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Proactive Personality and Career Success

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This study examined the relationship between proactive personality and career success by surveying a sample of 496 employees (320 men and 176 women) from a diverse set of occupations and organizations. Proactive personality was positively associated with both self-reported objective (salary and promotions) and subjective (career satisfaction) indicators of career success. Hierarchical regression analyses showed that proactive personality explained additional variance in both objective and subjective career success even after controlling for several relevant variables (demographic, human capital, motivational, organizational, and industry) that have previously been found to be predictive of career outcomes. These findings were consistent using both self-report and significant-other ratings of proactive personality.

Identification of variables influencing career success has received considerable research attention from organizational scholars. Comprehensive models of career success have included a number of individual and organizational variables (e.g., Judge & Bretz, 1994; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, in press). These models show that at the individual level, several demographic, human capital, and motivational variables are associated with career success. Organizational variables such as firm size, industry sector, and geographic location also covary with career success. Most research on careers views individuals as passive and malleable, emphasizing the influence of situations on human behavior (Bell & Staw, 1989). In contrast to this perspective, Bell and Staw argued that personality, through the process of personal control, can ultimately affect outcomes that appear to be

determined by environmental forces. However, as several scholars have noted, previous researchers have largely ignored the influence of personality on career success (Bell & Staw, 1989; Judge, Bretz, Kennedy, & Bloom, 1996; Kilduff & Day, 1994).

There is a strong theoretical rationale, related to the nature of careers, to suggest that personality variables should be included in models of career success. Career success is a cumulative outcome, the product of behaviors aggregated over a relatively long period of time. Personality is more likely to be a determinant of aggregate or cumulative outcomes, such as career success, than any single act or behavioral measure (Buss & Craik, 1983; Epstein, 1979). Furthermore, personality is more likely to influence behavior in “weak” situations that present few constraints on behavioral options than “strong” situations that have a high degree of structure and definition (Mischel, 1977; Snyder & Ickes, 1985). Organizational life is full of ambiguity and uncertainty (March, 1978), and this ambiguity allows employees to maneuver and express their own individuality in the way that they fulfill their organizational roles (Miner, 1987; Weick, 1979). Thus, although recent research has largely disregarded the influence of personality, the very nature of careers—a long-term, aggregate construct occurring in ambiguous and uncertain situations—suggests that personality should be included in models of career success.

The purpose of this research was to empirically examine the relationship between a particular personality trait—an individual’s disposition toward proactive behavior—and objective and subjective career success. We expanded on theory building by Judge et al. (1995) by incorporating a

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dispositional variable into explanations of career outcomes. Although proactive personality and behaviors have been linked to a variety of organizational behaviors, including transformational leadership (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant & Bateman, in press), the job performance of real estate agents (Crant, 1995), socialization and organizational entry (Ashford & Black, 1996; Morrison, 1993), entrepreneurial vocational interests (Crant, 1996), and career planning (Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997), the extent to which proactivity is associated with career success remains unexplored. Thus, this study also contributes to the growing literature on the role of proactivity in the workplace.

Consistent with previous research, we define *career success* in terms of the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one accumulates as a result of work experiences (Judge et al., 1995; London & Stumpf, 1982). Career success can be fruitfully studied from both objective and subjective reference points. The term *objective career success* refers to observable career accomplishments, such as salary and promotional history (London & Stumpf, 1982). *Subjective career success* reflects peoples' feelings of satisfaction and accomplishment with their careers (Judge et al., 1995). Although these two components of career success might be expected to be positively but moderately associated (Bray & Howard, 1980; Judge & Bretz, 1994), they do not necessarily covary with one another. People who are extrinsically successful may not feel satisfied with their achievements (Korman, Wittig-Berman, & Lang, 1981). Thus, it is important to consider both objective and subjective evaluations of career success (Gattiker & Larwood, 1989; Howard & Bray, 1988; Judge et al., 1995).

Theory Development and Hypotheses

Proactive Personality

People can intentionally and directly change their current circumstances, including their social environments (e.g., Buss, 1987; Diener, Larsen, & Emmons, 1984). Furthermore, individual differences exist in people's proclivity to take action to influence their environments (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Bateman and Crant defined the individual with a prototypical proactive personality as one who is relatively unconstrained by situational forces and who effects environmental change. They viewed proactive personality as a stable disposition toward proactive behavior. According to Bateman and Crant's formulation, people who are highly proactive identify opportunities and act on them, show initiative, and persevere until they bring about meaningful change. They transform their organizations' missions, find and solve problems, and take it on themselves to have an impact on the world around them. Less proactive people are passive and reactive; they tend to adapt to circumstances rather than change them.

Past research has demonstrated that proactive personality is

related to several behavioral outcomes. Bateman and Crant (1993) found proactive personality to be positively correlated with participants' involvement in community service activities and the degree of constructive environmental change revealed in essays of participants' most significant personal achievements. Additionally, Crant (1995) found proactive personality to be predictive of objective job performance among a sample of 131 real estate agents. Job performance was operationalized as the number of houses sold, number of listings obtained, and commission income over a 9-month period. Furthermore, proactive personality has been found to be a unique construct, unrelated to locus of control and mental ability, and only moderately related to need for achievement and need for dominance (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 1995).

The theoretical relationship between one's level of proactivity and objective and subjective career outcomes stems from interactional psychology (Magnusson & Endler, 1977; Snyder & Ickes, 1985; Terborg, 1981; Weiss & Adler, 1984). This perspective holds that behavior is both internally and externally controlled and that situations are as much a function of persons as vice versa (Bandura, 1977; Bowers, 1973; Emmons & Diener, 1986; Snyder & Ickes, 1985). The interactionist perspective calls attention to the complex process whereby individuals select, interpret, and change situations (Terborg, 1981). In terms of career success, the tendency to shape one's work environment offers the individual a number of advantages. Individuals who exert control over their work situations are more likely to understand the contingencies in their environments and anticipate changes. They may alter their own work methods, procedures, and task assignments and even exert influence over decisions affecting their pay, promotions, and the distribution of other organizational rewards (Bell & Staw, 1989). Consistent with this interactionist perspective, the hypotheses developed below are based on the notion that more proactive individuals receive greater objective and subjective career outcomes because they select, create, and influence the situations in which they work.

Proactive individuals approach their jobs and careers differently than less proactive people. Proactive individuals select and create situations that enhance the likelihood of high levels of job performance (Crant, 1995). They are more likely to engage in career management activities such as seeking out job and organizational information, obtaining sponsorship and career support, conducting career planning and persisting in the face of career obstacles (Ashford & Black, 1996; Frese et al., 1997; Morrison, 1993). They anticipate changing environmental contingencies and generate constructive change (Bateman & Crant, 1993). They may even be more likely to identify and pursue opportunities for self-improvement, such as acquiring further education or skills needed for future promotions. Less proactive people react to their environments rather than create them; they maintain the status quo. It is through this element of

creating environments that proactivity leads to objective career success. Thus,

Hypothesis 1: There will be a positive relationship between individuals' proactive personality and objective career success.

We expected subjective career success, as displayed through affective reactions to one's career, to also covary with proactivity. Several areas of research suggest a relatively robust effect of personality on affective outcomes across many domains of people's lives (Costa, McCrae, & Zonderman, 1987; Judge, 1992; Judge & Hulin, 1993; Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986; Staw & Ross, 1985). After reviewing this literature, Bell and Staw (1989) concluded that "career satisfaction may be determined as much (or more) by individuals' stable predispositions as by the 'objective' features of the career" (p. 239).

From the interactional perspective, we expected more proactive individuals to be more effective in shaping their own work environments, as posited in Hypothesis 1. This will have a positive effect on career satisfaction in two ways: First, consistent with theories of personal control (Bell & Staw, 1989; Greenberger & Strasser, 1986; Greenberger, Strasser, & Lee, 1988), more proactive individuals should have a greater sense of self-determination and self-efficacy in their work lives. Several theoretical traditions emphasize the importance of autonomy, self-determination, or self-efficacy in producing affective reactions and psychological well-being (Abramson, Garber, & Seligman, 1980; Bandura, 1986; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Second, we presumed that more proactive people will do more to select and create work environments that match their vocational needs and values. The importance of matching between the individual and the work environment in producing vocational satisfaction has been the focus of several theories of career development (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Holland, 1985; Super, 1963). Strong support has also been found for the positive effects of person-organization fit on a range of individual-level work attitudes and affective outcomes (Kristof, 1996). In summary, we presumed that more proactive individuals will be more effective in shaping and selecting appropriate work environments and will have a greater sense of self-determination in their work and careers. We therefore expected more proactive people to be more satisfied with the dimensions of their careers such as jobs, rewards, advancement, and skill development. Thus,

Hypothesis 2: There will be a positive relationship between individuals' proactive personality and subjective career success.

Control Variables

Judge et al. (1995) proposed and tested a broad model of subjective and objective career success. Judge et al. argued

that their model provided "the most comprehensive evidence to date regarding the predictors of career success" (p. 486). This model formed the basis for our selection of appropriate control variables in our study. Following Judge et al., we controlled for demographic, human capital, motivational, organizational and industry variables.

We controlled for a variety of demographic variables, specifically age, gender, marital status, spouse's employment status, ethnic background, and socioeconomic status. Human capital variables controlled included level of education, occupation, years since college graduation, and the number and length of employment gaps. We controlled for two motivational variables: the number of hours worked and one's desire for upward mobility. Organizational-industry controls were organizational size, whether the company was publicly traded, whether the company was located in a metropolitan area, or industry sector.

The proactive personality is conceptually distinct from each of the categories of control variables and the individual variables controlled. Previous researchers on the determinants of career success, as captured through the control variables, have not incorporated the idea of employees actively creating and shaping environments. Thus, an additive effect for proactivity on career success is proposed, above and beyond the effects of the control variables on career success.

Methods

Sample and Procedures

Participants for this study were alumni of a large, private Midwestern university. We chose business and engineering school graduates to ensure that the sample contained a wide variety of occupations for which career outcomes would be comparable. Surveys were mailed to the homes of 2,781 randomly selected alumni who graduated 3–30 years before the date of the study.

Two surveys were mailed to each alumnus. The alumnus questionnaire was divided into separate sections that included items assessing career-related control variables, alumnus personality, and the alumnus' career outcomes, respectively. The alumnus was asked to give the second questionnaire (provided in a separate sealed envelope) to someone who knew him or her well, such as a spouse, friend, or coworker. This "significant-other" questionnaire asked the respondent to rate the alumnus' personality. Alumni and significant others were instructed to complete their respective surveys without consulting each other and to return their surveys directly to one of us in the separate return envelopes provided. Random code numbers were assigned to each survey so that they could be matched on return while ensuring respondent confidentiality. To encourage responses, we entered all alumni respondents into a drawing for three prizes of approximately \$50 in value. A reminder postcard was mailed 3 weeks after the initial mailing.

A total of 773 alumni surveys were returned (28% response rate), with 637 containing complete data. Respondents who were not working ($n = 24$), working only part time ($n = 32$), or self-employed ($n = 85$) were eliminated from the primary analyses

because their career outcomes might not be comparable to those with current full-time employment. A total of 684 significant-other surveys were returned (25% response rate), with 660 containing complete data and 408 matching the full-time employed alumni sample. The final sample therefore consisted of 496 alumni for analyses using the self-report measure of proactive personality and 408 for analyses using the significant-other measure of proactive personality. Respondents and nonrespondents did not significantly differ with respect to gender, race, or major (business vs. engineering). However, we received fewer responses from MBA graduates (13%) than were represented in the target sample (25%).

The demographic breakdown of the respondents is as follows: their average age was 35.6 years; the average time since graduating from the university was 13.0 years; 65% were men; 73% were married; 96% were White; 41% had a bachelor's degree as their highest degree attained; 9% had a master's degree other than an MBA; 40% had an MBA; 5% had a law degree; 2% had a PhD; and 3% had some other type of degree beyond the bachelor's level.

Measures

Proactive personality. Proactive personality was assessed with a shortened version of Bateman and Crant's (1993) 17-item Proactive Personality Scale (PPS). Bateman and Crant presented evidence for the scale's reliability (Cronbach's alphas across three samples ranged from .87 to .89, and the test-retest reliability coefficient was .72 over a 3-month period) and convergent, discriminant, and criterion validity. We created a shortened version of the scale (see Appendix) by selecting the 10 items with the highest average factor loadings across the three studies reported by Bateman and Crant (1993). Cronbach's alpha in the present study was .86.

To establish the validity and reliability of the shortened version, we conducted a pretest with a separate sample of 181 MBA and undergraduate students who completed the 17-item PPS. The correlation between the 10-item scale used in this study and the full 17-item scale was .96. Deleting the 7 items had little effect on the reliability of the scale (17-item $\alpha = .88$; 10-item $\alpha = .86$). Thus, the shortened version of the PPS appears to be comparable to the full 17-item version.

As part of our research design, we asked alumni to choose a spouse, friend, or coworker to rate the alumnus's personality. We supplemented the self-report measure of proactive personality with this significant-other measure because independent reports of personality allow researchers to demonstrate that observed relationships are independent of single-source method bias (Judge & Cable, 1997). Data from someone who is close to the target person may be a valid measure of that person's personality (Funder & Colvin, 1988), and empirical data suggest that self-reported personality measures may underestimate effects (Mount, Barrick, & Strauss, 1994). The intercorrelation between self- and significant-other reports was .44 ($p < .01$), which is slightly stronger than the correlations between self- and other-reports of personality found in other studies (see Mount et al., 1994, for a review).

Career success. Subjective career success was measured with Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley's (1990) five-item career satisfaction scale. Alumni were asked to indicate their levels of satisfaction with five dimensions of their careers on a scale ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*). A sample item is

"the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement." Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .83.

Objective career success was measured with two self-reported variables: promotions and salary. Alumni were asked to report the number of promotions they had received over their entire careers. Promotions were defined as "any increases in level and/or any significant increases in job responsibilities or job scope." Alumni also indicated their current annual salaries (including bonuses and other direct income). Although self-report data are prone to a number of distortions, Podsakoff and Organ (1986) noted that information that is factual, likely to be in the possession of the respondent, and at least in principle verifiable is less likely to suffer from such problems. For example, Judge et al. (1995) reported that in a sample of 1,338 executives, the difference between self- and archival reports of salary was 1%. Because the z test on the skewness statistic indicated a nonnormal distribution for salary ($z = 36.5, p < .001$), we followed Gerhart and Milkovich's (1989) recommendation and used a natural logarithmic transformation of salary for all analyses.

Control variables. To measure the respondents' levels of motivation to advance in their careers, we used Landau and Hammer's (1986) four-item scale of desire for upward mobility ($\alpha = .65$). A sample item is "I would like a job with more responsibility." Socioeconomic status was measured with an item using a response scale ranging from 1 (*poverty level*) to 6 (*social elite*). The remaining control variables were measured with specific items in the alumni questionnaires. These variables were age; gender (0 = male, 1 = female); marital status (0 = not married, 1 = married); spouse employment status (0 = spouse not employed, 1 = spouse employed); ethnicity (0 = non-White, 1 = White); highest degree attained (BS is the comparison category); occupation (accounting is the comparison category); industry (manufacturing is the comparison category); whether they had an employment gap (1 = yes) and, if so, the number of weeks of that gap; whether their firm was publicly traded (1 = yes); whether they lived in a major metropolitan city (population greater than 1 million; 1 = yes); number of employees in their firm; and number of hours worked per week.

Analyses

In addition to examining the intercorrelations among variables, we used two sets of hierarchical multiple regressions to assess the contribution of proactive personality to career success after controlling for several relevant variables. We first ran the regression equations using only the alumni data ($n = 496$) and then ran a separate set of regression equations using the subset of the sample for which the significant-other reports of proactive personality were available ($n = 408$). In each set of regressions, we estimated three regression equations: one for each measure of career success (log salary, promotions, and career satisfaction). To allow comparison with the Judge et al. (1995) results, we entered the control variables in five steps for the objective measures of career success and six steps (including objective career outcomes first) for career satisfaction.

Log salary and promotions were each first regressed on the demographic variables, with human capital variables entered in Step 2, industry-area variables in Step 3, organizational variables in Step 4, and motivation variables in Step 5. Finally, proactive personality was entered in Step 6. If the change in R^2 at this final step is significant, we can conclude that proactive personality is a

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1. Age	35.57	7.14	—																	
2. Female	0.35	0.48	-.33	—																
3. Married	0.73	0.45	.34	-.19	—															
4. Spouse employed	0.50	0.50	.05	.14	.61	—														
5. White	0.96	0.20	.09	-.01	.07	.03	—													
6. Socioeconomic status	4.10	0.95	-.15	.10	-.04	-.04	.18	—												
7. Master's	0.08	0.28	-.04	.05	-.04	-.02	-.01	-.13	—											
8. MBA	0.40	0.49	.18	-.12	.05	-.05	.07	.05	-.25	—										
9. Law	0.05	0.22	.03	.05	.04	.09	.05	.09	-.07	-.19	—									
10. PhD	0.02	0.14	.16	-.05	.06	.03	.03	-.05	-.04	-.12	-.03	—								
11. Other high degree	0.03	0.18	.06	.00	.02	.03	.04	.03	-.06	-.15	-.04	-.03	—							
12. Engineer	0.15	0.36	.06	.01	.01	.02	.03	-.12	.27	-.18	-.10	.22	.07	—						
13. Finance	0.14	0.34	-.05	-.04	.02	.06	.00	.03	-.08	.20	-.04	-.06	-.08	-.17	—					
14. General management	0.14	0.35	.18	-.15	.01	-.12	.03	-.03	-.02	.08	-.02	-.02	-.08	-.17	-.16	—				
15. HRM	0.02	0.13	-.01	.03	-.02	-.02	-.05	.03	.01	-.05	.04	-.02	-.03	-.06	-.05	-.06	—			
16. MIS	0.05	0.22	-.08	.09	-.04	.02	-.04	-.01	-.07	-.01	-.06	.03	.01	-.10	-.09	-.10	-.03	—		
17. Marketing	0.12	0.33	-.03	.02	.00	-.03	.08	.12	-.11	.08	-.06	-.01	-.04	-.16	-.15	-.15	-.05	-.09	—	
18. Operations	0.06	0.23	.05	-.08	.04	.01	-.03	-.03	-.01	.01	-.06	-.04	-.05	-.11	-.10	-.10	-.03	-.06	-.09	—
19. Other occupation	0.17	0.38	.00	.08	.00	.03	.04	.05	.00	-.04	.33	-.06	.15	-.19	-.18	-.18	-.06	-.11	-.17	-.11
20. Years since graduation	13.03	7.11	.89	-.30	.31	.04	.08	-.05	.00	.01	.07	.17	.08	.12	-.06	.15	-.01	-.07	-.04	.01
21. Employment gaps	0.39	0.49	.09	.19	.02	.12	.00	.05	.04	.05	.03	-.06	-.04	.02	-.07	-.04	.08	-.04	-.03	-.06
22. Weeks of employment gaps	17.04	47.80	.13	.11	-.07	.00	.04	.02	-.01	.05	-.02	.01	.04	.01	-.05	.02	.04	.02	-.05	-.03
23. Construction	0.04	0.21	-.01	-.04	.02	-.02	.05	.08	-.03	-.08	-.01	-.03	.01	.10	-.09	.00	.04	-.05	-.08	.07
24. Transportation	0.06	0.25	-.03	-.01	.01	-.02	.01	-.01	.04	.02	-.06	.02	-.05	.07	-.06	-.06	-.04	-.02	-.05	.18
25. Retail	0.04	0.19	-.07	.09	-.04	.05	-.01	.03	-.06	.01	-.05	-.03	-.04	-.08	.01	.04	.05	.00	-.01	.04
26. Finance	0.20	0.40	-.05	-.06	.04	.07	-.10	-.02	-.13	.11	.04	-.07	-.01	-.21	.34	-.03	.01	-.02	.00	-.10
27. Service	0.21	0.40	-.10	.06	-.07	-.02	-.02	.03	-.01	-.10	.15	-.07	.04	-.09	-.13	-.02	-.03	.19	-.02	.02
28. Communication	0.06	0.25	.03	-.01	-.02	-.10	.06	.07	-.02	-.01	-.06	-.04	.04	-.02	.01	.01	-.04	-.02	.08	-.03
29. Nonprofit	0.07	0.26	.01	.13	-.03	.04	.02	.01	.13	-.07	.00	.23	.12	-.01	-.05	-.03	.02	.00	-.01	-.07
30. Public administration	0.04	0.19	.11	-.08	.00	.00	-.01	-.12	.13	-.03	.00	-.03	-.04	.01	-.01	.14	-.03	-.05	-.07	.00
31. Other industry	0.02	0.13	.05	-.07	.05	.01	-.05	-.08	-.04	.01	.04	-.02	-.03	-.06	-.01	.03	.09	-.03	.09	-.03
32. Metropolitan area	0.70	0.46	-.14	.06	-.08	-.06	-.01	.09	.07	.02	.04	-.09	-.04	-.07	.11	-.09	.06	.06	.01	-.10
33. No. of employees	4.13	1.30	.04	.07	.01	-.01	.07	.04	.01	.14	-.14	.07	.05	.01	.12	-.02	.02	.10	-.05	.00
34. Publicly traded	0.49	0.50	.03	-.05	.05	-.09	.01	.06	-.01	.16	-.09	-.03	-.10	.03	.15	-.02	.02	-.01	.00	.08
35. Upward mobility	4.58	1.24	-.23	-.06	-.07	-.10	-.09	-.02	-.02	.09	-.01	-.09	-.05	.01	.07	-.07	.01	.02	.05	.05
36. Hours worked	50.55	7.68	.04	-.14	-.04	-.17	.02	.08	-.05	.07	-.01	-.02	.05	-.19	-.01	.21	.01	-.02	.10	-.05
37. Proactive personality	5.18	0.75	.04	-.09	.01	-.04	-.06	.01	-.07	.07	-.07	.02	-.01	.01	-.10	.18	.03	.03	.12	-.11
38. Significant other rating of proactivity ^a	5.38	0.78	.00	-.07	-.06	-.07	-.04	-.11	-.03	.05	-.14	-.01	.06	-.05	-.03	.08	.03	.01	.06	-.03
39. Log salary	4.30	0.53	.48	-.21	.27	-.04	.06	.00	-.09	.25	.01	.03	-.03	-.08	.06	.25	-.01	-.05	.07	-.05
40. Promotions	4.71	2.88	.46	-.16	.26	.02	.02	.01	-.04	.20	-.05	-.06	-.02	-.03	-.03	.20	.02	-.05	.12	.00
41. Career satisfaction	3.71	0.71	-.01	.09	.03	.03	.03	.02	.00	.02	-.02	.01	-.03	-.10	-.03	.14	-.02	.04	.01	-.03

Note. *N* = 496. Decimal points were removed from all but *M* and *SD* columns. Correlations greater than or equal to .09 are significant at *p* < .05. HRM = human resources management; MIS = management information systems.

^a *N* = 408.

unique predictor of the dependent variable (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Career satisfaction was first regressed on the objective measures of career success (log salary and number of promotions), subsequently entering the remaining control variables as described earlier, with proactive personality entered in Step 7.

Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the variables in the study. Hypothesis 1

predicted that proactive personality would be positively related to the two objective measures of career success. The zero-order correlations show that proactive personality was positively associated with the two objective measures of career success, log of current salary ($r = .15, p < .05$), and the number of promotions over the alumnus's entire career ($r = .17, p < .05$). To more rigorously assess these relationships, we conducted a set of hierarchical regression analyses using a set of control variables. The hierarchical

19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41
—																						
-01	—																					
07	06	—																				
06	13	45	—																			
03	01	07	10	—																		
-01	-05	03	00	-06	—																	
-06	-05	03	09	-04	-05	—																
-03	-04	-10	-07	-11	-13	-10	—															
13	-08	03	02	-11	-13	-10	-25	—														
01	05	-04	03	-06	-07	-05	-13	-13	—													
12	00	01	-02	-06	-07	-06	-14	-14	-07	—												
03	13	02	04	-04	-05	-04	-10	-10	-05	-06	—											
-06	05	05	01	-03	-04	-03	-07	-07	-04	-04	-03	—										
03	-06	-02	-01	-11	-01	-01	10	09	07	-13	-01	-04	—									
-07	00	-07	-07	-20	08	-05	-01	-12	03	02	05	-11	17	—								
-11	03	-10	-09	-13	12	01	12	-24	14	-28	-19	-01	16	41	—							
-06	-22	-10	-11	05	01	00	10	-05	-11	-08	09	-12	06	14	07	—						
02	03	-09	01	-06	-11	04	01	08	-03	-03	00	04	03	13	09	17	—					
-06	01	02	03	03	04	02	-05	-07	09	01	02	00	-09	02	01	37	15	—				
02	-04	-04	-05	-03	00	01	-02	-06	06	-04	01	-01	-03	03	00	28	19	44	—			
-08	46	-15	-15	-09	-03	-02	07	-04	12	-14	-07	05	15	21	22	16	27	15	13	—		
-13	41	02	-10	06	-06	-05	07	-08	04	-08	02	05	-01	05	10	19	13	17	10	49	—	
01	-02	-03	00	-03	-03	01	00	-01	13	07	-09	03	01	11	10	43	18	31	26	31	20	—

regressions predicting log of salary and number of promotions are shown in the first two columns of Table 2. Proactivity, entered at the final step in the hierarchical regression, produced a significant increase in the amount of variance explained by the model for log salary ($\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .05$) and number of promotions over one's entire career ($\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. The regression models with all variables included explained 54% of the variance in salary and 37% of the variance in the number of promotions.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that proactive personality would be related to the subjective measure of career success. The zero-order correlation in Table 1 also shows that proactivity was positively associated with career satisfaction ($r = .31, p < .05$). As shown in the last column of Table 2, proactive personality, entered at the final step in the hierarchical regression that controlled for the full set of career success predictors and the two objective measures of career success, produced a significant increase in the amount of variance in career satisfaction explained by the model ($\Delta R^2 = .07, p <$

Table 2
Multiple Regressions of Career Variables and Self-Rated Proactive Personality on Objective and Subjective Career Outcomes

Variable	Log salary		No. of promotions		Career satisfaction	
	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β
Objective career outcome						
Log salary					0.43*	.33*
No. of promotions					0.03*	.13*
Change in R^2					.10*	
Demographic						
Age	0.01*	.18*	0.16*	.40*	-0.02*	-.25*
Female	0.08	.07	0.45	.07	0.11	.07
Married	0.25*	.20*	0.94*	.15*	-0.04	-.03
Spouse employed	-0.13*	-.13*	-0.36	-.06	0.07	.05
White	-0.05	-.02	-0.51	-.04	0.12	.04
Socioeconomic	-0.01	-.02	0.16	.05	-0.03	-.04
Change in R^2	.28*		.24*		.06*	
Human capital						
Master's	0.04	.02	0.40	.04	0.08	.03
MBA	0.19*	.18*	0.62*	.11*	-0.05	-.03
Law	0.14	.06	-0.32	-.02	0.03	.01
PhD	0.01	.00	-2.14*	-.10*	0.05	.01
Other high degree	-0.02	-.01	0.02	.00	-0.15	-.04
Engineer	-0.01	-.01	0.17	.02	-0.13	-.07
Finance	0.06	.04	-0.20	-.02	-0.08	-.04
General management	0.21*	.13*	0.81	.10	-0.03	-.01
Human resources	0.03	.01	0.36	.02	-0.24	-.04
Management information systems	-0.05	-.02	0.13	.01	0.02	.01
Marketing	0.08	.05	0.93*	.11*	-0.15	-.07
Operations	-0.04	-.02	0.12	.01	0.12	.04
Other occupation	-0.03	-.02	-0.61	-.08	0.02	.01
Years since graduation	0.02*	.27*	0.02	.06	-0.01	-.06
Employment gaps	-0.09*	-.09*	0.34	.06	-0.04	-.03
No. of weeks of employment gaps	-0.00*	-.18*	-0.01*	-.19*	0.00	.07
Change in R^2	.13*		.09*		.04	
Motivational						
Desire for upward mobility	-0.05*	-.11*	-0.10	-.04	-0.19*	-.32*
Hours worked	0.01*	.16*	0.02	.06	0.01	.06
Change in R^2	.04*		.01		.07*	
Organizational						
No. of employees	0.06*	.15*	0.03	.01	0.04	.08
Publicly traded	-0.02	-.02	0.15	.03	0.09	.06
Change in R^2	.03*		.00		.01	
Industry-area						
Construction	0.04	.01	1.63*	.12*	0.08	.02
Transportation	0.03	.02	-0.22	-.02	-0.08	-.03
Retail	0.10	.03	0.11	.01	-0.03	-.01
Finance	0.06	.04	0.77*	.11*	0.07	.04
Service	0.04	.03	0.24	.04	0.03	.02
Communications	0.16*	.07*	0.29	.02	0.15	.05
Nonprofit sector	-0.20*	-.10*	-0.06	-.01	0.27*	.10*
Public administration	-0.32*	-.11*	0.02	.00	0.00	.00
Other industry	0.06	.02	0.40	.02	0.08	.01
Metropolitan area	0.18*	.16*	0.34	.05	-0.07	-.05
Change in R^2	.05*		.02		.02	
Personality						
Proactive personality	0.08*	.11*	0.46*	.12*	0.28*	.30*
Change in R^2	.01*		.01*		.07*	
Constant	2.26*		-6.65*		1.49*	
<i>R</i>	.74*		.61*		.61*	
R^2	.54*		.37*		.37*	
Adjusted R^2	.50		.32		.32	

Note. $N = 496$.

* $p < .05$.

.05). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was also supported. The full regression model explained 37% of the variance in career satisfaction.

To assess whether common method variance alone accounted for these results, we conducted a second set of analyses using the significant others' ratings of alumni proactive personality. Hierarchical regression results using the significant-other ratings of alumni personality are displayed in Table 3. The results for proactivity were significant and consistent with those using the self-ratings for the two objective career outcomes but were somewhat smaller in magnitude for the subjective career outcome. Proactivity produced a significant increase in the amount of variance explained by the models predicting salary ($\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .05$), number of promotions ($\Delta R^2 = .01, p < .05$), and career satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .04, p < .05$). The regression results using the significant-other reports of alumni proactive personality demonstrated that the observed relationships were not due solely to same-source data.

As noted previously, data from the part-time and self-employed respondents were eliminated from the primary analyses because we were concerned that their career outcomes would not be comparable to those in full-time employment. The relatively small sample size ($n = 117$) precluded the use of the full hierarchical regression model with these data, but zero-order correlations suggested that proactivity operates in a similar manner for these types of workers. For the part-time and self-employed respondents, the zero-order correlations between proactive personality and salary ($r = .25, p < .05$), promotions ($r = .19, p < .05$), and career satisfaction ($r = .21, p < .05$) were each statistically significant and comparable to those using the full-time employed sample.

Turning to the control variables themselves, we found a number of relationships. Whether using self- or significant-other reports, each set of variables (demographic, human capital, industry-area, organization, and motivation) explained a significant amount of variance in salary. The demographic and human capital variables, as sets, each explained a significant amount of variance in promotions. A significant amount of variance in career satisfaction was explained by the two objective indicators of career success (salary and number of promotions) and the demographic and motivational variables, as sets. Detailed results for each variable are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Discussion

We surveyed a sample of 496 currently employed business and engineering graduates to assess the relationship between proactive personality and objective and subjective career success. Our results show that, although the average effect size was modest, proactive personality was significantly and positively associated with the employees' current

salary, the number of promotions received, and their career satisfaction even after controlling for several career-related variables. In practical terms, a 1-point increase in the proactive personality scale was associated with an \$8,677 increase in yearly salary after controlling for all other variables in the model. Additionally, results using the significant-other personality ratings for a subset of 408 respondents were virtually the same for salary and promotions and were significant but smaller in magnitude for career satisfaction. The consistency in results across data sources makes it unlikely that our results were due solely to common method bias.

These findings contribute to the understanding of both career success and the proactive personality construct. Our results extend models of career success by adding a dispositional variable to the array of variables associated with career success. This is important because the interactional perspective suggests that dispositional variables should influence career processes and outcomes, yet previous work within the organizational behavioral literature has largely ignored dispositional influences on career success. Our findings suggest that dispositional variables have the potential to explain variance in career success in addition to that accounted for by other individual, organizational, and structural variables. These results also contribute to the literature on proactive personality. Proactivity has previously been linked to leadership, sales performance, personal achievements, and entrepreneurship. Our findings indicate that objective and subjective career success are also associated with proactive personality.

The set of career success predictors, although not the primary focus of our study, represents a replication and extension of previous research on career success. Consistent with previous research, each set of variables (demographic, human capital, industry-area, organization, and motivation) produced a significant increase in the amount of explained variance for salary. Results for promotions also substantially replicated the previous findings, with the demographic and human capital variable sets adding significant amounts of explained variance and the industry-area and organizational variable sets not explaining incremental variance in promotions. However, in the current study, the motivational variables did not add explanatory power in predicting number of promotions as they did in the Judge et al. (1995) study. With respect to career satisfaction, our results also partly differ from those of Judge et al. In their study, each variable set except industry-area explained additional variance in career satisfaction. In the current study, only the objective career outcomes, demographic, and motivational variable sets contributed incremental variance to the model; the industry-area, human capital, and organizational variable sets did not.

These differences from previous research may be due to the nature of the sample for each study. Judge et al. (1995)

Table 3
*Multiple Regressions of Career Variables and Significant-Other Rated Proactive Personality
 on Objective and Subjective Career Outcomes*

Variable	Log salary		No. of promotions		Career satisfaction	
	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β
Objective career outcome						
Log salary					0.47*	.36*
No. of promotions					0.03*	.13*
Change in R^2					.10*	
Demographic						
Age	0.02*	.24*	0.14*	.36*	-0.01	-.13
Female	0.12*	.11*	0.41	.07	0.08	.05
Married	0.29*	.24*	0.81*	.12*	-0.18	-.11
Spouse employed	-0.16*	-.15*	-0.11	-.02	0.16	.11
White	-0.07	-.02	-0.71	-.05	0.03	.01
Socioeconomic	0.00	.00	0.20	.06	-0.01	-.01
Change in R^2	.32*		.27*		.07*	
Human capital						
Master's	0.06	.03	0.13	.01	-0.09	-.04
MBA	0.18*	.17*	0.83*	.14*	-0.06	-.04
Law	0.10	.04	-0.15	-.01	0.02	.01
PhD	0.00	.00	-2.40*	-.12*	0.07	.01
Other high degree	-0.02	-.01	0.19	.01	-0.23	-.06
Engineer	-0.07	-.05	0.08	.01	-0.14	-.07
Finance	0.03	.02	-0.25	-.03	-0.13	-.06
General management	0.14	.09	1.11*	.13*	0.04	.02
Human resources	0.00	.00	0.06	.00	-0.31	-.06
Management information systems	-0.06	-.02	0.07	.01	0.06	.02
Marketing	0.06	.04	0.81	.09	-0.18	-.09
Operations	-0.11	-.05	-0.19	-.02	-0.02	-.01
Other occupation	-0.04	-.03	-0.82	-.11	-0.03	-.02
Years since graduation	0.02*	.23*	0.05	.11	-0.01	-.15
Employment gaps	-0.06	-.06	0.33	.06	0.00	.00
No. of weeks of employment gaps	-0.00*	-.19*	-0.01*	-.17*	0.00	.07
Change in R^2	.11*		.10*		.05	
Motivational						
Desire for upward mobility	-0.05*	-.11*	-0.08	-.04	-0.15*	-.26*
Hours worked	0.01*	.13*	0.01	.04	0.00	.03
Change in R^2	.03*		.00		.06*	
Organizational						
No. of employees	0.06*	.16*	-0.03	-.01	0.04	.08
Publicly traded	-0.03	-.03	0.51	.09	0.12	.08
Change in R^2	.02*		.00		.01	
Industry-area						
Construction	0.06	.02	2.16*	.15*	0.09	.03
Transportation	0.07	.03	0.09	.01	0.03	.01
Retail	0.10	.04	0.79	.05	-0.04	-.01
Finance	0.02	.02	0.80*	.11*	0.10	.06
Service	0.03	.02	0.49	.07	0.06	.03
Communications	0.14	.07	0.35	.03	0.27*	.10*
Nonprofit sector	-0.21*	-.10*	0.35	.03	0.36*	.13*
Public administration	-0.19	-.06	0.75	.05	0.04	.01
Other industry	0.07	.02	0.42	.02	0.12	.03
Metropolitan area	0.18*	.15*	0.23	.04	-0.07	-.05
Change in R^2	.05*		.02		.02	
Personality						
Proactive personality	0.06*	.10*	0.35*	.09*	0.18*	.20*
Change in R^2	.01*		.01*		.04*	
Constant	0.97*		-5.41*		1.49*	
<i>R</i>	.74*		.66*		.59*	
R^2	.54*		.40*		.34*	
Adjusted R^2	.50		.34		.27	

Note. $N = 408$.

* $p < .05$.

used a sample of high-level executives, whereas the current study was drawn from a population of undergraduate business, engineering, and MBA alumni currently employed in a range of occupations and organizational levels. A somewhat different model may best explain career success for this more general population, especially with regard to career satisfaction.

When considering the generalizability of the findings, potential limitations should be noted. First, the use of mail surveys may be problematic in that we could not observe the actual generation of data, nor did we have control over who completed the significant-other survey. To minimize this problem, we provided detailed instructions throughout the survey and requested both the alumni and significant-other respondents to complete the surveys without consulting one another. A second limitation is that the predominantly White sample (96%) precludes generalization to other races. Future researchers should examine career success with a more racially diverse sample. A third limitation is the cross-sectional design of the study and the corresponding inability to draw strict causal conclusions. However, research indicates that personality traits are fairly stable over time (e.g., Staw et al., 1986), suggesting that the causal direction is from personality to career outcomes rather than the reverse. Nonetheless, future longitudinal research is needed both to provide further evidence for the stability of proactive personality over time and to establish the causal direction between proactive personality and career outcomes. Finally, we relied on self-report data to assess the dependent variables of this study. The limitations of self-report data are well-known (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), and future researchers should attempt to include other sources of data for the dependent variables of interest.

The results of our study suggest several additional opportunities for future research. For example, it would be fruitful to examine the behaviors that mediate the relationship between proactive personality and career success. Possible mediating behaviors may include the effective use of influence tactics, building social networks, active career planning, and initiating new projects. Researchers should also examine potential differences in the operation of proactive personality in different occupations. Some occupations may not allow one much latitude to be proactive, regardless of one's disposition, or may not provide the same kinds of rewards for proactive behavior. Finally, it would be worthwhile for future researchers to include in their models other personality variables that may be correlated with proactive personality, such as the Big Five traits (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1992), and other individual-differences variables, such as interests and general abilities. As a relatively narrow and focused trait, proactive personality may serve to mediate the effects of these more molar individual differences on career success.

In conclusion, the results of this study provide initial evidence that proactive personality contributes to career success.

Even after controlling for an extensive set of variables related to career success, proactive personality had a significant effect on career satisfaction, salary attainment, and the number of promotions over one's career. This finding is consistent with an interactionist perspective on careers (Bell & Staw, 1989) and adds to the growing body of evidence on the role of personality in organizational settings.

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Appendix

Shortened Version of Bateman and Crant's (1993) Proactive Personality Scale


Responses are made on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

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.

Note. From "The Proactive Component of Organizational Behavior," by T. S. Bateman and J. M. Crant, 1993, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 14, pp. 103-118. Copyright 1993 by John Wiley & Sons Limited. Reprinted with permission.

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