief that gender-based policies had hindered their careers (male $M = 3.06$, female $M = 2.79$), and that personal qualities had helped their careers (female $M = 4.43$, male $M = 4.27$). The discriminating equation was able to correctly classify 64% of the sample. Hypothesis 3 was therefore accepted.

Table II.

Discriminant analysis of attributions for own career progress by sex.

Attribution for career progress	Standardised discriminant co-efficient
Gender based Policies	.869
Personal qualities	-.664
Political awareness	.026
Social network resources	.000

Attributions for Achievement of Last Promotion

Hypothesis 4 proposed that there will be sex differences in the reasons given for the last promotion achieved, and that women will give communal attributions, and men will give agentic attributions. A discriminant analysis tested the ability of attributions for achievement of last promotion to separate the male and female managers (Table III). A significant difference was found between male and females on two reasons. These were experience (Wilks Lambda = .984, $p < .05$) and individual qualities (Wilks Lambda = .976, $p < .001$). The discriminating equation was able to correctly classify 59% of respondents.

Table III.

Discriminant analysis of attributions for achievement of last promotion by sex.

Attributions for achievement of last promotion	Standardized discriminant Coefficient.
Individual qualities	.763
Experience	.423
Strategic vision	.401
Industriousness	-.390
Gender	.361
Luck	.120
Qualifications	-.067
Past success	-.019

Females were stronger on the belief that individual qualities played an important part in their last promotion (female \bar{M} = 3.80, male \bar{M} = 3.58). In contrast, male managers were more likely to believe that experience played an important role in their last promotion (male \bar{M} = 3.93, female \bar{M} = 3.70). The emphasis on individual qualities by women (mentoring relationship, personality and potential for development) suggests a communal tendency to enjoy working closely with others. On the other hand, the male view that range and years of experience were important factors in achieving their last promotion reflect the agentic qualities of mastery and control. Hypothesis 4 was therefore accepted.

Aspirations to Obtain a Senior Management Position

Hypothesis 5 predicted that more male managers than female managers will aspire to a senior management position. However, there was no difference in the percentages of males (83%) and females (76%) who aspired to senior management positions ($\chi^2 = 3.107$, $df = 1$, $p = ns$). Therefore, the hypothesis of a sex difference in career aspirations was not supported.

Expectations of Obtaining a Senior Management Position when Age and Length of Time in Middle Management are Controlled

Hypothesis 6 predicted that fewer female managers than male managers will expect to obtain a senior management position when age and length of time in middle management are controlled. A multiple regression tested the influence of sex on expectations controlling for age and length of time in the present position (Table IV).

Table IV.

Multiple Regression Analysis for predicting Managers confidence in achieving a senior management position.

Variable	R ²	Δ R ²	F	B	SE B	Beta
Step 1	.075	.075	18.86***			
Length of time in management				-.23	.01	-.12*
Age				-.16	.04	-.21**
Step 2						
Sex	.087	.008	3.85*	-.26	.13	-.09*

*p <.05, **p <.01

The multiple regression showed that the addition of sex on Step 2 added to the prediction of obtaining a senior management position after controlling for length of time in the present position and age. These results suggest that sex affects promotion expectation. In particular, males are more likely to expect to be promoted. Hypothesis 6 was therefore accepted.

Explanations for Why a Promotion May Not be Achieved

Hypothesis 7 predicted that there will be sex differences in the explanations given for why a possible future promotion may not be achieved. There was a significant difference in the percentages of males and females reporting each reason for promotion not occurring ($\chi^2 = 66.717$, $df = 5$, $p < .001$). More women believed that lack of personal interest (26% compared to 14% male), family reasons (20% compared to 2% male) and negative stereotyping (9% compared to 2% male) may contribute to their not achieving a promotion. More men thought that politics (12% compared to 6% female), personal inadequacy (40% compared to 25% female) or lack of opportunities (31% compared to 15% female) may be the cause. The hypothesis of sex differences in explanations for promotion failure was therefore accepted.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study partially support the predictions of social-role theory that gender-role influences appear to affect the attitudes and beliefs of managers relating to management career success. No sex differences were found in the percentages of middle managers who felt that everyone in the organisation had the same opportunities for promotion, or in the personal aspirations of middle managers to achieve senior promotions. However, sex differences were found in explanations for unequal advancement. Women were more inclined to believe that who you know and bias and discrimination influenced advancement. Male managers believed that the area of management worked in, style, and being in the right place at the right time were important factors. Sex differences were also found in the explanations given for a manager's own career progress. In particular, women were more likely to feel that factors such as gender, stereotyping, formal organizational policies, and informal organizational policies had hindered their career, whereas personal qualities such as being a team player, doing the job well, determination to succeed, communication skills, integrity and self confidence had helped their careers. Women also reported that individual qualities such as potential for development, personality and mentoring relationships had played an important role in their last promotion, whereas men believed that years of experience and range of experience had influenced their promotion. The manager's sex also influenced expectation to achieve a senior management role when age and length of service were controlled, with males being more likely to expect to be promoted. Finally,

there was a significant difference between male and female managers in terms of explanations given for why a promotion may not be achieved. More women believed that lack of personal interest, family reasons or negative stereotyping would be the reasons that future promotions may not occur, but men thought that politics, personal inadequacy or lack of opportunities would be the cause.

These results indicate some gender-based social role influence on men and women's beliefs, attitudes and values. For example, when women managers suggest that personal qualities have helped their careers, the communal qualities of interdependence, co-operation and preference for working closely with others are evident. Women also believe that their individual qualities played an important part in obtaining their last promotion. This again highlights the communal tendency to successfully interact with others. In contrast, men state that gender-based policies have not hindered their careers, and that experiences gained were important influences on promotion. This suggests that, for men, agentic type beliefs and behaviour such as ambition and independence are dominant.

The present study adds to the women in management literature through the application of social-role theory. The social-role framework suggests that gender and social roles may influence the attitudes and behaviour of men and women when they are seeking promotion. This interpretation offers a possible explanation for women's poor representation in senior management roles. Success in organisations is often gained through an individual's own achievement, such as a successful application for promotion. This is an illustration of the agentic principle of independent, competitive, and outcome-focussed work behaviour (Marshall, 1995). This is reflected in the male managers' attributions for the achievement of their last promotion. Conversely, the focus of communion is not on personal achievement, but on working to modify the environment through influencing and empowering others (Marshall, 1995). These communal values may influence the methods used to obtain promotion. Thus, women may seek promotion through the development of social networks, encouragement of teamwork, and an emphasis on expressing interpersonal competencies. This is reflected in the attributions given by women for their own career progress, and for the achievement of their last promotion. Other research has suggested that the agentic style of being is valued, and the other, communion, is not. As Marshall (1995) argues "action based in communion may therefore go unrewarded by formal organizational systems" (p. 285). The implication is that the communal values held by women lead to behaviours that are not valued when promotion is sought.

The primary limitation of this study is that the data were based on self-reports. Additionally, the research design could have included more direct measures of agentic/communal attitudes and behaviours. This would have allowed a deeper analysis of gender and social role conflicts that may occur in agentic and communal behaviours (see Moskowitz, Jung & Desaulniers, 1994, for a discussion of this issue).

Women managers have been reported as saying that perceiving the political environment accurately is difficult for them, as is learning how to operate within the informal power structure of the organisation in which they work (Wentling, 1996). The practical implications of this study therefore are that Human Resource management professionals could introduce programs that focus on clear organisational guidelines for what is required in order to be promoted to senior positions in management. Men and women will therefore have the opportunity to focus on promotion-seeking behaviours that are valued, and hence rewarded in their organisations. In this way, it may be possible to reduce some of the perceptual and behavioural differences between male and female managers who seek promotion. Alternatively, a "...radical revision of the value systems against which we judge good performance" (Marshall, 1995, p.285) could be attempted. In this way, any gender-role differences in behaviour could be valued equally, and a more genuine embracing of diversity achieved.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has found that sex differences occur in regard to many perceptions relating to promotion. These perceptions could represent different value systems arising from agentic and communal ways of being. These perceptual differences may also lead to differences in promotion-seeking behaviour. Thus gender roles may influence the promotion-seeking behaviour of managers, and the outcomes of the promotion-seeking process.

REFERENCES

- Adler, N. J. & Izraeli, D. N. (1988), Women in Management Worldwide. In Adler, N.J. and Izraeli, D.N. (Eds.), *Women in Management Worldwide* (pp.3-15). Sharpe Inc., New York.
- Aguinis, H. & Adams, S. K. R. (1998), Social-Role versus structural models of gender and influence use in organisations. *Group and Organization Management*, 23, 414-446.
- Amason, P. & Allen, M. W. (1997), Intraorganizational communication, perceived organisation support, and gender. *Sex Roles*, 37, 955-977.
- Bakan, D. (1966), *The Quality of Human Existence; An Essay on Psychology and Religion*, Rand McNally, Chicago.
- Bellamy, P. A. & Ramsay, K. (1994), *Barriers to Women Working in Corporate Management*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.
- Cejka, M. A. & Eagly, A. H. (1999), Gender-stereotypic images of occupations correspond to the sex segregation of employment, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25, 413-423.
- Davidson, M. & Cooper, C. (1992), *Shattering the Glass Ceiling. The Woman Manager*, Paul Chapman, London.
- Davidson, M. (1996), Women and Employment. In Warr, P. (Ed.), *Psychology at Work*, Penguin, London.
- Eagly, A. H. (1987), *Sex Differences in Social Behaviour: A Social-Role Interpretation*, Hillsdale, New Jersey.
- Eagly, A. H. & Karau, S. J. (1991), Gender and the Emergence of Leaders: A Meta-Analysis, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 685-710.
- Eagly, A. H. & Wood, W. (1991), Explaining Sex Differences in Social Behaviour: A Meta-Analytic Perspective, *Personality and Social Psychology*, 17, 306-315.
- Eagly, A. H. & Wood, W. (1999), Origins of Sex Differences in Human Behaviour, *American Psychologist*, 54, 4008-423.
- Fagenson, E. A. & Jackson, J. (1994), The status of women managers in the United States. In Adler, N. J. and Izraeli, D.N. (Eds.), *Competitive Frontiers: Women Managers in a Global Economy* (pp. 388-404). Blackwell, Cambridge, MA.
- Feingold, A. (1993), Cognitive Gender Differences: A developmental perspective, *Sex Roles*, 29, 91-112.
- Feingold, A. (1994), Gender Differences in Personality: A Meta-Analysis, *Psychological Bulletin*, 116, 429-456.
- Fielden, S. L. & Davidson, M. J. (1999), Stress and Unemployment: A comparative review and research model of female and male managers, *British Journal of Management*, 10, 63-93.
- Franke, G. R., Crown, D. F. & Spake, D. F. (1997), Gender Differences in Ethical Perceptions of Business Practices: A Social Role Theory perspective, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82, 920-934.
- Gold, U. O. C. & Pringle, J. K. (1988), Gender-Specific Factors in Management Promotion, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 3/4, 17-21.
- Hede, A. & Dingsdad, D. (1994), Equity in Staff Selection: Managerial Attitudes and Practices, *International Journal of Selection and Management*, 2, 37-44.
- Hede, A. & Ralston, D. (1993), Managerial Career Progression and Aspiration: Evidence of a Glass Ceiling?, *International Journal of Employment Studies*, 1(2), 253-282.
- Hersch, J. & Viscusi, W.K. (1996), Gender Differences in Promotions and Wages, *Industrial Relations*, 35 (4), 461-473.
- Hind, P. & Baruch, Y. (1997), Gender Variations in Perceptions of Performance Appraisal, *Women in Management Review*, 12, 276-289.

- Kakabadse, A. & Margerison, C. (1987), The Female Chief Executive: An analysis of Career Progress and Development Needs, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 2, 17-25.
- Kisch, J. & Ryan, C. (1991), Perceptual Barriers to Leadership: Advancement for Corporate Sector Women, *The International Journal of Career Management*, 3(4), 22-26.
- Mainiero, L. A. (1994), On Breaking the Glass Ceiling: The Political Seasoning of Powerful Women Executives, *Organizational Dynamics*, 22, 5-20.
- Marshall, J. (1984), *Women Managers: Travellers in a Male World*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester.
- Marshall, J. (1993), Patterns of cultural awareness: Coping strategies for women managers, In Long, B. C. & Kahn, S. E.(Eds.), *Women, Work and Coping* (pp.90-110). McGill Queen's University Press, British Columbia, Canada.
- Marshall, J. (1995), Re-visioning career concepts: a feminist invitation, In Arthur, M. B., Hall, D.T. & Lawrence, B.S. (Eds.), *Handbook of Career Theory* (pp.275-291). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Morrison, A. M. & van Glinow, M. A. (1990), Women and Minorities in Management, *American Psychologist*, 45, 200-208.
- Moskowitz, D. S. (1990), Convergence of self-report and independent observers: Dominance and friendliness, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 1096-1106.
- Moskowitz, D. S., Suh Eun Jung & Desaulniers, J. (1994), Situational Influences on Gender Differences in Agency and Communion, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66, 753-761.
- Orser, B. (1994), Sexrole stereotypes and requisite management characteristics: An international perspective, *Women in Management Review*, 9(4), 11-19.
- Parker, B. & Fagenson, E. A. (1994), In Davidson, M. J. and Burke, R.J. (Eds.), *Women in Management: Current Research Issues* (pp.11-28). Paul Chapman, London.
- Pringle, J. & Goyma, C. (1989), Managers' perception of success and satisfaction, Executive Report, Deakin University, Melbourne.
- Reynolds, R. & Associates, I. (1990), *Men, women and leadership in the American corporation*, Russell Reynolds Associates Inc., New York.
- Rosen, B., Miguel, M. & Peirce, E. (1989), Stemming the exodus of women managers, *Human Resource Management*, 28, 475-492.
- Ruderman, M. N., Ohlott, P. J. & Kram, K. E. (1995), Promotion decisions as a diversity practice, *Journal of Management*, 14, 6-23.
- Schein, V. E. (1994), Managerial sex typing: A persistent and pervasive barrier to women's opportunities, In *Women in Management: Current research issues* (Eds. Davidson, M. J. and Burke, R.J.) Paul Chapman, London.
- Schein, V. E. & Mueller, R. (1992), Sex role stereotyping and requisite management characteristics: A cross-cultural look, *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 13, 439-447.
- Sinclair, A. (1994), *Trials at the Top*, The Australian Centre, University of Melbourne, Melbourne.
- Smith, C., Crowley, M. and Hutchinson, J. (1993), *The lost generation? Women managers in the Australian mining industry*, University of Western Sydney, Nepean, Sydney.
- Snyder, R. A. (1993), The glass ceiling for women: Things that don't cause it and things that won't break it, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 4, 97-107.
- Stewart, L. P. & Gudykunst, W. B. (1982), Differential factors influencing the hierarchical level and number of promotions of males and females within an organization, *Academy of Management Journal*, 25, 586-597.
- Still, L. V. (1990), *Enterprising women*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

- Still, L. V. (1993), *Where to from here? The managerial woman in transition*, Business and Professional Publishing, Sydney.
- Still, L. V. (1996), *Women as Leaders*, Women & Leadership series, Paper No. 4. Edith Cowan University, Churchlands, W.A.
- Still, L. V. (1997), *Glass ceilings and sticky floors: Barriers to the careers of women in the Australian finance industry*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Sydney.
- Stroh, L., Brett, J. M. & Reilly, A. H. (1992), All the right stuff: A comparison of female and male managers' career progression, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77, 251-260.
- Stroh, L. & Senner, J.R. (1994), *Female top level executives: turnover, career limitations, and attitudes towards the workplace*, Industrial Relations Research Association Proceedings, December, p.495.
- Tharenou, P., Latimer, S. & Conroy, D. (1994), How do you make it to the top? An examination of influences on women's and men's managerial advancement, *Academy of Management Journal*, 37, 899-931.
- Tolbert, P. S. & Moen, P. (1998), Men's and women's definitions of 'good' jobs, *Work and Occupations*, 25, 168-195.
- Uren, D. (1999), Avoid corporate rot with more women at the top, In *The Australian*, Sydney, p. 13.
- Wentling, R. M. (1996), A study of the career development and aspirations of women in middle management, *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 7, 253-270.

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT
2000 WORKING PAPER SERIES

- 1/00 Amy Wong. "The Role of Relationship Strength in the Formation of the Customer-Contact Employee Relationship" (February, pp.26).
- 2/00 Paul Kalfadellis & Loong Wong "Labour of Burden: An Analysis of Occupational Change – The Domestic Worker" (February, pp.9).
- 3/00 Marjorie Jerrard "Organisation of the Roman Clothing and Textile Industry: Skill, Occupation, and the Gender-segmented Workforce" (February, pp.11).
- 4/00 Marjorie Jerrard "Formation to Arbitration" – The Early Years of the Queensland Branch of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union 1889-1918" (February, pp.14).
- 5/00 Jacintha Tan & Damian Morgan "Quality in Australian Tourism Education: Educator and Professional Views" (February, pp.15).
- 6/00 Betty Weiler & Sam H Ham "Training Ecotour Guides in Developing Countries: Lessons Learned from Panama's First Guides Course" (February, pp.9).
- 7/00 Rosemary Black, Sam Ham & Betty Weiler "Ecotour Guide Training in Less Developed Countries: Some Research Directions for the 21st Century" (February, pp.12).
- 8/00 Jacintha Tan & Damian Morgan "Tourism Education: Views from Educator and the Tourism Industry" (February, pp.8).
- 9/00 Warwick Frost "Ecotourism and Rainforests" (February, pp.13).
- 10/00 Glenice J. Wood & Margaret Lindorff "Sex Differences in Managers' Explanations for Career Progress: A Test of Social Role Theory" (February, pp.15).