Jane STURGES

WHAT IT MEANS TO SUCCEED?
MANAGERS' CONCEPTIONS OF CAREER SUCCESS

What is success for the manager?, asked the author of the study in an empirical survey from the executives of a big British telecommunications company. The answers led her to the conclusion that the earlier conceived „advancement plans" are no longer sufficient to reflect the managers' needs to advance and their visions. Managers think in terms of professional advancement rather than organisational and hierarchical rank.

This paper reports the findings of a research study aimed at discovering how managers define career success for themselves on their own terms. The qualitative study was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews with managers in a leading UK telecommunications company: qualitative methods were chosen because they appeared to be those most likely to shed light on this under-researched topic, as discussed in more detail below in section 4.

It is acknowledged that career theory has lacked a satisfactory conceptualisation of how managers define career success for themselves on their own terms (Poole et al. 1993): managers' personal conceptions of success have often been excluded from research into careers (Herriot et al. 1994). As a result, career success is still frequently presented as something which can be determined objectively and measured solely through external criteria such as hierarchical position and salary level (e.g. O'Reilly and Chatman 1994, Melamed 1995). This view persists despite considerable evidence that managers do not regard their own career success in terms of such external criteria alone (e.g. Korman et al. 1981, Gattiker and Larwood 1988). Moreover, the flattening of organisational hierarchies and the advent of a new psychological contract between employer and employee, which does not include the promise of promotional opportunities,

(Herriot and Pemberton 1995) have made the traditional notion of career success as hierarchical advancement increasingly less relevant both to organisations and to individual managers.

Women managers and older managers in particular appear less likely to see career success in the external terms in which it is commonly described (e.g. Marshall 1984, Asplund 1988, O'Connor and Wolfe 1987, Nicholson and West 1988). This adds weight to the need for research which investigates the concept of career success from the perspective of individual managers.

The research findings presented in this paper therefore raise the issue of „what is success" (Sekaran and Hall 1989) for managers. In doing so, they fill a clearly identified gap in the theory on career success by developing a conceptualisation of managers' personal perceptions of career success, based on individuals' subjective definitions of career success (Poole et al. 1993), and presented in the form of a typology of managerial career success. The use of a typology to conceptualise career success from the individual's point of view responds to calls for the development of „orientational categories" in this field, that represent „an aggregation of individual data which reflects differences in subjective meanings" (Bailyn 1989).

The organisational background

Organisations are less and less willing and able to offer their managers career success based on the idea of hierarchical advancement than they were in the past. Over the past ten years many have rethought the way in which they operate and shed whole layers of management, destroying the neat hierarchical ladder up which executives once climbed. The ostensible reasons for this has been to improve communication and speed up decision making, but undoubtedly such changes have also been driven by a desire to reduce costs. The flattening of organisational hierarchies has meant in particular the removal of middle management grades within companies. In the organisation where this research was carried out, for example, there are now just six levels in the management hierarchy, compared with 12 before the process of restructuring began: between four and five thousand managers' jobs were lost in the most recent reorganisation six years ago.

This means that, for those managers who remain in organisations, there are far more limited opportunities for hierarchical advancement and consequently less opportunity to achieve success in the external terms by which it has traditionally been defined. The concepts of „career" and „career success", as they have been known, are now under threat (Leach and Chakiris 1988), since it is clear that hierarchical success, based on pay and position, may no longer be available to many people.

Other aspects of the changes which have taken place in organisations in the past decade have exacerbated the demise of the traditional hierarchical career. For now not only do managerial careers offer fewer opportunities for progression, they are also far more precarious. Many believe that in the future companies will employ just a small core of permanent staff, with others being brought in on a temporary basis, as and when required (Handy 1989). As a result the managerial career of today has been described as „boundaryless", since it is likely to be independent of, rather than dependant on, organisational boundaries (Arthur 1994): as such, responsibility for its development will fall increasingly on the individual manager, who must acquire the right mix of skills and competencies to survive in this new „freelance" environment (Kanter 1989).

For a growing number of managers, therefore, it may not even be possible to base career success on any kind of organisational success at all. Pahl (1995) comments: „Whether or not the golden age of orderly careers ever existed, the experience of most managers in the 1990s is of considerable insecurity and uncertainty about their future prospects."

In the circumstances, organisations have much to gain from a greater understanding of what career success means to the managers whom they still employ. The disappearance of the „career by advancement" means that many of the processes concerning career management previously used will have to be rethought: if companies want to continue to offer their staff opportunities for development, these will have to based on something other than the principle of upward mobility. Brousseau et al. (1996), for example, argue that the end of the hierarchical career is an opportunity for organisations to introduce a pluralistic career framework, which allows for definitions of success other than hierarchical advancement and consequently requires different approaches to career management and development. A better understanding of how individuals perceive career success therefore could provide organisations with insight into potential alternative focuses for career development initiatives.

The theoretical background

The literature on managerial careers suggests that managers' conceptions of career success cannot be represented adequately by external criteria such as level in the hierarchy and pay in the way that it frequently is (e.g. O'Reilly and Chatman 1994, Melamed 1995): there is much evidence that external organisational success is not sufficient on its own to make managers to feel that their careers are successful (e.g. Korman et al. 1981, Scase and Goffee 1989, Russo et al. 1991). It has been suggested that, as the career has an internal as well as an external dimension (Schein 1978, Gunz 1989, Derr and Laurent 1989), so career success itself should include a subjective internal dimension, as well as the objective external perspective from which it is generally viewed (Gattiker and Larwood 1986). If this is the case, then for managers personal conceptions of career success will be based on both objective external and subjective internal criteria.

Gattiker and Larwood (1990) argue that individuals' perceptions of their own achievements tend to be based on „less obvious, more subjective personal standards". They propose that career success should be assessed by reference to both internal and external perspectives (Gattiker and Larwood 1988), suggesting that, while studies investigating career success have generally focused on the external perspective, with „progress" being judged in terms of objective measures such as

income and job title, ,,a person's own assessment of his/her success may be strongly influenced by subjective internal career concepts" (Gattiker and Larwood 1986). Peluchette (1993) also proposes that career success for individuals consists of both objective and subjective criteria. She believes that ,,the subjective view concerns how a person feels about his or her career accomplishments and prospects for future achievements" and sets the importance of this internal dimension of success in an organisational context: ,,It should be emphasised that subjective career success has implications for one's mental well-being and quality of life, issues which most organisations are concerned about.....Individuals who feel successful are likely to be happier and more motivated, which in turn, would enhance their performance."

Poole et al. (1991 and 1993) suggest that subjective internal success may in fact be a more important determinant of perceived career success than objective external success. They argue that the interaction between objective external and subjective internal criteria for perceptions of success is very complex: while they agree that subjective criteria, such as interest and work satisfaction, are highly important, nonetheless they point out that objective criteria, such as income and supervisory status, can also influence feelings of career success.

Korman et al. (1981) found that many outwardly successful middle-aged (male) executives did not themselves believe they were a success; instead, they suffered from feelings of alienation, in particular related to a loss of affiliative satisfaction. Since Korman et al.'s research was carried out, a series of studies have indicated that managers place less emphasis on their careers as a source of satisfaction in their lives than they did in the past, altering their ideas about career success as a result: Scase and Goffee (1989), for example, believe that managers are increasingly disinterested in career success as it has been traditionally understood; they claim that managers are more and more drawn to their families as a source of satisfaction and less and less prepared to sacrifice their lifestyles for their careers.

Herriot and Pemberton (1995) likewise insist that ,,employees...are not as single mindedly promotion centred as they were ten or twenty years ago" and that, as a result, ,,many managers' ideas of career success do not match those held by people occupying the most senior roles in organisations, who are likely to see it in terms of position and pay". Sekaran and Hall (1989) suggest that the work force at large has adopted ,,a more individualised, 'protean' definition of success, which stresses

autonomy, flexibility and balance between work and home".

Schein (1996) found that, by the 1990s, up to 50 per cent of some groups of managers who took part in his research had a life style career anchor, that is they saw having the ability to balance their work life with their home life as the most important aspect of their career. This compares with groups of managers in the seventies and early eighties who he found were most likely to have work-focused general management or technical/functional career anchors. Schein attributes this change to the growing number of dual career couples who have to ,,integrate two careers and two sets of personal and family concerns into a coherent overall pattern". However, it seems likely that there is also some connection between the apparent shift in ideas about what the career means to managers and the organisational context of delayering and the new psychological contract, discussed in section 2.

The failure of many managers to relate their own success to purely external achievements (Korman et al. 1981, Herriot and Pemberton 1995) confirms that subjective internal criteria may in fact be a more important part of some individuals' personal definitions of career success. One group for whom this appears to be particularly true are women managers (e.g. Poole et al. 1993, Hennig and Jardim 1978, Marshall 1984, Asplund 1988), for reasons probably related both to their psychological development (Gilligan 1982) and their organisational experiences (Cox and Harquail 1991).

Powell and Mainiero (1992 and 1993) argue that women emphasise subjective internal measures of success more than men do. They conclude that, for women managers, career success relates more to satisfaction with career, defined in terms of its perceived quality, than objective career achievements ,,as measured by promotions, salary increments, and the like". ,,Subjective measures of success are at least as important as objective measures in determining whether women truly are successful," they state, although they stress that ,,this is not to say that men define their career success solely through objective measures or women by subjective measures" (Powell and Mainiero 1993).

Women managers often appear to relate their own career success to a process of personal development (Hennig and Jardim 1978) which involves interesting and challenging work (Marshall 1984, Asplund 1988), and balance with the rest of their life (Powell and Mainiero 1992). Hennig and Jardim (1978), for example, claim that women managers treat each job as an opportunity to

show that they can perform well; they conclude that they see achieving success in their careers almost as internal growth „towards an intensely personal goal which the individual alone can judge whether she has achieved". Marshall (1984) suggests that many women managers do not look far ahead in their careers but instead seek to get continual challenge, interest and growth from their work. Nicholson and West concur (1988) that „women managers are less concerned than men with material rewards from work and are more interested in fulfilling a need for growth".

The relative importance of external material criteria for career success also seems to wane as managers grow older (Nicholson and West 1988), with managers becoming more concerned in middle age with criteria for success such as autonomy and influence (O'Connor and Wolfe 1987, Nicholson and West 1988, Kalleberg and Losocco 1983.) Nicholson and West (1988) describe the period of „young middle-age", which they place between 36 and 45, as a watershed for managers in terms of what they want from their career. They claim that during this period managers' need for growth and need for rewards from work peak, before declining thereafter. Managers „nearing the end of their career" are „more relaxed, fulfilled, and less ambitious and are less concerned with material rewards", they say. On the other hand, they are more concerned with „opportunities to influence and contribute to their environments" (Nicholson and West 1988). O'Connor and Wolfe's research (1987) also supports the existence of some kind of mid-life turning point, which brings about a change in managers' career orientation and increases their need for autonomy at work.

Research methodology

This research was carried out using qualitative methods, namely semi-structured interviews. The decision to conduct the research in this way was made largely for pragmatic reasons. The questions which the research aimed to answer were as follows:

1. *What do managers conceive career success to be for themselves on their own terms?*
2. *Do women managers have different ideas about what career success is for them from men?*
3. *Do older managers have different ideas about what career success is for them from younger ones?*

The research questions are exploratory in nature: as a research topic, individuals' personal conceptions of suc-

cess have received little attention to date (Gattiker and Larwood 1989). For an exploratory study of this kind, it is generally accepted that qualitative methods offer the most appropriate means of answering the research questions (Marshall and Rossman 1989). It is also acknowledged that research which investigates the meanings and beliefs of individuals can be best carried out with recourse to qualitative methods (Silverman 1993). As Okely (1994) says, „peoples' beliefs, values and actions are not necessarily revealed by head counting".

This research was carried out amongst managers who worked for a leading UK telecommunications company. A total of 36 managers were interviewed for the research, 18 women and 18 men, divided into three age groups, the twenties, the thirties and the forties. The managers worked in all divisions of the organisation and held jobs at a variety of managerial grades, from the lowest to the grade below director level.

The aim of data analysis in this research was to build theory abductively (Blaikie 1993) from data gathered in the semi-structured interviews, in the manner described by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), who identity five stages in the analysis process: Following a period of *familiarisation* with the data, *identifying a thematic framework,* or the development of an index whereby the interview data could be coded, was the first step taken in analysing the data. After indexing, or coding, the next identifiable phase of analysis resembled what Ritchie and Spencer (1994) describe as charting: the data as a whole was examined in the context of the themes which emerged from coding. The latter stages of analysis were akin to what Ritchie and Spencer call *mapping and interpreting:* it involved integrating the concepts which emerged from the data in the context of the research questions to create a typology of managerial career success.

The development of the typology was central to the approach taken to data analysis in this research. The use of typologies, schemes which conceptually classify qualitative data according to different „types" which emerge from them, has been widely acknowledged as an expedient means of data analysis, particularly for research which explores the different meanings people place on the phenomenon being explored e.g. Ritchie and Spencer (1994) and is seen as especially pertinent for research which examines the career from the individual's point of view (e.g. Schein 1978, Driver 1982, Derr 1986). As discussed above, Bailyn (1989) has called for the development of more such typologies or *orientational categories,* which classify people „according to individual predispo-

sitions" about their careers. The decision to construct the typology was also informed by the process of data analysis itself. A series of analytical patterns and ideas from the data led the researcher inexorably towards building the typology. Thus its construction was the inevitable result of the data analysis process, and not simply an attempt to follow the example of previous research.

Because the types have been derived from and are grounded in the research data, most of the managers who took part in the research can be described as one of the four types. However, there were two managers for whom it was impossible to determine which type they were with any certainty.

Research findings

The research findings suggest that for individual managers the notion of career success is much more complex than it is commonly represented as hierarchical position and level of pay. All of the managers who took part in the study used internal criteria to measure their own success, as well as external criteria. Internal criteria were judged to be those which cannot be measured objectively in the way that pay and hierarchical level can be, and as such are experienced *internally* by the managers. Five separate groups of internal criteria for success were identified: achievement criteria, which included measures of success such as getting a sense of *achievement* from what one did at work and personal development, *accomplishment* criteria, which involved feeling that one was extremely good at one's job, enjoyment criteria, which meant seeing success in terms of finding work interesting and enjoyable, *integrity* criteria, which involved measures of success such as feeling that one acted with integrity as a manager and that the work one did was worthwhile, and balance criteria, which were centred on seeking the ability to balance work life with home life.

While internal criteria were an extremely important part of all the managers' conceptions of career success, external criteria nevertheless remained a crucial part of their ideas of success too. Grade criteria, such as hierarchical position and progression through promotion, and reward criteria, chiefly pay, were identified as a component of many of the managers' definitions of career success. However, the research also showed that external success is itself a more complex concept than has previously been acknowledged. It found that external success has two distinct aspects, an external material dimension based on grade and reward criteria, and a non-material and intangible dimension, which included personal

recognition criteria such as being respected and being seen as an expert, and influence criteria, such as being able to influence things at work and leave one's mark on the organisation for which one worked. Criteria such as these were often central to definitions of career success elicited by the research: whilst external to the managers, they are not „tangible" in the way that hierarchical position and level of pay are, and therefore are referred to as „intangible" criteria, in order to distinguish them from the „external" criteria of pay and position.

Thus the research found that, for all the managers, managerial career success was a three dimensional concept, based on internal, intangible and external criteria for success. The three dimensions were emphasised in different ways to varying degrees by individual managers: the difference between the managers in terms of how they viewed career success for themselves was therefore one of emphasis, not of actual kind. Most importantly, patterns emerged from the research, which revealed the existence of groups of managers who emphasised certain criteria for career success in a specific manner:

One group of managers saw career success very much in terms of organisational recognition, putting most emphasis on external grade and reward criteria in their definitions of career success. A second group of managers equated career success with personal recognition: for them, personal recognition criteria were central to their definition of success. A third group of managers associated career success with organisational influence; for them, influence criteria were the most important part of their definition of success. A fourth group of managers saw career success in terms of personal achievement and put achievement criteria at the heart of their idea of success.

Based on these groups of managers, a typology of managerial career success was developed to illustrate the diverse kinds of career success that the research found different managers pursued. The four types of managers found in this research are as follows:

➡ The Climber

For the Climber, career success is seen very much in terms of external criteria, that is the grade criteria of hierarchical position and progression through promotion and reward criteria, especially level of pay. The Climber's view of success is thus closest to the „traditional" concept of organisational career success and is often expressed as reaching the most senior levels of management:

„I have ambitions to succeed at the highest level...what that will be I don't know...I don't really want to say what it is, because I don't know...but it's to achieve at a high (level)...either director or general manager, a high level in business, or set my own business up." (20s man)

The name Climber was chosen to describe this type of manager not just because they aspire to move up the organisational hierarchy but also because they seek the status which they believe this will give them. Having an influence at work is not enough for them to feel success-ful, they have to achieve a perceived status too. This sta-tus can be expressed either in organisational or in social terms. The Climber also tends to be very goal oriented in terms of their attitude to their career progression. The managers who fall into this category as a rule set them-selves regular stretching goals and targets relating to their level of pay and their position in the hierarchy. Related to this emphasis on career goals, the Climber often has a strong competitive instinct.

Nevertheless, Climbers do not rely on external crite-ria alone to define their career success. They need to enjoy their work to feel that they are successful, and internal enjoyment criteria therefore are an important part of their idea of success too. Not surprisingly, however, their goal orientation and their competitive instinct mean that Climbers are highly likely to enjoy working in the corporate environment.

➡ **The Expert**

For the Expert, success is seen in terms of achieving a high level of competency at their job and being recog-nised personally for being good at what they do, be it in terms of being seen to be an expert or winning the respect of the people they work with. The Expert's conception of success is therefore grounded in both internal accom-plishment and intangible personal recognition criteria:

„I want to be good at what I'm doing and recognised as being good, and have that feedback." (20s woman)

This affirmation of their accomplishment is central to Experts' perception of career success. It can take many forms, such as given positive feedback, being thanked for their efforts or winning awards. External criteria are far less important in terms of how Experts conceive career success than internal and intangible criteria. For many

Experts, grade criteria for career success are not part of their definition of success at all. Other Experts, especial-ly younger ones, do include external criteria in their def-inition of career success, but only because they see them as another form of personal recognition, rather than because they value them in absolute terms in the way that Climbers do.

To Experts, the content of the job they do is more important than their position in the hierarchy or their sta-tus within the organisation. For this reason, they value enjoyment criteria for success highly, especially job satis-faction, and often are not prepared to sacrifice a job they enjoy doing for advancement within the organisation.

➡ **The Influencer**

To the Influencer, career success means being able to do things at work which have a tangible and positive effect on the organisation they work for, regardless of their posi-tion in the hierarchy. The Influencer's idea of career suc-cess is thus grounded in influence criteria for success, such as leaving a mark or having an impact on the busi-ness:

„If I was in a job where I couldn't influence the stuff I felt mattered, I'd go barking mad...I accept certain political realities, because the art of negotiation is knowing what you can change and what you can't, but my idea of hell is being in a job where I'm just there to carry out orders." (40s woman)

The way in which Influencers perceive they may achieve influence varies. For older Influencers in particular, the idea of leaving a mark on their organisation is extremely important, and is often linked to gaining autonomy at work, particularly for those managers who have not reached senior levels in the managerial hierarchy. For younger Influencers, or those who wish to progress up the hierarchy, influence is frequently seen as attaining a level of responsibility within the organisation, and, as such, something to aspire to as their career develops.

Influence is also often described in terms of having an impact on the business by Influencers of all ages. Some of the managers have tried to achieve this regard-less of their grade by getting involved in activities outside the normal remit of their job, which has allowed them to attain greater levels of influence than their position in the hierarchy would have permitted them. Others are keen to progress up the hierarchy because they perceive that the

higher they are, the greater the level of influence they will be able to exert. Nevertheless, while the Influencer may believe that their grade in the hierarchy is important, this is because of the influence it allows them, rather than for the status it gives them. Internal criteria for career success are important to Influencers too, in particular achievement criteria for success, because to them career success relates to what they can achieve within the organisation, rather than the position which they reach.

➡ **The Self-Realiser**

For the Self-Realiser, career success is very much an internal concept, based on the idea of achievement at a very personal level, sometimes in a way which means little to other people. As a result internal criteria for success, especially achievement criteria, are most important to the Self-Realiser. The Self-Realiser's idea of success is thus as far removed from external managerial success as possible and closest to the notion of personal fulfilment:

„If you've been able to express your best ability, and you've enjoyed yourself, then I think you've got a successful career...without both of those it wouldn't be successful." (20s man)

Accomplishment criteria for success may also be valued by the Self-Realiser, since they sometimes obtain a sense of achievement from being good at what they do at work. However, while success for the Self-Realiser can be the result of specific job-related achievements, sometimes they may have difficulty in describing their very personal idea of career success in organisational terms at all.

Self-Realisers often find it essential that their work is challenging at a personal level in some way. Meeting a challenge not only adds to their sense of achievement but helps them develop as managers, something which many Self-Realisers value. In addition, for Self-Realisers, a vital part of their idea of career success is achieving a balance between their work life and their home life; they are usually managers to whom it matters that they succeed in both spheres of their life on their own personal terms.

Differences were found between the male and female managers, and younger and older managers, in terms of the criteria they used to define career success. The men were more likely to see their own career success in terms of external criteria, whereas the women perceived theirs more in terms of internal and intangible criteria; younger

managers favoured external criteria for success more than older managers, whereas older managers were more likely to view career success in terms of influence criteria, especially the criterion of leaving a mark on the organisation.

This was reflected in the kind of managers who were identified as being each of the four types described above: The group of Climbers consisted of seven men, six of whom were in their twenties and thirties; the group of Experts consisted of nine managers, seven women and two men, including three of the five women in their twenties who took part in the research; the group of Influencers was composed of eleven managers, six men and five women, seven of whom were in their forties, including five of the six men interviewed; the group of Self-Realisers consisted of seven managers, six women and one man, spread between the three age groups. (It was impossible to describe two of the managers, both men, as any one of the four types.) Thus the research findings show that younger men are most likely to be Climbers, and older men Influencers, whereas younger women are most likely to be Experts, and older women Experts, Self-Realisers or Influencers.

Discussion

The research findings support the view that describing managerial career success wholly in the external material terms of hierarchical position and pay does not represent what most managers feel about their own success (e.g. Korman et al. 1981). For all of the managers who took part in the research, success had an internal as well as an external dimension (Poole et al. 1993, Gattiker and Larwood 1986 and 1988, Peluchette 1993). Of the four types of manager identified, just one, the Climber, has a view of career success which in any way resembles the traditional definition of success as advancement (e.g. O'Reilly and Chatman 1994, Melamed 1995). Only seven of the 36 managers interviewed for this research could be categorised as Climbers; the vast majority (29) of the managers, therefore, had a personal definition of career success which was far removed from the „traditional" idea of success within organisations.

Since all of the Climbers the research identified were men, it is perhaps not surprising that the „traditional" model of career success has been identified as representing a typically „masculine" idea of success (e.g. Powell and Mainiero 1993). Most of the managers identified as Experts and Self-Realisers were women: aspects of the

Expert's and Self-Realiser's definitions of career success reflect the findings of studies which have investigated what female managers want from their careers: the Self-Realiser's conception of success, based on the idea of achievement at a very personal level, in particular echoes much of this earlier research, which showed that women managers seek challenge and personal growth from their careers, rather than external material success (e.g. Hennig and Jardim 1978, Marshall 1984, Asplund 1988, Nicholson and West 1988).

The Experts defined career success as accomplishment and personal recognition. While less has been written about the importance of these criteria for success to managers, there is some indication of the value managers, especially women, may place on them: Hennig and Jardim (1978), for example, claim that women treat each job as an opportunity to show that they can perform well.

The largest group to emerge in this research was that of the Influencers, generally an older group of managers, who saw success in terms of being able to have a real influence on the organisation they worked for and leave their mark behind them. This again echoes the findings of earlier research which acknowledged that the idea of influence may be more important to older managers (O'Connor and Wolfe 1987, Nicholson and West 1988).

It is open to debate how far the views of career success the research found the majority of the managers held have been influenced by the changes which have taken place in organisations over the past decade. Many of the success criteria which the managers used could be seen as a response to the context of organisational delayering and the new psychological contract which has arisen between employer and employee as a result. For example, accomplishment may be more important as a measure of success to managers who perceive their career to be „boundaryless", in that it is acknowledged (Kanter 1989) that those managers who succeed in this environment will need to be extremely competent at what they do. Likewise, it is possible that getting a sense of achievement from what one does at work may become the only thing by which success can truly be judged when the boundaryless career is the norm and career success cannot be computed in organisational terms at all.

It may also be the case that other success criteria, such as personal recognition, are emphasised as „alternatives" to the traditional idea of career success based on hierarchical advancement, which is perceived to be no longer available: it is accepted that managers alter their needs as their career develops to suit what they believe

they will be offered in order to achieve self-fulfilment of some kind (Nicholson and West 1988). In particular, success in organisations may become increasingly equated with criteria of influence in a context where managers operate in a „flattened" hierarchy with little opportunity for progression.

Thus, the kind of success the Expert seeks could reflect what career success means in a boundaryless career, which focuses very much on the individual's skills and competencies, recognition of which will probably be in personal not organisational terms. The conception of career success held by the Self-Realiser, as achievement at a very personal level involving personal challenge and self-development, is also in keeping with the context of a career where organisational success is unattainable or means very little. Career success as the Influencer describes it is suited to an environment where is little opportunity to move up an organisational hierarchy, but every chance to succeed through extending one's sphere of influence in a flatter structure.

Research which shows how managers have altered their ideas about what their career means to them (e.g. Scase and Goffee 1989, Schein 1996) suggests that the changing organisational context may have had a strong influence on managers' conceptions of career success. Nevertheless, earlier literature, in particular that which examined what women managers wanted from their career (e.g. Hennig and Jardim 1978, Marshall 1984), also indicates that many managers have never viewed their own career success in terms of hierarchical advancement. One must conclude, therefore, that further studies are needed to explore why different managers conceive success in the way that they do, and what are the most significant influences on them in this regard.

Conclusion

In the past, careers have generally been viewed from the point of view of the organisation (Herriot et al. 1994) and success judged accordingly in external, organisational terms. The research findings discussed in this paper indicate that no such narrow definition of career success exists from the point of view of the individual. Managers have different ideas about what career success means to them, illustrated here by the typology of career success which the research has developed.

The typology shows that managers' views on career success not only need not be in accord with the traditional organisational definition, but also are not homogeneous at all. It is just as possible for a manager to see career

success in terms of extremely personal achievement involving a degree of challenge and self-development, like the Self-Realiser does, as it is for them to see it primarily in terms of organisational seniority and pay, like the Climber: each definition of success as described in the typology is equally valid.

The research findings therefore greatly improve understanding of what careers and career success mean to managers: organisations should no longer assume that they are a homogeneous group, with a single set of wants and needs related to their career. In particular, there are important implications for the future development of organisational career management systems. In the past, career development for managers has been predicated on the idea of career success as hierarchical advancement: more recently there have been calls for organisations to introduce pluralistic career frameworks (Brousseau et al. 1996), based on different notions of success.

This research suggests what kind of ,,alternative" definitions of career success organisations might promote as the basis for new career tracks and career development strategies. In this way, organisational career management will reflect better what individual managers actually want from their careers and may even allow the disappearance of the hierarchical career to be seen as a positive move and not as the negative phenomenon it is currently perceived to be.

References

Arthur, M.B. (1994) 'The boundaryless career: a new perspective for organisational enquiry', Journal of Organisational Behaviour, 15: 295-306.

Asplund, G. (1988) Women managers: changing organisational cultures, Chichester: John Wiley

Bailyn, L. (1989) 'Understanding individual experience at work: comments on the theory and practice of careers', in M.B. Arthur, D.T. Hall and B.S. Lawrence (eds.) Handbook of career theory, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Blaikie, N. (1993) Approaches to social enquiry, Cambridge: Polity Press

Brousseau, K.R., Driver, M.J., Eneroth, K. and Larsson, R. (1996) ,,Career pandemonium: realigning individuals and organisations", Academy of Management Executive, 10(4): 52-66.

Cox, T.H. and Harquail, C.V. (1991) 'Career paths and career success in the early career stages of male and female MBAs', Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 39: 54-75.

Derr, C.B. and Laurent, A. (1989) 'The internal and external career: a theoretical and cross-cultural perspective', in

M.B. Arthur, D.T. Hall and B.S. Lawrence (eds.) Handbook of career theory, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Derr, C.B. (1986) Managing the new careerists: the diverse career success orientations of today's workers, San Francisco: Jossey Bass

Driver, M.J. (1982) 'Career concepts - a new approach to career research', in R. Katz (ed.) Career issues in human resource management, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall

Gattiker, U.E. and Larwood, L. (1986) 'Subjective career success: a study of managers and support personnel', Journal of Business and Psychology, 1(2):78-94.

Gattiker, U.E. and Larwood, L. (1988) 'Predictors for managers' career mobility, success and satisfaction', Human Relations, 41(8): 569-591.

Gattiker, U.E. and Larwood, L. (1989) 'Career success, mobility and extrinsic satisfaction of corporate managers', The Social Science Journal, 26(1): 75-92.

Gattiker, U.E. and Larwood, L. (1990) 'Predictors for career advancement in the corporate hierarchy', Human Relations, 43(8): 703-726.

Gilligan, C. (1982) In a different voice, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Handy, C. (1989) The Age of Unreason, London: Business Books

Hennig, M. and Jardim, A. (1978) The managerial woman, London: Marion Boyars

Herriot, P. and Pemberton, C. (1995) New deals: the revolution in managerial careers, Chichester: John Wiley

Herriot, P., Gibbons, P., Pemberton, C. and Jackson, P.R. (1994) 'An empirical model of managerial careers in organisations', British Journal of Management, 5: 113-121.

Kalleberg, A.L. and Losocco, K.A. (1983) 'Aging, values and rewards: explaining age differences in job satisfaction', American Sociological Review, 48: 78-90.

Kanter, R.M. (1989) When giants learn to dance, London: Simon & Schuster

Korman, A.K., Wittig-Berman, U. and Lang, D. (1981) 'Career success and personal failure: alienation in professionals and managers', Academy of Management Journal, 24(2): 342-360.

Leach, J.L. and Chakiris, B.J. (1988) 'The future of jobs, work and careers', Training and Development Journal, April: 48-54.

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G.B. (1989) Designing Qualitative Research, Newbury Park: Sage

Marshall, J. (1984) Women managers: travellers in a male world, Chichester: John Wiley

Melamed, T. (1985) ,,Career success: the moderating effect of genderí, Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 47: 35-60.

Nicholson, N. and West, M.A. (1988) Managerial job change: men and women in transition, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

O'Connor, D.J. and Wolfe, D.M. (1987) 'On managing midlife transitions in career and family', Human Relations, 40(12): 799-816.

O'Reilly, C.A. and Chatman, J.A. (1994) 'Working longer and harder: a longitudinal study of managerial success', Administrative Science Quarterly, 39(12): 603-627.

Okely, J. (1994) 'Thinking through fieldwork', in A. Bryman and R.G. Burgess (eds.) Analysing Qualitative Data, London: Routledge

Pahl, R. (1995) After success, London: Polity Press

Peluchette. J. van E., (1993) 'Subjective career success: the influence of individual difference, family and organisational variables', Journal of Vocational Behaviour, 43: 198-208.

Poole, M.E., Langan-Fox, J. and Omodei, M. (1991) 'Sex differences in perceived career success', Psychology Monographs, 117(2): 153-174.

Poole, M.E., Langan-Fox, J. and Omodei, M. (1993) 'Contrasting subjective and objective criteria as determinants of perceived career success: a longitudinal study', Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology, 66: 39-54.

Powell, G.N. and Mainiero, L.A. (1992) 'Cross-currents in the river of time: conceptualising the complexities of women's careers', Journal of Management, 18(2): 215-237.

Powell, G.N. and Mainiero, L.A. (1993) 'Getting ahead – in career and life' in G. Powell (ed.) Women and men in management, 2nd edition, Newbury Park: Sage

Ritchie, J. and Spencer, L. (1994) 'Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research', in A. Bryman and R.G. Burgess (eds.) Analysing Qualitative Data, London: Routledge

Russo, N., Kelly, R-M. and Deacon, M. (1991) 'Gender and success-related attribution: beyond individualistic conceptions of achievement', Sex Roles, 25(5-6): 331-350.

Scase, R. and Goffee, R. (1989) Reluctant managers: their work and lifestyles, London: Routledge

Schein, E.H. (1978) Career dynamics: matching individual and organisational needs, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley

Schein, E.H. (1996) „Career anchors revisited: implications for career development in the 21st century", Academy of Management Executive, 10(4)

Sekaran, U. and Hall, D.T. (1989) 'Asynchronism in dual career and family linkages', in M.B. Arthur, D.T. Hall and B.S. Lawrence (eds.) Handbook of career theory, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Silverman, D. (1993) Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analysing talk, text and interaction, London: Sage