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Title: The role of developmental networks in building a managerial career

Year: 2020

Version: Accepted Manuscript (Final draft)

Please cite the original version:

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the role of developmental networks in a managerial career. We argue that the twenty-first century managerial career is constructed in interaction with developmental networks. The people around one and the prevailing situation can either promote or restrict a person's career. We search for answers to the questions of 1) what kinds of developmental networks exist and 2) how developmental networks affect managerial careers. We interviewed 16 managers, both male and female, in semi-structured thematic interviews. We discovered six core narratives of developmental networks: Enticers, Recognizers, Supporters, Challengers, Blockers and Demotivators. Our results highlight the importance of support and developmental networks in managerial careers.

Keywords:

Career, manager, developmental network, narrative, Finland

The Role of Developmental Networks in Building a Managerial Career

In the twenty-first century the already turbulent career environment has become even more complex due to globalization, technological advances, the flattening of organizations, numerous career transitions and financial crises (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Baruch, Szücs, & Gunz, 2015). At the same time, networks have become more important than ever to personal and career growth and some types of networking behavior are related to career outcomes. Singh et al. (2009) emphasized that career resources are embedded within individuals and their relationships. It has also been discovered that mentoring outcomes for protégés and mentors are determined by not only individual differences and dyadic factors but also the influences of the people from various social spheres who comprise one's developmental network. (Chandler, Kram, & Yip, 2011).

According to Higgins and Kram (2012) developmental networks are a group of people who take an active interest in and action to advance focal individuals' careers and personal growth. Developmental networks research started when mentoring research broadened from its dyadic perspective to the support provided by a developmental network (Kram, 1985; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy & Kram, 2012). How developmental networks affect managerial careers has become an increasingly important issue. Developmental network in a managerial career has been defined as "a network of individuals actively involved in supporting the leader's career and identity development through providing developmental assistance" (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Dobrow & Higgins, 2005; Ghosh, Haynes & Kram, 2013). Several scholars have highlighted the importance of developmental networks (e.g. Higgins & Kram, 2001; Bosley, Arnold, & Cohen, 2009; Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy, & Kram, 2012; Cohen, 2014; Colbert, Bono, & Purvanova, 2016; Chanland & Murphy, 2018). In this study, the developmental

networks include people "whom the manager perceives has had an effect during his/her career development".

We have focused especially to managerial careers because managers usually are highly educated and therefore have more career possibilities. In addition to that, the current business environment challenges the traditional managerial careers: hierarchies, centralized control, formality and bureaucracy offer ways to manage companies that are too slow, stagnated and predetermined for the new, highly complex and dynamic environment. (Ekonen & Forsström-Tuominen, 2017). Furthermore, managers have highly demanding tasks and responsibilities and their careers often develop to the higher positions in organizations where they must take more responsibility, work across different networks and influence others. The network of developers around manager is essential when the career develops to more demanding positions. Despite the apparent positive influence that developmental networks have on managerial careers, Singh et al. (2009) have noted that, by researching the role of mentoring and career capital in career success, the scholars should examine both positive and negative career outcomes. We know relatively little about developmental networks' negative outcomes to the managerial careers/and the diverse experiences that managers have on developmental networks. We argue that there may be diverse relationships around person's career, not only supportive ones. The surrounding people can promote or hinder the development of a managerial career.

The study has two main purposes: firstly, to examine different types of developmental networks, and secondly, to explore the agency of developmental networks in managerial careers. We begin with a review relating to developmental networks and managerial career research. We then describe our methods and report our major findings regarding the research questions. Finally,

we discuss the implications for research and practice.

Developmental networks and managerial careers

Networking behaviors can be defined as individuals' attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career (Forret & Dougherty, 2004). Developmental network discussion has roots in mentoring. Previous mentoring research conceptualized mentoring "as the developmental assistance provided by a more senior individual within a protégé's organization" (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Today mentoring research has broadened from its traditional dyadic perspective to an examination of the support provided to individuals by a "constellation" of several people from different life domains (Cotton, Shen, & Livne-Tarandach, 2011; Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy & Kram, (2012). Mentoring outcomes for protégés and mentors are determined not only by individual differences and dyadic factors but also by the influences of people from various social spheres who make up the individual's developmental network (Chandler, Kram & Yip, 2011). Chandler, Kram and Yip (2011) propose a shift from thinking about mentoring as an interaction between individuals to mentoring as a property of whole systems. Recent research has called for increased attention to *developmental networks* (e.g. Higgins & Kram, 2001; Molloy, 2005; Higgins, Dobrow, & Roloff, 2010; Shen & Kram, 2011; Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy & Kram, 2012; Cheung, Herndon, & Dougherty, 2016).

The developmental network as a concept is near mentoring, it refers to "groups of people who take an active interest in and action toward advancing a protégé's career" (Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy & Kram, 2012). Developmental networks are "conceptualized as a set of relationships that offer mentoring assistance including senior colleagues, peers, family, and community members" (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Molloy, 2005). Drawing on previous developmental networks

research, Murphy and Kram (2010) argue that "non-work relationships are a critical part of developmental networks and individuals' career success". Non-work relationships have been studied in the social support and work-family literatures and work-family conflict/facilitation (Murphy & Kram, 2010). Support from work relationships was positively associated with salary level and career satisfaction and support from non-work relationships was positively associated with career satisfaction and life satisfaction (Murphy & Kram, 2010).

Studies on developmental networks in career context are relatively new but recently there has been increasing interest on it. Higgins, Dobrow and Roloff, (2010) studied the relationship between optimism and the structure and quality of individuals' developmental networks in a sample of young adults. Cotton, Shen and Livne-Tarandach (2011) noted that the developmental networks of those with the highest levels of extraordinary career development are large and diverse, composed of a rich mix of single-function and multiplex ties. Shen and Kram's (2011) study shows that expatriates have developmental networks of different sizes, that more than 60 percent of the developers are cross-cultural, that there are few home-based networks, and that there was a dominance of psychosocial support drawn from a wide range of developers, including company colleagues, family, and friends. Ibarra's (1993) study pointed out that the networks of women and racial minorities differ from those of their white male counterparts in composition and in the characteristics of their relationships with network members. Carroll and Teo (1996) found that the networks of managers and non-managers differed e.g. by ties outside the organization and to co-workers, by network size, and by the closeness of ties. Ghosh, Haynes and Kram (2013) suggested that different kinds of holding behaviors are necessary to enable growth and effectiveness for leaders in different developmental orders. Spouses have an impact on managerial careers (Känsälä, 2012; Heikkinen, 2014; Heikkinen, Lämsä, & Hiillos, 2014) and play an

important role in shaping how managers make sense of their career in relation to their family (Lysova, Korotov, Khapova & Jansen, 2015).

We argue that a person's managerial career is created in interaction with his or her developmental networks, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Surrounding people and prevailing situations can support or hold back a person's career development. However, people themselves ultimately make their own career decisions (Heilmann, 2004; LaPointe & Heilmann, 2014). The current study contributes to the theoretical discussions of developmental networks in managerial careers. In the practice, the study is useful for career counselling and mentoring processes.

Method

Design

To better understand the developmental networks in managerial careers, the authors utilized the qualitative, interpretive and inductive research method. Narrative research is the study of stories. Stories can be ubiquitous, appearing as historical accounts, as fictional novels, as fairy tales, as autobiographies, and other genres. Stories are also told by people about themselves and about others as part of their everyday conversations (Polkinghorne, 2007). Bruner (1986) has explained the term narrative as a specific 'mode of knowing'. Many scholars have noted the benefits of a narrative approach in career studies (Cochran, 1990; Cohen & Mallon, 2001; Bujold, 2004). Narrative research gives us insights into how managers present their experiences and a multifaceted picture of managerial careers (Cohen & Mallon, 2001). The narrative approach is a tool for individual career determination and identity and it helps the subject adapt to the conditions in the contemporary world of work that unsettle previously predictable careers and professional

identities (Ashforth & Fugate, 2001; Cohen & Mallon, 2001; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).

Participants

The sample for the current study included 16 managers who were recruited by using a snowball sampling approach. Eight were male and eight were women managers. Participants' age ranged from 36 to 49 years. Eleven of the managers were married and they had an average of 1.6 children. All of the interviewees were Finnish citizens living around Finland. In this study the managers work in high-technology industry that is based primarily on development of new knowledge and the production and management of new technologies (Harpaz & Meshoulam, 2004). High-technology industry operates on global markets and is affected by global competition. This industry also faces a turbulent environment and constant uncertainty. The culture of the industry also supports flexibility, freedom of action, and cooperation and interaction across the different organizational levels (Gamst & Otten, 1992).

Measures

The authors developed five main themes (or domains, Blunstein et al. 2013; Fouad et al. 2012) to uncover the various experiences that the participants may have had during their managerial careers. The interview themes examined managers' background information, accounts of early career, changes and turning points during career, current managerial position, and future career prospects.

Procedures

Data collection. Author 1 contacted the participants and arranged the appointments. Data were collected through the use of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews in the managers' workplaces, in quiet office rooms reserved for the purpose. The length of interviews ranged from

60 to 150 minutes, with an average of 105 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Finnish, which was the interviewees' native language. After 16 interviews saturation was reached and no new themes emerged (Silverman, 1997). All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the professional transcriber to ensure research credibility and confirmability of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Identifying information was removed from the interview files, and each participant was assigned a pseudonym to preserve confidentiality. Author 1 checked the completed transcript against the original audio file to ensure accuracy and make any necessary changes.

Data analysis. We used narrative thematic analysis method. According to Riessman (1993; 2008), narrative analysis refers to a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form. The underlying emphasis of a narrative thematic analysis is on the content of the text, what is said more than how it is said. The thematic approach in narrative research is useful for finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report. (Riessman, 1993; 2008.) The coding process comprised three major steps. First, the authors read all the interviews many times in order to become familiar with the data. In this phase the texts were marked with colors and different notes were written into marginals. After the authors had independently read the data, the team collectively discussed about the first coding step and the initial notes they have done.

Second, the authors started coding independently the participants' responses that included other people and saved them into an another excel file. After that the authors discussed each individual set and compared the coded responses that were saved to the excel file until the consensus was reached.

Third, based on the coded responses the authors continued working with the responses gathered to

the excel file. Altogether, 147 stories based on 16 interviews were identified of which 64 stories included other people's affection and role on their career. These 64 stories were divided into groups which consisted of same kind of responses. The purpose of creating groups was to start finding common themes. Along the third phase the authors worked together, and the raw data were continually reviewed to ensure the accuracy of themes. Once the themes were finalized, the authors determined how well the data represented the sample. Therefore, the data were classified as typical (applies to more than half the cases: 9-16 in this study), or variant (applies to less than half the cases but more than two: 3-8 in this study). Lastly, the data were charted based on the aforementioned categories (Hill et al., 1997, 2005).

Results

Analysis of the data revealed six core narratives: a) Enticers, (b) Recognizers, (c) Balancers, (d) Challengers, (e) Blockers and (f) Demotivators. Table 1 provides a list of these themes, along with the frequency of each.

Insert Table 1 about here

Enticers

Managers in this core narrative emphasized that extra-organizational colleagues, named here as Enticers, widened their career options by offering them new career opportunities. Our findings point to the importance of knowing extra-organizational colleagues at the beginning of one's career: they will help to open doors to workplaces and managerial positions. However, the

data suggest that these new career possibilities usually come as a surprise to managers themselves and cause uncertainty and conflicting feelings even if they lead to a positive outcome. John, for example, got a new job offer early on in his career from a colleague who was working in a fast-growing company. As John notes, extra-organizational networks help one to get new challenges:

> *"It was a time when this [Company X] was growing very rapidly and it was the 90s and I had some people I knew working here who by chance called me and asked how I was doing. And I said that I could try some new challenges and then I got a job offer here" (John, 40, production manager).*

Sometimes Enticers' offers were so unexpected and the managers felt that such offers unbalanced their career and upset their feeling of security. Peter, who had a permanent position and secure career prospects, got a very tempting but at the same time uncertain offer when he was in his 40's. The data suggest that extra-organizational networks offer unexpected possibilities that are not exactly what one has planned and can change one's career plans totally. They can also change the way one sees oneself, from a person with a secure career to a risk-taker:

> *"One person that I knew, whom I once used as a subcontractor in a one-time big project... she called me and said she was going on maternity leave and suggested that I should be her substitute during her leave. Well, I said, 'No, I'm 40 years old and I have a permanent position in [Company X] that I can't leave to become anyone's substitute'. However, she said, 'This is a big organization; think about this seriously. This is a big organization; you'll find new jobs here in the future'. Then I considered it for a few months and negotiated… After that I quit my job and started here on a one-year fixed-term contract" (Peter, 48, HR manager).*

It can be a difficult decision to quit a permanent, secure position and take up a new, one-year fixed-term position. The Enticer's offer often leads to an unexpected turning point in a career causing feelings of insecurity. Vera got an unexpected offer that suddenly changed her career

direction. Extra-organizational relationships can encourage one to go places that one has never even imagined, launching out in quite unknown directions:

> *"I worked in [Company X] and I was doing my PhD studies there and then I called someone working in [Company Y] and asked him to give me an interview. At the end of the phone call he said, 'We have a lot of open positions here. Would it be possible for you to consider applying for them?' And I said to him, 'I haven't worked with HRM issues before'. He just said, 'No worries, just apply'. And I didn't have any idea of where I was coming. Nevertheless, it's been nice to work here (Vera, 39, HR manager).*

The results show that a developmental network consisting of extra-organizational people can change the way the manager sees him/herself as a person. At the beginning of their career the managers are satisfied with a secure career pattern, but suddenly the Enticers' offer changes them from a happy non-risk-taker into a risk-taker into someone who is willing to take a leap into the dark. However, although the Enticer makes the career offer, it is the manager him/herself who makes the final career decision (see Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1994).

Recognizers

Throughout managers' careers there were company colleagues or senior managers on whom the manager's skills and abilities had made a positive impression. These people form the second core narrative, named here as Recognizers. The data suggest that especially the managers' desire to serve others in their organization were the reasons for the positive impression they had made. John, for example, had the idea that in his career his primary task was to help other people:

> *"I argue that the catalyst in my career development has been my idea that I always feel that I have to make my supervisor's life easy. I mean, I see myself as a service provider… and as I said, I*

haven't been aware of actively building my career. I've been working it out from different situations that this must be the reason why I've quite often been offered new jobs [in the current workplace]. Actually, I've rarely applied for any positions myself" (John, 40, production manager).

John believed that his career ideology as serving other people around him in the workplace was the main reason why, during his career, he had constantly been offered new assignments. In these stories, each manager felt that Recognizers had promoted their career indirectly, but obviously in each case there were individuals on whom the managers' trustworthiness had made an impact. In the next story, Anthony talks about his awareness of the fact that he could not promote his career alone:

"I don't underestimate at all that I'm hardworking, get along with people very well, because there are a lot of networks and social contacts here [in the current workplace]. You can't do anything alone" (Anthony, 41, HR manager).

As this quote from Anthony indicated, he needed good co-operation skills in order to construct his career in the company, which seemed to be constructed around a web of people. It was also important to make one's skills visible and find a way to stand out from the crowd, as the following quote from Susan indicates:

"Of course, I've always done my work very well. Moreover, as for my personality, I'm very sort of efficient. I mean that when I do something, then things happen. And because I'm kind of an extrovert, people also remember me well and that's why I've often been asked to take on new responsibilities too, and because I've worked here a long time I also know a lot of people in this company" (Susan, 40, HR manager).

In Susan's story, her career developed because someone recognized her skills and capabilities in a management position. Thus, she felt it was important to prove to others that she

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was capable, competent and committed in both her job and the organization. Other people's trust generally seems to be one of the main factors advancing careers. For example, Anna said that trust between different members of an organization develops through long-term relationships:

> *"Why I've worked so long in this one company is that people know me very well and the way I work and what kind of person I am. So people trust me quite a lot, and it's been easy for me to say, 'Yes, I can do it' " (Anna, 37, production manager).*

The results show that a developmental network consisting of Recognizers is constructed through long-term relationships of trust in one organization. During their career in the company, managers have impressed others with their excellent co-operation skills, showing that they can manage relationships around them well. However, they have not done it intentionally but it has seemed to be more like an ideology, how they have wanted to work as managers. Compared to Enticers, Recognizers are not always identifiable individuals but instead they seem to be a web of people who have recognized the manager's management skills and want to offer new career possibilities.

Supporters

The third core narrative group is called Supporters, and these were usually family members. Hannah, for example, told a story about how, early on in her career, her husband took care of their children and made it possible for her to work longer hours and dedicate to her career. In Hannah's story, her spouse's support was both behavioristic, meaning that he shared in the care of the children (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2006), and also psychological. As she said, her husband understood that she had to work long hours in order to build her career:

> *"Well, of course, if my husband would have been different, then nothing like this would have been*

possible, because he had to support me a lot, especially in the beginning of my career. I was

sometimes working both days and nights, at least during the first year. I talked on the phone every

evening and worked… It would not have been possible if he had not thought that this is a good

thing (Hannah, 37, production manager).

It is important to have a spouse who shares the same ideas of how to combine family and

career (see Heikkinen, Lämsä and Hiillos, 2014). According to Frederica's story, she shared family

responsibilities with her husband:

"And in my family, my husband's got the same kind of attitude as me. For example, if our daughter

is sick, then we both take care of her. Not just me (Frederica, 41, HR manager).

Matt also mentioned that his wife had given him psychological support for his career.

Behind his story the traditional gender role, in which the husband is the breadwinner, was also

evident. Instead of talking about objective career success, such as making money and experiencing

upward career development, Matt said that he had the possibility of creating a meaningful career

with his wife's support:

"Our family influences are such that at home nobody has ever tried to restrict anything. It really

is two-sided. I say to my wife and my wife says to me, 'Think. Is it the sort of job that you would

like to do, and is it better than the job you're doing right now?' Sort of like a basic attitude is that

the main idea is not to make as much money as possible, but to enjoy your work as much as possible.

And that kind of support I get at home. And because of that, I don't have any pressure that I should

apply for another job to make more money" (Matt, 36, HR manager).

In Matt's story his wife shared the same ideas about building a meaningful career that suits

one instead of aspiring to more money and other objective features of career success. However,

what is striking in the male managers' stories is the plain language they used when they talked

about the supportive role of their families. For example, Mike said that his family had saved him from both physical and psychological problems because his family life balanced his working life and made it impossible for him to work around the clock:

> *"I believe that I would have been burned out without my family. With this mental combination and this workplace and this job and this working culture, I would have been working every night and weekend if I didn't have my family (Mike, 39, HR manager).*

This means that the family plays a vital supporting role in male managers' well-being and health in relation to their career development. For male managers, having a family also changes their values and the way they think about their career in its early stages. In Anthony's case, the birth of his children was a turning point in his whole life:

> *"The family is a significant factor when there's a question about me and my relationship with work and my life. I think about the time when I didn't have any family, children, but only had a life partner. Then when our children were born that was a huge change in my attitude toward many things in life, not just work. But when you have kids, then you suddenly understand that there's something essential, something valuable in your life which is much bigger than any employer"* (Anthony, 41, HR manager).

In sum, the developmental network consisting of Supporters can be a valuable asset in a managerial career. Supporters offer both practical help and emotional support to develop one's career in line with one's own values. In these stories, the male managers became more family oriented during their career development. The effect of Supporters on the managers' careers was vital and positive: it promoted their career and had a positive effect on their physical and mental well-being.

Challengers

Although the role of spouse and children was positive in the third core narrative named as Supporters, this was just one side of the story. The findings from the data point to the fact that the family was, in the male managers' stories, also a Challenger. Challengers, the fourth core narrative, questioned the choices managers wanted to make during their career development and the goals they had for it. Quite often managers had to choose between career and family, or at least try to establish a better balance between them. As Anthony noted:

> *"Sometimes we've had very tough discussions at home, because sometimes you just get blind that now I have to do this and that at work and I have to get this and that. It's like a once-in-a-lifetime outlook. Then we come back to basics at home. 'If you want to work 60 hours a week, okay, we can move away'. But luckily I have a partner that I can talk to and she's like a coach and a partner but also a challenger"* (Anthony, 41, HR manager).

In Anthony's story, his wife sometimes pointed out to him that his career choices were threatening the balance and well-being of their family life. Some male managers felt that the family could sometimes restrict them and prevent them taking up new opportunities. Peter had conflicting feelings about the role of the family in his career. As he related, the family was a positive part of his life, but still it restricted his career choices:

> *"My family has been – some people would say – a barrier to my career. I mean that they didn't want to move abroad when I had the possibility of going… Then I thought that, really it was a big crisis for me to think that if we wouldn't have any children, I would have moved. However, I chose the family because we have kids. My wife actually chose"* (Peter, 48, HR manager).

Peter's story brings out one aspect of the concept of a boundaryless career (Arthur &

Rousseau, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1994), in which someone like a manager turns down career opportunities for personal or family reasons. The data suggest that male managers often limit the amount of work they take on and that they are unwilling to take positions that would threaten their life balance as a whole. As Mike said, he was unwilling to move upwards in his career because he had small children:

> *"I have to, or don't have to but I do, restrict my work quite a bit… and it might be that when you ask what kind of future plans I have… for example the task that my supervisor is running, I'm not ready to take on that kind of challenge, to change my position, if that would make my other work more difficult. This family work (Mike, 39, HR manager).*

The family phase seemed to affect managers' career choices and future career plans in such a way that they were willing to think about taking on a challenging job *after* their children had grown up. In other words, these managers were not denying themselves their career goals and dreams forever, but instead they were moving them to a later phase of their career.

The results show that male managers did not see the family as negative, but as something that forced them to slow their careers down for a while in order to balance career and family life. Male managers, we could say, put their career aspirations on hold. The role of the Challengers was clearly not to prevent managers' career development altogether but rather to slow down their career aspirations and make them re-evaluate their career choices. Often the choice had to be made between family well-being and the manager's possible new career move. In sum, the managers seemed to accept the situation in the belief that they would realize their career aspirations at a later stage in their career.

Blockers

Managers in this core narrative underscored that company colleagues, named here as Blockers, put obstacles in the way of women's opportunities for career development or questioned their managerial skills. Blockers closed the doors to new managerial positions and prevented women from fulfilling their career aspirations. Anna gave an example of what happened when she applied for a new position:

> *"My previous boss's job was open and I was of course interested in it… It could have opened a totally new world for me, because the job was something I didn't have any previous experience in, and I would have liked to give it a try. In addition, my previous boss and his boss recommended that position to me. But then there were a couple of guys there who didn't want me to get that job"* *(Anna, 37, production manager).*

According to Anna's story, it seems that her male colleagues inside the company blocked her career development in the particular company she was working in. In Anna's case, she was prevented from taking advantage of this new opportunity. Based on the data, it seems that women managers did not get any explicit explanations for such occurrences. Sometimes the reason seemed to be being too young, and the wrong gender. Hannah talked about the challenges she faced with her new boss at the beginning of her managerial career:

> *"I got a new boss. It was, I think, when I'd been working with him for approximately three or four months. Then one day he came and said, 'Come with me to the production department and tell me what you've done and how you could do things better". Next day he called me and apologized, saying that he'd been thinking that I was just a little girl and he'd thought, "How was it possible that I had a job like that"… Now he just realized that I'd been really doing good work. These kinds of things. But then I was just a 28-year-old young girl"* *(Hannah, 37, production manager).*

The Blockers seemed to question women's capabilities and whether they had the necessary

skills to hold a management position. In women's stories, they had encountered credibility problems and stereotypical gender expectations. Anna talked about this kind of experience in job interviews:

"In [job interviews] almost every time, if there are male interviewers, it's a regular question of how I, as a girl, imagine surviving among the vulgar men. These are like, I could be mad, because how old do I have to be before I'm treated like an adult woman instead of being called a girl? Nevertheless, I've thought that the men's world is the men's world, and they're testing me in those interviews, waiting to see my reactions to these questions. Because it's the other part of the story that you can't say, whether they're simply testing me or is there some kind of problem in their attitudes" (Anna, 37, production manager).

The results show that company colleagues in a developmental network could prevent women's career development. Blockers negatively affected women managers' careers by standing between them and any opportunities for a career move. In addition to that, women encountered stereotypical thinking based on their age and gender.

Demotivators

The sixth core narrative was named as Demotivators and these were usually senior managers working in the same organization. These senior managers led our interviewees to consider their work in a negative light, as something they did not want to identify with in the future. Shen and Kram (2011) propose that anti-role modeling, where the focal person sees part of his or her current self as being in conflict with what the developer stands for, is important for individual learning and development. As Anthony said, he wanted to have interesting assignments, not necessarily a position at a higher organizational level:

"I think I'll be OK as long as I get interesting assignments… I can go like zigzag if the job feels good. I'm not interested if I look at what kind of challenges those people have who are in charge of big organizations. I'm not necessarily interested in those tasks" (Anthony, 41, HR manager).

Based on the data, managers are not motivated to follow the traditional, hierarchical career path. Instead, their career ideology is based on meaningful managerial work, in which the content of the work is important, not the position in the hierarchy. Anthony's story links to the 'new career' discussion (see Mirvis & Hall, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996), where objective measures of career development are less important for managers than are subjectively meaningful careers. Vera reported that career development to a higher organizational level was not something that she was interested in for the future:

"I don't have any thought that I would want to be in my boss's position; he's the head of our HR department. When I look at what he's doing, it's awfully boring because he doesn't have any link to reality and to the concrete business because he's located in head office… and the fact that he's at a higher organizational level doesn't make the task interesting" (Vera, 39, HR manager).

In the 'new career' discussion, a horizontal move can offer interesting career development possibilities for managers. As the data show, learning is one of the main motivators in managerial career development. One reason for refusing a higher position in the hierarchy is the fear of putting an end to the learning curve in one's career, as Eva says:

I've said many times that I do not want to be in my boss's position. I've seen so closely what kind of job she's doing, and I don't think I would get anything extra out of it. It's more like moving to look at things from another angle" (Eva, 35, production manager).

In sum, the developmental network consisting of Demotivators can act as an important source of learning and development for managers. Looking at senior managers' work can teach

managers important lessons about their aspirations during their career. In these stories, managers' negative expectations with regard to senior management positions helped them to identify that learning and the nature and content of the job were the most motivating aspects for them. Managers based their future career goals on the idea of having interesting assignments that offered new learning possibilities.

Discussion and implications

This study supports the importance of ~~multiple~~ developmental networks in today's turbulent career environment (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom, 2005; Baruch, Szücs & Gunz, 2015). How the managerial career develops rarely depends only on the individual concerned. Other people can act as decisive and invaluable enablers of career achievements (Cotton, Shen & Livne-Tarandach, 2011). Researchers have so far paid scant attention to how managerial careers are affected by developmental networks, so this study contributes to expanding our understanding of the relationships pertinent to career development and success (Cotton, Shen & Livne-Tarandach, 2011). In particular, the study's findings enhance our understanding of managerial careers and developmental networks, showing that these networks can work both ways, as either contributing to or impeding managerial career. In this section we outline the implications of these findings for theory, research, and practice.

Implications for theory and research. First, this study extends prior knowledge of what kind of developmental networks exist and how they impact managerial careers. We argue that in today's turbulent working environment, a managerial career is constructed in dynamic interaction with developmental networks. Consistent with past research, this study supports the finding that developmental networks are important to manager's career development (e.g. Higgins & Kram,

2001; Molloy, 2005; Higgins, Dobrow & Roloff, 2010; Shen & Kram 2011; Dobrow, Chandler, Murphy & Kram, 2012; Cheung, Herndon & Dougherty, 2016).

Second, the results show that extra-organizational colleagues, family members, company colleagues and senior managers make up the most important developmental networks during managerial career development. The significance of developmental networks appeared in access to new career opportunities, practical and mental help in finding a balance between career and family life, challenging and blocking career aspirations and moves, and evaluating the managers' career development aspirations. The study's findings highlight the diverse effects developmental networks have on careers (Cotton, Shen & Livne-Tarandach, 2011; Shen & Kram, 2011), and in this case, on managerial careers.

Third, this study extends our understanding of how developmental networks have both positive and negative effects on managerial careers. The results clearly show that family members and company colleagues can slow down or block managers' aspirations for advancing in their career. Previous studies have emphasized that integrating family and career often holds back women managers' career development (Daly, Ashbourne, & Hawkins, 2008; Halrynjo, 2009). However, in this study it was only male managers who reported these experiences. Rather than family reasons, it tended to be company colleagues who limited women managers' opportunities to make career moves in the organization. These findings are in line with previous studies on how relationships in organizations may hinder women managers' career development possibilities (e.g. Gibson & Cordova, 1999; Oakley, 2000; Singh, Vinnicombe, & James, 2006). Findings from the study highlight the importance of including negative effects as another important dimension in developmental networks studies. Examining both positive and negative effects helps to expand

understanding of the functions they serve (Colbert, Bono & Purvanova, 2016).

Finally, family had an important role in both female and male managers' stories. The managers wanted to keep a balance between their career and family life, and they made their career choices according to the desire for balance. On a general level, research supports the importance of the intersection of family and a managerial career for both women and men (Murphy & Kram, 2010; Känsälä, 2012).

Implications for practice. The present study has practical implications that are worthy of consideration. First, other people can have significant effects on how a manager sees him/herself as a person. Other people's offers, demands or opposition can bring about sudden and unexpected shifts in one's career development. This can change the way the manager sees him/herself or can lead to a crisis if the career cannot be developed as planned. Sometimes the effect that other people have is so powerful that one's career development must be put on hold or the next career moves re-evaluated, or one must resign oneself to having less motivating career development for a while. These findings also have implications for career counselors as they usually work with young people. It is necessary for them to know about the importance of developmental networks in later career phases. They must inform their clients that these networks can work both ways, as either contributing to or impeding managerial career. Career counselors' assumptions that only women's careers are put on hold because of the family demands, must be challenged, because male managers also have challenges to keep a balance between career and a family. It is important for counselors to understand the role of company colleagues limiting women managers' opportunities to make career moves in the organization and help clients to be aware of that.

Second, the most fundamental component of present-day organizations is individual

interaction (see Ekonen & Forsström-Tuominen, 2017). The results of this study show that managers need good co-operative skills in order to be able to create a successful career in interaction with other people. It is important for career counselors to help clients understand and consider the importance of developing skills that enable the creation of long-term, dependable relationships around one, which seems to be vital for the development of a career in management.

Third, the findings of the present study extend prior research on instrumental support and encourage managers to be aware of the value of having supportive people in their lives. In this study, the "softer" support (see Higgins, Dobrow, & Roloff, 2010) given by family members had significant effects on managers' physical and mental well-being. Such support also helps managers to overcome the possible challenges that will come their way. Counselors may want to help clients consider of who are the supportive people in their developmental network and finding those important supporters.

Individuals also need to recognize the effect they have on other people's careers and critically examine whether they are having a positive or negative effect. Counselors should emphasize that people who are in management or other powerful positions in an organization should be aware of this.

Limitations and future research. The study has limitations in terms of sample and design. First, our study is limited to the extent that we have a qualitative research group that is rather small and we have a single source of information – that is, the interviews. Extending this research to a broader sample of managers would greatly enhance its generalizability.

Second, in this study only Finnish managers were examined. It would be interesting in the future to look at managers from different cultures. Such data would enable us to compare the

experiences of managers from other cultures and see the commonalities and differences between them.

Third, the design of our study would have been considerably stronger if we had gathered the data from managers at different stages in their career. Then we could have obtained wider data and could have found more specific results concerning the role of developmental networks in managers' early, middle and late career.

Conclusion

This study applied a narrative approach to examine the role of developmental networks during managerial career development. The main findings contribute several important insights to the managerial careers literature and the developmental networks literature. The key findings highlight the richness of developmental networks in the context of managerial careers and the effects these networks have. In addition, the results underscore the need to systematically consider how developers shape managerial careers, and to rethink the role of the positive and negative effects of developmental networks on managerial career development.

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TABLE 1

Six core narratives of developmental networks

Core narrative of developmental network	Effect on managerial career	Frequency
Enticers	Extra-organizational colleagues who offer new career opportunities and can change the way the manager sees him/herself as a person.	Variant (6/16)
Recognizers	Company colleagues who offer new assignments and have recognized the manager's skills in co-operation and in creating trustworthy relationships around him/her.	Variant (6/16)
Supporters	Family members who offer practical and mental help to balance between career and family life.	Variant (7/16)
Challengers	Family members who challenge managers' career aspirations and moves.	Typical (9/16)
Blockers	Company colleagues who block managers' career goals or question their managerial skills.	Variant (6/16)
Demotivators	Senior managers who act as examples of managerial work at a higher organizational level can help managers evaluate their career development aspirations.	Variant (3/16)

Note: Number of participants (n=13), *Typical* applies to 9-16 cases, *Variant* applies to 3-8 cases.