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Dual-Career Couple Issues in the Job Search Process: A Longitudinal Study

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Abstract

This study considered the impact of dual-career issues on the job search process. The result of surveys from 198 people in dual-career relationships found that five predictor variables (gender, previous relocation behavior, job prestige, partner's career importance, and career focus) had direct and indirect impacts on both the planned job search strategy for the couple as well as the actual decision making behavior.

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In the last few decades, the United States workforce has significantly changed its composition through the influx of women into the workforce (e.g. Burke & Greenglass, 1987). Work and family issues are becoming more intertwined, since both partners in a couple are likely to be working. Statistics indicate that by 1985 fewer than 10% of the population still fit the traditional family structure (husband employed and wife working in the home; BNA, 1986) which is down from 70% of American households in the 1950's (Pleck, 1985). In 1988, 54% of married women with children under 6 years of age were in the workforce and 62% of families with children over 6 years of age had both parents working (Information Aids, 1988).

Even though 60% of the U. S. workforce in 1993 reportedly consisted of dual-career couples (Michaels & McCarty, 1993), the issues facing them have often been neglected in the workplace and in research (Gupta & Jenkins, 1985). The majority of previous research has tended to be theoretical and not empirical. Previous research has often defined typologies of interaction (Hall & Hall, 1979), described relationship types between work and family (Evans and Bartolome, 1984), and identified different sources of role conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Although it has contributed a wealth of information, most work-family research considers the issue in a closed system by primarily studying the impact that each domain has on the other. This study expands on previous work-family research by taking family-related variables and applying them to a more specific aspect of work life - the job search process for dual career couples.

One criticism of the work-family literature is that much of it does not deal with specific and measurable constructs (i.e., Higgins, Duxbury & Irving, 1992). The work-family research tends to study the conflict between the work and family domains (i.e. Loerch, Russell, Rush,

1989) without focusing on specific family or organizational episodes. This study contributes to the work-family literature by studying the effect of family variables on a work-related episode outside of the context of domain conflict. Family variables should affect many work-related decisions and behaviors, and many of these can be examined at a more specific level than work-family role conflict. Furthermore, this study provides a longitudinal perspective which allows the examination of interplay between strategy forming intentions and actual decision making behavior. This study will consider the effect of dual-career issues on the job search process including career prioritization for the search and actual decision making behavior. The sample used in this study, students facing graduation, had a narrow focus, but is uniquely suited to studying these issues. All participants were in self-defined committed relationships in which one or both members were about to graduate from undergraduate or graduate school. They were all making major life decisions while constrained by their partner. This should allow the focus of the study to be on the influence of dual-career issues on the job search process without complications such as depending on the security of an existing job.

Dual-career Couples Research

Even two decades ago, researchers argued that the work and family domains can no longer be considered as separate entities (Kanter, 1977). Family and work have obvious reciprocal influences, and much of the work-family research has studied the impact that the two domains have on each other. Work-family conflict occurs when participation in one domain is incompatible, or interferes with, participation in the other domain, and this conflict can have negative outcomes (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Burke, 1988). The effect of the conflict can be bi-directional, such that work can interfere with family (i.e. overtime keeps a parent from a child's party), and family can interfere with work (i.e. a parent stays home with a sick child;

Gutek, Searle, Klepa, 1991). Empirical research has shown that conflict does exist and can have negative outcomes such as burnout and low job satisfaction. Burke (1988) found that when work interfered with the family lives of police officers, they experienced more burnout, higher levels of alienation and lower job satisfaction. Research has also focused on issues such as gender differences (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991), work and family involvement (Yogev & Brett, 1985), and stress and strain (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984).

Work-family issues have become more salient in the past few decades as more women entered the workforce and more couples face dual-career issues. O'Neil & Kinsella-Shaw (1987) argue that dual-career couples should be considered a special group when considering career development issues, because they face more complex issues. When both partners are working outside of the home, it creates more potential for work and family conflict since there are two jobs involved as well as the family (Gupta and Jenkins, 1985; Hall and Hall, 1979). Research has indicated that stress and strain experienced by one partner can have a negative effect on the other partner (Parasuraman, Greenhaus, and Granrose, 1992). For example, Higgins and Duxbury (1992) conducted a survey and found that dual career men had a stronger positive relationship between work conflict and family conflict than traditional men. Dual-career couples are also unique, because they deviate from traditional gender roles and experience more issues concerning role conflict and responsibility sharing (O'Neil & Kinsella-Shaw, 1987). Sometimes the negative effects of the dual-career couple lifestyle can be influenced by spousal social support. Burley (1995) found that spousal social support mediated the relationship between work-family conflict and marital satisfaction.

An example of the struggle that dual-career couples can face occurs when they choose to prioritize careers over family and maintain commuter relationships. Commuter relationships

occur when a couple decides to separately seek career opportunities and maintain two different households in different locations and see each other when schedules permit (Taylor and Lounsbury, 1988). This arrangement obviously disturbs the traditional family arrangement. Some research indicates that commuter relationships will be more successful when couples have been married long enough to have a shared history and when there are no children at home (Gerstel & Gross, 1982). Dual-career couples face some unique and tough issues that can affect all aspects of life including work-related events such as the job search process.

Job Search Research

The dual-career couple job search provides a good opportunity to consider the effects of personal variables on a work-related process. Members of dual career couples have to balance their job search with the job search of their partner and with the needs of their family. The complexity of this balancing act indicates that the couples are probably using strategies to determine how to proceed with the job search process. For example, the couple must decide whose career will take priority (if either), geographic restrictions and how to meet the needs of children (if present). In this study, the job search process will be operationalized by considering couple career prioritization. Specifically couple career prioritization refers to the strategy of deciding whose career will take priority in the job search. From the individual's perspective, one extreme is if the partner's career takes priority such that the individual will be expected to sacrifice for the partner. The other extreme occurs when the individual's own career takes priority in the search process. However, if both jobs are important, such as in an egalitarian relationship, the career prioritization would fall in the middle of the scale.

Current job search research rarely addresses the issue of dual-career couple search strategies such as career prioritization. Existing job choice research typically considers the job

search process in terms of factors such as job content characteristics (i.e. pay, benefits, type of work), process issues (i.e. evaluating jobs in comparison to others and search intensity; Schwab, Rynes and Aldag, 1987), and actual job search behaviors (activity and preparation; Blau, 1994). This earlier research treated the job seeker as if he or she existed in a vacuum and failed to adequately consider personal and social influences.

One line of research that considers personal issues as well as job issues is the work on the relocation patterns of dual-career couples. This research tends to examine the effect of relocation on the non-initiating spouse, location of the move and the economic costs to the family (Shaklee, 1989). Findings indicate that a move often results in a period of unemployment and a less satisfying job for the non-initiating spouse (Ferber & Huber, 1979; Lichter, 1983). This research often provides descriptive data of the psychological and economic costs of the relocation but does not consider the strategies involved in relocation decision-making (Shaklee, 1989). Shaklee (1989) summed it up by writing, "...two-earner couples rely on a very simple rule to determine family moves: that is, locate where the husbands have jobs." This explanation is an overly simplistic explanation for what should be a complex decision making process. Many social and family related variables besides gender should affect the strategy and actual decision making behavior when considering relocation.

Evidence exists that social context variables do influence the job search process. Using social information processing theory to show that socially related variables affect the job search process, Kilduff (1990) found that students who were friends or perceived each other as similar tended to interview with the same organizations. If friends can effect the job search process, family stakeholders (such as spouses or children) might exert an even stronger effect, since they will be directly impacted by the process and final decision. Family members have a unique

opportunity to provide both emotional and instrumental support to a person for work-related decisions (Adams, King, & King, 1996). Some research has indicated that job seeking support predicts job-seeking behavior (such as frequency and intention; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987; Wanberg, Watt & Rumsey, 1996). If family support predicts job seeking behavior, it could also influence job search strategies and decision making.

This study examines dual-career issues in the job search in two longitudinal steps. First, it focuses on the dual-career factors that influence job search strategies as operationalized by couple career prioritization. Second, it examines how personal variables and career prioritization eventually affect actual job decisions.

Model & Hypotheses

This study considered the impact of dual-career predictors on the development of a job search strategy. Job search strategy refers to deciding which partner's (one or both) career will take priority in the job search. Specifically, this involves strategies such as having one partner find a job and the other partner follows, or alternatively as having both partners search and choosing the best mutual option. The couple's career prioritization is likely to be affected by several personal and dual-career variables including gender, previous relocation behavior, job prestige, perception of the partner's career importance, and personal career focus. This study also considers how relevant predictors and the planned job search strategy affect the actual job decisions. Specifically, the study considers whether or not the couples actually followed the planned job search strategy concerning which career (if either) took priority.

Several dual-career variables were predicted to affect job search strategy and actual decision making behavior. In Figure 1 a model of the job search process of dual-career couples is presented. The model uses personal and dual-career variables to explain the impact of

relationship/family influences on the job search process (career prioritization) of individuals in dual-career couples. It also predicts direct effects for two of the variables and for career prioritization on the actual job decision. The longitudinal data used in this study allowed for the investigation of both behavioral intentions (job search strategy), and actual decision behavior, in a manner that is similar to theories of reasoned action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) hypothesized that intentions predict actual behavior. Brett & Reilly (1988) found evidence that intentions can predict behavior when they showed that willingness to relocate predicted actual relocation behavior in a longitudinal study.

This model hypothesizes that one objective, demographic variable (gender), one behavioral variable (previous relocation behavior), two attitudinal variables (perception of partner's career importance and career focus), and the prestige of the job should affect the planned job search strategy. Gender, past relocation behavior and planned job search strategy were predicted to directly affect actual decision behavior. Specific relationships and hypotheses are outlined below.

Planned Job Search Strategy

Job search strategy is operationalized in terms of career prioritization. In other words, the partner with the higher priority would take the lead in the search and get to accept the job offer of choice. The individual with the lowest priority would probably be constrained by the partner's decisions, have fewer options, and follow the partner to a new location. Job search strategy could place the individual's career: as the highest priority for the couple, as equivalent priority to the partner's career, or as lowest priority for the couple.

Although women have similar education and working ethics to men, they still face disadvantages in the workplace. Women have slower salary progression and fewer advancement

opportunities (Stroh, Brett, & Reilly, 1992). Research shows that women are much more likely to sacrifice their career for family related issues such as marriage, child care and career development of their partner (i.e. Burke & Greenglass, 1987). Lyness & Thompson (1997) found that women tend to be less mobile to advance their own careers. This tendency for women to sacrifice their own careers outlined in the Gender Role Framework of work-family research discussed by Gutek et. al. (1991). In this framework, gender has either direct or moderated effects on work-family conflict. Women are more likely to put family before work and therefore be first to make a work-related sacrifice. Due to cultural and historical constraints, women are expected to have different expectations and behaviors in the search process, often placing the priority of their career after their partner's.

H1: Women will be less likely than men to choose a job search strategy that gives priority to their own career.

It has been said that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior (Guion, 1991). Selection is an example of one research area that has built on this idea through biographical data (Schmitt & Ostroff, 1986), accomplishment records (Hough, 1984), and background checks. Past behavior should also predict the job search decision making process within a dual-career couple. Previous relocation behavior is used to assess behavioral patterns that have been established within the couple. If a pattern has been established, it is likely to be followed again, since people often fall back into pre-set patterns. Such previous behavior could also influence an individual's perception of his or her career priority within the couple. Previous relocation behavior provides an objective indicator of how the couple approached other job search decisions in the past.

H2: If an individual has moved in the past to accommodate the partner's career, he/she should be more likely to choose a job search strategy gives career priority to the partner.

Prestige of the job is also an important variable in the job search. Job prestige involves an index of highest degree level attained, expected salary and personal perception of job status. According to Equity theory (Adams, 1965), people seek fairness between their inputs and outcomes for events. In this case, a person who invested time in education and pursuing a high prestige job (large input) would expect the opportunity to seek and accept a good job (good outcome). When a couple is trying to decide whose career should take priority all of these prestige elements could affect the decision. The amount of time, energy, and commitment spent to get to a certain educational and status level as well as the financial benefits of some jobs should impact the job search strategy.

H3: As job prestige increases, an individual should be more likely to choose a job search strategy that gives priority to his or her own career.

In a dual-career couple, most decision making occurs within the context of the couple. Family and social support have been shown to have significant effects on health, well-being and strain (see Beehr & McGrath, 1992 for a review). Family members are uniquely suited to provide emotional and instrumental support outside of an organization. Instrumental support could come by giving priority to one's partner in the job search. Job-seeking support has been shown to positively effect job seeking behavior for unemployed people. Wanberg, Watt, and Rumsey (1996) longitudinally studied 245 unemployed people and found that support of spouses helped predict re-employment. Couples have different amounts of mutual support and influence that may depend on the career focus of each partner (Burke & Greenglass, 1987). For instance, if one partner is very career focused then the other partner might be more willing to make sacrifices

for the other's career. Relationships are full of compromise, and few people make critical decisions without considering the needs of their partner. In the job search process, a person's perception of his or her partner's career orientation could also affect the level of importance one gives to his or her own career.

H4: The more an individual perceives the partner's career as important to the partner, he or she should be more likely to reduce the priority of his or her own career within the couple.

Since the career importance of the partner has been considered, it is also necessary to consider the importance of an individual's own career. A person who is career-focused or whose self-esteem and self-definition is based on their work accomplishments should be less likely to sacrifice his or her own career for the partner. Some people consider themselves to "just have a job" which was acquired solely for economic reasons and which does not provide future opportunities (Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987). On the other hand, some people consider their work as a career and define themselves by the occupation, want to work hard and expect to have a future in the field (Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987). These different approaches to work should influence priority-setting and job search planning within the couple.

H5: As an individual's career focus increases, the individual should be more likely to give priority to his or her own career.

Actual Job Decisions

Job search strategy is expected to have a major influence on actual job search behavior. The research on the influence of behavioral intentions on behavior is extensive (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Based on this research, job search strategy should serve as a mediator between attitudes, demographics, and behavior (time 1 antecedents) and actual job decisions.

H6: Planned job search strategy should mediate the relationship between time 1 antecedents and actual job decisions.

While job search strategy is expected to have a major influence on the actual job decision, there can be a difference between the planned job search strategy (behavioral intention) and actual job decision. In this context, gender is expected to account for some of that difference, since research shows that women often end up following the man in the job search process regardless of earlier intentions. One study considered the decision rules of the job seeking strategy for couples. They found that 42%-61% of the couples planned to use egalitarian decision making strategies in the job search process (Berger et al., 1977). Egalitarian strategies would be those in which both members actively look for jobs and seek to make the best decision for both. However, only 25% of the couples actually made egalitarian decisions. Most of the couples ended up following a traditional model in which the man's career was given precedence.

H7: After controlling for job search strategy, men should be more likely than women to make a job decision that gives priority to their own career.

Previous relocation behavior is also expected to have a direct impact on the actual job decision above and beyond strategy. While behavioral intentions have large influences on actual behaviors, past behavior can also influence actual behaviors beyond the attitude-intention relationship (Ajzen, 1991). Previous relocation behavior is an indication of what has occurred in the past, and when faced with pressure, people may rely on old patterns to guide their behavior. Even though the couple planned to try a new strategy, they may be likely to end up following the established routine.

H8: After controlling for job search strategy, individuals who have relocated in the past to accommodate their partner's career should be more likely to make an actual job decision that gives priority to their partner's career.

Method

Participants

Participants were 198 individuals in dual-career relationships.

Dual-career relationships: Dual-career relationships were defined as relationships in which the individuals had been a couple for a significant amount of time and planned for the relationship to continue. All of the participants self-defined themselves as members of a dual-career couple before being asked to participate in the study. They indicated that they intended for the relationship to continue and make decisions with their partner in mind. Both members of the couple were already working or intending to work immediately upon completion of their degree (which occurred at approximately the same time as time 2 data collection). Participants who intended to continue their education or work at home were removed from the sample. All of the participants were in the same relationship at both data collection times of the study.

Sample: In the sample, 59.6% of the participants were married. Brett, Stroh, & Reilly (1993) measured spousal influence in relocation decision, and they also included non-married couples in their study. Most (XXX%) of the participants were living with their partner. Each member of the couple was surveyed independently of his or her partner. At least one member of each couple was a student at a large mid-western university who was scheduled to finish his or her degree about the same time as time 2 data collection. Mean age was 28.4 (SD = 7.0) with ages ranging from 19 to 58 with 53.8% falling into the 22 year old to 28 year old range.

Complete data was received from 102 women and 96 men. Although both members of the

couple were surveyed, some participants did not fill out both time 1 and time 2 surveys. In this study, participants were treated independently of their partner, so all participants who completed time 1 and time 2 data were included, regardless of whether or not the partner had completed both parts. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the participants had Ph.D.s, 26% had masters degrees and 44% had bachelors degrees as their highest degree at the time 2 data collection. Participation in the survey was voluntary.

Sample Cross-Validation

Since both members of the couple were included as individuals in the data set in most of the cases, the sample had a potential problem with correlated errors. Such an issue raised a concern that individuals were not independent units in the dataset. This potential limitation was investigated using a cross validation approach. The total sample was divided into two samples, such that each partner in the couple was in a separate sample. A regression equation was developed on the first sample and the equation was used to predict the criterion for the second sample. For the second sample, the predicted criterion scores were correlated with the actual criterion scores. The beta weights for the weighting sample were similar to the whole sample and the correlations for planned job search strategy (Multiple $R = .655$) and actual job decision (Multiple $R = .510$) were similar to the overall multiple correlations in the whole sample, .691 and .583, respectively. While correlated errors were a concern, these analyses provide evidence that it was not a critical factor in this study.

Procedure

The surveys were collected longitudinally at two points in time. Participants completed the first survey when they began their job search in the fall semester. Recruited through the University Career Services department, the participants were required to be in a committed

relationship in which one or both members would be graduating and doing a job search (preferably non-local) within the next six months. Both members of the couple participated in the study, but completed the surveys independently. The second survey was mailed to the participants approximately 12 months after their graduation date.

Measures

Gender. Participants reported their gender which was coded: 1 = female and 2 = male.

Previous Relocation Behavior. Two items from the survey asking about previous relocation behaviors were used to create the following variable: 0 = partner has moved for individual's career, 1 = both or neither has moved to accommodate the other's career, 2 = individual has moved to accommodate partner's career.

Job Prestige. A standardized index based on average t-scores was created using three components: (1) the highest degree level attained by the participant; 4 = Ph.D., 3 = M.A., 2 = Bachelor, 1 = Associates or high school, (2) self-report of expected level of salary, and (3) self-report of perceived status of occupation.

Perception of Partner's Career Importance. This variable was a one-item measure of the individual's perception of his or her partner's career importance. The item was coded on a five-point scale with 1 = other important aspects of partner's life almost always take priority over partner's career and 5 = partner's career almost always takes priority over other important aspects of partner's life.

Career Focus. Career focus was measured using the Occupational Role Values sub-scale from the Life Role Salience Scale (Amatea, Cross, Clark, Bobby, 1986). This five-item scale measured the participant's self-reported career focus and was rated on a five-point likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale included items such as: It is important to me

to feel successful in my work/career. The internal consistency estimates of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was reported as .86 in the literature (Amatea, et al., 1986), but was .65 in this sample.

Planned Job Search Strategy. The planned job search strategy was based on two measures: a decision rules measure where individuals chose the description that best fit their circumstances and a self-report measure of whose career takes priority. This decision rules measure was developed by Berger, Wallston, Foster, and Wright (1977). The choices include many possible strategies with an "other" choice available for situations that did not fit the noted strategies. The choices included items such as "I look first then partner looks" to "locate where partner has the best offer." A three-point continuous scale was computed based on these items with 3 = individual's career takes priority in the search, 2 = both careers take priority in the search, and 1 = partner's career takes priority in the search. The self-report measure asked individuals whose career takes priority on a five-point scale with 1 = partner's career highest priority to 5 = my career highest priority. A standardized index based on average t-scores was created.

Actual Job Decision. The measure of the actual job decision was based on the job search strategy item and was also developed by Berger et al. (1977). This measure was collected in the second wave of the study. Some of the seven choices included "I accepted a job offer first and my partner followed" and "only my partner had an offer so I followed." A three-point continuous scale was computed with 3 = individual's career took priority, 2 = both careers took priority, and 1 = partner's career took priority.

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the study variables. Multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses. The first objective of the research was to examine the variables affecting an individual's job search strategy in terms of the priority he/she placed on their career in relationship to their partner's career. Table 2 presents the multiple regression results. The results indicated that participants were less likely to favor their own career in the planned job strategy when: they were female ($\beta = .26, p < .05$); they had relocated for their partner in the past ($\beta = -.31, p < .05$); they had less prestigious careers ($\beta = .24, p < .05$); they had less career focus ($\beta = .17, p < .05$); they perceived their partner's career as being very important to him or her ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$). These five family-oriented variables explained almost 48% of the variance in the job search strategy ($R^2 = .478$). Hypotheses 1-5 were supported in the prediction of planned job search strategy.

The second objective of the research was to examine planned job search strategy as mediator of the relationship between the time 1 antecedents and actual job decision made by the couples using hierarchical multiple regression. Table 3 presents the multiple regression results. All variables displayed significant zero-order correlations ($p < .05$) with a significant R^2 when all variables were entered as a single block at step 1 in the regression ($R^2 = .276, p < .05$). Job search strategy was entered at step 2 of the regression which produced a significant change in R^2 ($\Delta R^2 = .064, p < .05$). These results supported hypothesis six which predicted that strategy would mediate the relationship between the predictor variables and the actual job decision. When job search strategy was entered at step 1 of the regression, a significant R^2 was obtained (.288, $p < .05$). When the time 1 antecedents were entered as a single block in step 2 of the regression, only gender and the index of previous moves maintained a significant effect on actual job decision. This demonstrated the direct and indirect effects on actual job decision. The R^2 is still significant

which also indicates partial mediation. These results support hypothesis seven and eight which predicted a direct relationship for gender and past relocation behavior on the actual job decision.

In addition, evidence for the hypothesized full path model including the mediated effects was tested by examining the significance and size of the hypothesized direct and indirect effects. LISREL 8 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993) was used to fit this model to the covariance matrix which resulted in a good fit as indicated by the fit indices $\chi^2 = 1.87$, $df = 4$, $p = .76$, adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) = .98, and the standardized RMR = .01. Figure 2 presents the model with standardized path coefficients which are all significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Discussion

This study was designed to provide empirical evidence of the impact that dual-career variables have on the job search process of dual-career couples. Although dual career couples are becoming more common, the issues facing them have not received adequate attention. The results from the study supported the model. Gender, previous relocation behavior, job prestige, perception of partner's career importance and career focus do predict the planned job search strategies (career prioritization) that members of dual career couples use. Furthermore, the planned strategy, gender and previous relocation behavior directly predict the actual decision behavior. These results are important, since they help predict how dual-career couple plan job search strategies and what decisions they actually make. The variables showed direct and mediated relationships to the planned job search strategy and to the actual job decision.

The longitudinal model presented in Part I of the study was supported. Gender, previous relocation behavior, job prestige, career focus, and partner's career importance were all directly and significantly related to the planned job search strategy for the couple, supporting hypotheses one through five. The five family variables explained 48% of the variance in planned job search

strategy. Gender and previous relocation behavior also had a direct effect on the actual job decision, supporting hypotheses seven and eight. As predicted in hypothesis six, the planned job search strategy mediated the relationship between the predictor variables and the actual job decision. The family variables and the planned job search strategy explained 34% of the variance in the actual job decision. These results indicate how important family variables are for the job search process. This expands the impact of social influences, such as those found by Kilduff (1990), to include family members. The effect of family is likely to be stronger than the effect of other social influences, since family members are stakeholders in the strategy and decision. Job search research should include family variables, as well as job content characteristics, process issues and job search behaviors. Job seekers do not exist in a vacuum. They must always consider the needs and desires of their families - especially in a dual-career couple.

The results supported hypothesis one which predicted that women would be more likely to sacrifice their career than men. This finding adds to a wealth of similar results (i.e. Gutek et al., 1991; Burke & Greenglass, 1987). It is only in the last few decades that large numbers of women have entered the workforce - especially in professional careers. These results indicate that social and psychological norms have not changed as fast as the demographics of the workforce. In most dual-career couples, the man's career automatically still takes priority. Male socialization tends to encourage characteristics such as independence and competition which are generally associated with career success. By contrast, female socialization tends to encourage nurturance and dependence which may inhibit success in the workplace (Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987). Another possible explanation for gender differences in career priority is that women face more discrimination and have fewer opportunities in the workplace (Stroh, Brett & Reilly, 1992; Gilbert & Rachlin, 1987). These limitations may frustrate women and make them less likely to

actively pursue new and better positions. Gender is such a strong variable that it also directly impacted the actual decision making behavior as predicted in hypothesis seven. Egalitarian intentions for couples often do not translate into egalitarian decision making (Berger et al., 1977). This is an indication that couples fall back onto traditional models and past behavior when forced to make an actual decision.

The strength of past behavior and patterns also explains the significant relationship between past relocation behavior and planned job search strategy (hypothesis two) and actual decision making behavior (hypothesis eight). Past behavior provides people with a road map in their active planning and decision making, and that past behavior is likely to direct future behavior (Guion, 1991). When faced with strategy planning and decision making, couples rely on past experience to guide them. A person who has sacrificed a career in the past will be more likely to sacrifice again. This variable also indicates the past status of each career in the relationship. The dominant career in the past is likely to still be the dominant career.

Job prestige also predicts planned job search strategy as predicted in hypothesis three. Equity theory (Adams, 1965) explains that people expect suitable rewards for their effort or input. A person who worked hard for a degree or for a high salary would expect some priority for his or her career. This variable would likely have the most impact when the members of the couple had dramatically different levels of job prestige. For example, if one member had a good paying job that required a higher degree, then his or her job would likely get more priority than a partner who had an hourly part-time job. Since this study dealt with couples, it was also important to consider the individual's perception of his or her partner. Hypothesis four was supported and showed that an individual's perception of the partner's career importance will affect the behavior of the individual. Other researchers have shown that family and social

support are a critical part of life events such as the job search process (Beehr & McGrath, 1992; Wanberg, Watt and Rumsey, 1996). Members of dual-career couples do not make decisions in a vacuum - they must consider the needs and wants of the partner. This sometimes involves self-sacrifice in order to fulfill the dreams of the partner. However, hypothesis five was also supported and indicates that an individual's own career focus also affects job search strategy. A person who is strongly career focused may not be willing to sacrifice his or her own needs for the partner. These findings indicate that members of dual-career couples face a balancing act between personal needs and partner's needs.

In addition, planned job strategy served as a mediator between the relationship of the five time one antecedents and the actual job decision, demonstrating a similar relationship to Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action. These findings support hypothesis six. The family variables influence the development of the planned search strategy. As Berger et al. (1977) found, that strategy will often be a fair and egalitarian one. The actual decision is strongly, but not completely, influenced by the planned search strategy. Gender and previous relocation behavior also have a direct impact on the decision making behavior and those influences can lead to less fair and often male-biased decisions.

Limitations and Future Directions of Research

Potential limitations of the current research include the restricted number of items available to measure certain variables. For example, only one item was available to measure the perception of partner's career importance. Another potential limitation was that children were not included in the study, because not enough people in the sample had children. Only 47 individuals in the study had children and only 28 of them had preschool children, thus limiting the effect size for the influence of children. However, research indicates that children add an

extra dimension and added stress to a dual-career relationship (see Gilbert & Rachlin (1987) for a discussion). At a basic level, children add the extra complexity of childcare issues, monetary strain and emotional division. This sample was unable to consider the impact of children, but it should be an important variable in future research.

In terms of other future research, several directions could be taken. First, to be more consistent with traditional job search research, job content and process variables could be collected for the various job offers to examine the interaction between job characteristics (e.g., benefits and job attributes) and external family variables. Second, job market and perceived behavioral control variables could have an influence on the strategies and decisions if they create a pressure situation with limited options. Third, organizational and governmental policies relating to work family issues could be examined. For example, some organizations offer job search assistance for the non-initiating partner when a relocation occurs. Organizations are also offering more programs to ease the burdens of working parents. Finally, levels issues could be explored by measuring the couple-level influences on the job search in addition to those at the individual level.

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Table 1
 Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Zero-Order Intercorrelations of Study Variables

Variables	Means	sd	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	1.48	.50	---						
2. Previous Reloc. Beh.	1.01	.56	-.28*	---					
3. Job Prestige	50.01	7.41	.30*	-.13	---				
4. Career Focus	3.40	.53	.21*	-.20*	.27*	---			
5. Partner Career Focus	2.82	.77	-.10	.29*	-.08	.00	---		
6. Planned Job Search Strategy	49.92	8.72	.47*	-.49*	.42*	.36*	-.27*	---	
7. Actual Job Decision	2.03	.93	.38*	-.41*	.25*	.26*	-.15*	.54*	---

n=198; Gender: Female = 1 and Male = 2; * $p < .05$

Table 2
Result of Regression Predicting Job Search Strategy

Variable	Beta	F	R	R²
Gender	.26*			
Previous Relocation Beh.	-.31*			
Job Prestige	.24*			
Career Focus	.17*			
Partner's Career Importance	-.14*	31.09	.691	.478*

* $p < .05$

Table 3

Result of Hierarchical Regression of Job Search Strategy as a Mediator between Time 1 Antecedents and Actual Job Decision

A. Equation 1 Test of Mediation

		Beta^a	F	R	R²	R² Change
Step 1	Time 1 Antecedents		12.14	.525	.276*	
Step 2	Planned Job Search Strategy	.36*	13.99	.583	.340*	.064*

B. Equation 2 Test of Mediation

		Beta^a	F	R	R²	R² Change
Step 1	Planned Job Search Strategy	.54*	79.47	.537	.288*	
Step 2	Gender	.14*				
	Previous Reloc. Beh.	-.19*				
	Job Prestige	.02				
	Career Focus	.06				
	Partner's Career Impt.	.02	16.36	.583	.340*	.052*

* $p < .05$; ^a Betas refer to the standardized regression weights assigned for each step of the Hierarchical regression

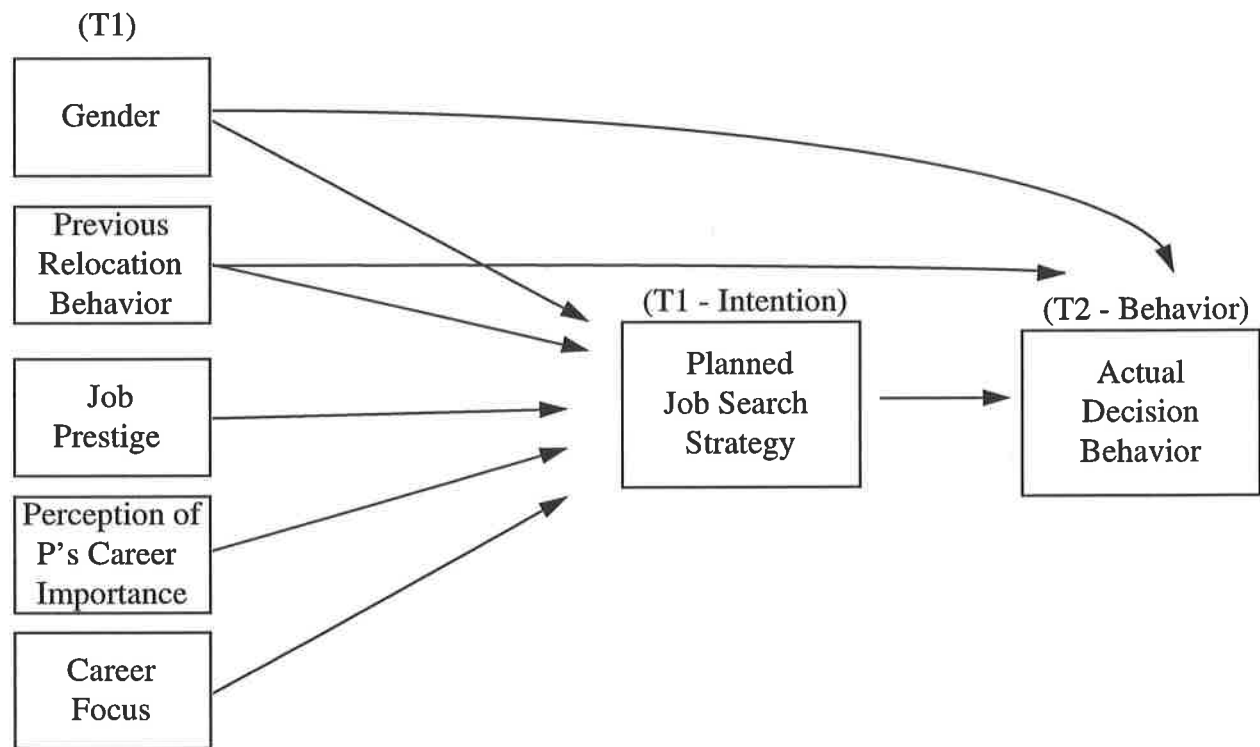


Figure 1: Model of Job Search Process of Dual-Career Couples

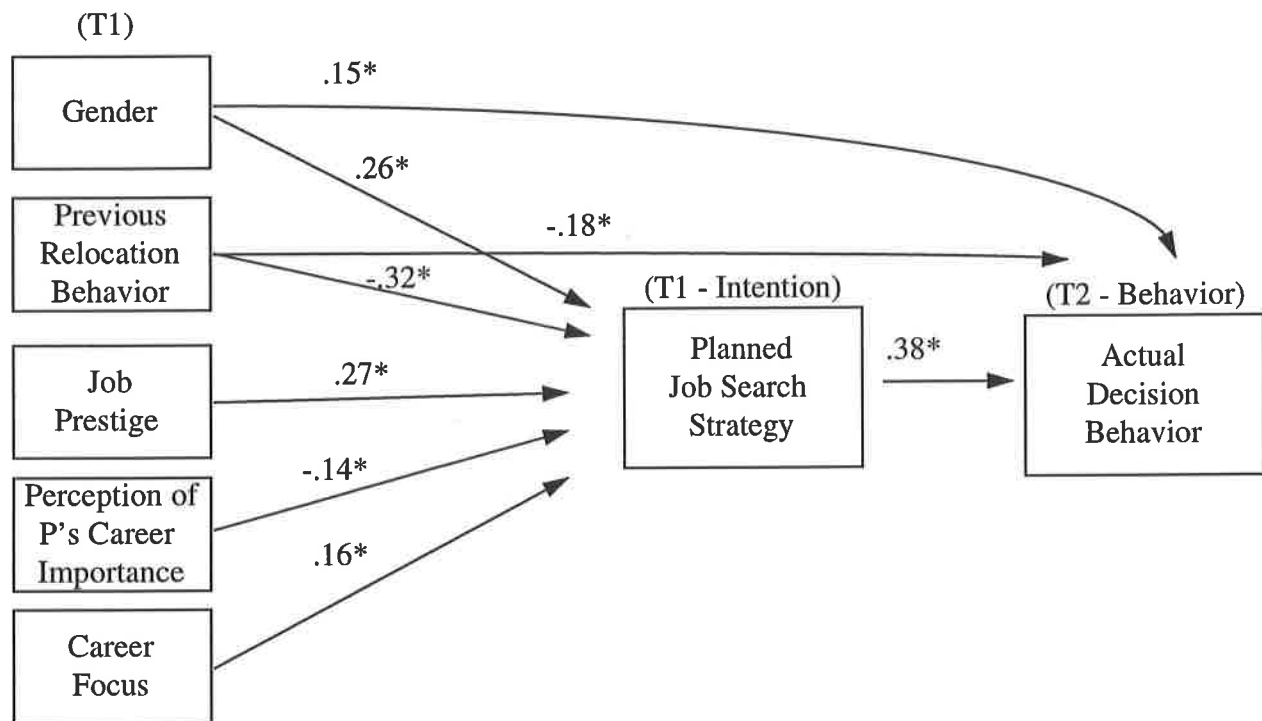


Figure 2: Model with LISREL path coefficients