Can a Manager Have a Life and a Career? International and Multisource Perspectives on Work–Life Balance and Career Advancement Potential

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The present study was the first cross-national examination of whether managers who were perceived to be high in work–life balance were expected to be more or less likely to advance in their careers than were less balanced, more work-focused managers. Using self ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings of 9,627 managers in 33 countries, the authors examined within-source and multisource relationships with multilevel analyses. The authors generally found that managers who were rated higher in work–life balance were rated higher in career advancement potential than were managers who were rated lower in work–life balance. However, national gender egalitarianism, measured with Project GLOBE scores, moderated relationships based on supervisor and self ratings, with stronger positive relationships in low egalitarian cultures. The authors also found 3-way interactions of work–life balance ratings, ratee gender, and gender egalitarianism in multisource analyses in which self balance ratings predicted supervisor and peer ratings of advancement potential. Work–life balance ratings were positively related to advancement potential ratings for women in high egalitarian cultures and men in low gender egalitarian cultures, but relationships were nonsignificant for men in high egalitarian cultures and women in low egalitarian cultures.

Keywords: work–life balance, international, career advancement, culture, gender egalitarianism

Kirchmeyer (2000) defined work–life balance as “achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains,” and she pointed out, “To do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment be well distributed across domains” (p. 81). Prior research has shown that work–life balance (or work–family balance) is positively related to quality of life (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003) and other indicators of well being (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). However, less is known about relationships of work–life balance to career outcomes for managers, and this issue has not been examined in previous cross-national research.

An important construct that has not received much attention in work–life and work–family research is career advancement. Thus, not much is known about whether or how work–life balance is related to career advancement, defined as promotions to jobs at higher levels in the management hierarchy or to jobs that have a larger scope of responsibilities (Hall, 2002). Although judgments about a manager’s potential to advance in his or her career are related to current job performance, the constructs differ in that it is possible for a manager to be performing competently in his or her current job but yet not be perceived as having the potential to advance due to likely inability to perform effectively in higher level or larger scope positions.

Whereas much of the prior research about career advancement has examined predictors in the work domain and individual differences, such as personality (see review by Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005), we wanted to find out whether perceptions about a manager’s balance of work with nonwork roles were related to judgments about whether he or she had the potential for further career advancement. This question appears to be timely. On the one hand, anecdotal evidence suggests that work–life balance is an increasingly important value, particularly among younger workers (Shellenbarger, 1999). On the other hand, new communication technologies enabling constant contact with employees and the need for businesses to cut lead times in order to compete globally have led to increased time pressures and intrusion of work into nonwork time for managers (Milliken & Dunn-Jensen, 2005). Thus, we wanted to find out whether “balanced” managers might be perceived as more or less likely to advance than less balanced, more work-focused managers in today’s high-pressure work environments.

A limitation of much of the prior work–family research is the reliance on self-reports, and there have been calls for use of multisource data (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007). The few studies that have included multisource measures have typically examined perspectives of employees’ spouses or other individuals, such as close friends, outside the work environ-
ment (e.g., Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, & Luk, 2001). However, because we were interested in perceptions of career advancement potential, it was important to examine perspectives of others in the work environment, such as focal managers’ supervisors and peers, as their perceptions about a manager’s relative commitment to work and nonwork activities might have important career consequences for the manager. For instance, supervisors often function as organizational decision makers, and peers might provide multisource feedback ratings or influence supervisors’ perceptions. Moreover, it has been suggested that supervisors’ perceptions about managers’ involvement in nonwork activities, such as family responsibilities, might affect promotion decisions (e.g., Acker, 1990; Judiesch & Lyness, 1999).

According to gender role theory, men are traditionally expected to fulfill the breadwinner role and women the homemaker role, and deviations from these societal expectations can result in negative evaluations (Eagly, 1987; Nieva & Gutek, 1980). Because it is possible that nonwork involvement might be perceived as more congruent with the female gender role than the male gender role, we were interested in finding out whether the relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential might be moderated by the focal manager’s gender. In addition, we thought that, consistent with recommendations to consider cultural values when conducting work and family research (e.g., Lyness & Kropf, 2005; Poelmans, 2005; Spector et al., 2004), cultural values related to traditional gender roles might moderate this relationship or lead to different perceptions about these relationships for female and male managers.

We addressed these issues by examining (a) relationships between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential for over 9,000 managers, (b) multisource perspectives on this relationship, including the manager’s own perspective as well as those of his or her supervisor and peers, (c) whether this relationship was moderated by the manager’s gender, and (d) whether this relationship was moderated by cultural values in the 33 countries where these managers worked.

Work–Life Balance and Career Advancement Potential

Various theories lead to opposite predictions about the direction of the relationship between work–life balance and career advancement. On the one hand, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argued that participating in one role, such as work, is more difficult for employees who participate in another role, such as family, resulting in work–family conflict, defined as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures of the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (p. 77). This reasoning is consistent with the scarcity or depletion hypothesis suggesting that an individual has a limited amount of time, energy, and other resources such that involvement in one role results in less resources available for other roles, leading to interrole strain or conflict and diminished performance in those other roles (Goode, 1960; Rothbard, 2001).

The scarcity perspective would predict that due to involvement with nonwork roles, the “balanced” employee would have less time or other resources for work than would an employee who is more exclusively focused on work. Moreover, according to gendered culture theory, organizations give promotions to employees who focus on task accomplishment and do not let family or personal matters interfere (Acker, 1990; Kanter, 1977), suggesting that work–life balance might be negatively related to career advancement.

Consistent with these ideas, there is prior research evidence that focusing on work was positively associated with others’ perceptions about managers’ potential to advance as well as actual career advancement. For example, in the AT&T management progress study conducted in the 1950s, assessors’ ratings of male managers’ primacy of work (i.e., low work–life balance) were positively related to both assessments of the likelihood of promotion to middle management, $r = .48, p < .01, N = 207$, and management levels attained 8 years later, $r = .18, p < .05, n = 123$ (Bray, Campbell, & Grant, 1974). Similarly, in the AT&T management continuity study conducted between 1977 and 1982 with a more diverse sample including women as well as African American and Latino managers, there was also a strong positive relationship between work involvement factor scores (including primacy of work) and assessments of advancement potential, $r = .54, p < .01, N = 344$ (Howard & Bray, 1988). More recently, Ng et al.’s (2005) meta-analytic research with broader samples of employees showed that work centrality was positively related to promotions. In one of the few studies that examined the relationship between nonwork involvement and career advancement for managers, Judiesch and Lyness’s (1999) research showed that managers who took leaves of absence for family or other reasons received fewer subsequent promotions than did managers who had not taken leaves. Taken together, we would predict a negative relationship between work–life balance and career advancement potential based on these theories and prior studies where managers who focused on work (i.e., low work–life balance) were more successful or perceived as more likely to advance in their careers than were more balanced managers.

On the other hand, according to the enrichment argument, involvement in multiple roles (implying work–life balance) can be beneficial by expanding an individual’s attention and energy such that benefits of multiple roles outweigh the stress or other costs associated with multiple roles (Rothbard, 2001; Sieber, 1974). Moreover, Barnett and Hyde’s (2001) expansionist theory suggests that multiple roles are advantageous because performance in each role is enhanced by involvement in other roles. Various mechanisms have been suggested to explain why multiple roles might lead to enhanced role performance, such as cross-role transfer of energy, positive experiences, or resources like social contacts (e.g., Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Sieber, 1974), all of which might also be related to career advancement.

In addition, it is possible that more competent managers are better at handling demands of multiple roles, including both work and nonwork activities, and thus are perceived as both more balanced and more likely to advance. For example, a U.S. study found that the personality trait of conscientiousness was negatively related to both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict, and was positively related to family-to-work facilitation (Wayne, Musica, & Fleeson, 2004). Conscientiousness includes attributes such as planfulness, efficiency, organization, responsibility, and achievement orientation (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; McCrae & John, 1992), and it is positively related to job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). It is possible, therefore, that conscientiousness might facilitate not only job performance...
but also work–life balance and thus lead to predictions of a positive relationship between work–life balance and career advancement.

We were unable to locate empirical research testing these ideas as they relate to work–life balance and career advancement potential, but we found some studies examining relationships of multiple role involvement to job performance. Consistent with expansionist theory, Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, and King’s (2002) study of U.S. managerial women found positive relationships between commitment to multiple roles (implying work–life balance) and composite performance ratings by supervisors, peers, and subordinates. Similarly, Graves, Ohlott, and Ruderman (2007) found that parental role commitment was positively related to composite performance ratings for a sample of U.S. managers, and marital role commitment was indirectly related to performance ratings through self-reported family-to-work enhancement. Therefore, we would predict a positive relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential based on (a) enrichment and expansionist theories, (b) our ideas about the possible role of managerial competence or conscientiousness, and (c) these prior empirical findings.

A third possibility is that perceptions of work–life balance are not related to career advancement potential. In support of this idea, prior research in eight U.S. organizations found that supervisors’ ratings of their managerial subordinates “balance between personal life and work” were not related to the supervisors’ promotability ratings ($r = -.01$, $ns$, $N = 336$) or to actual promotions 24–30 months later ($r = .03$, $ns$, $n = 253$; McAuley & Lombardo, 1990; McCauley, Lombardo, & Usher, 1989). The possibility that work–life balance is unrelated to career advancement is consistent with merit-based human resource management practices but also requires the assumption that nonwork involvement does not affect actual job performance, whereas some of the theories that we have discussed suggest that involvement in multiple roles can have either positive or negative effects on job performance.

Because of the conflicting theoretically based predictions, inconsistent empirical findings, and limited prior multisource research, we could not predict the direction of the relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and perceptions of career advancement potential for managers or whether this relationship would vary depending on the rating source (i.e., self, peer, or supervisor). Instead, we posed the following:

Research Question 1. Based on perceptions of managers, their supervisors, and their peers, will there be a positive relationship, a negative relationship, or no relationship between work–life balance and career advancement potential?

In the remaining sections we will introduce possible moderators of the relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential. It was important to examine potential moderating variables, as these might help to explain when the relationship between work–life balance and career advancement potential might be positive, negative, or null. Because we thought that perceptions of managers’ nonwork involvement might be related to views about gender roles, we examined the focal manager’s gender and national cultural values related to traditional gender roles as possible moderating variables.

Gender as a Moderator

Combining work and nonwork (and especially family) responsibilities has been identified as a persistent challenge for female managers that can impede their career advancement (e.g., Lyness & Terrazas, 2006). According to Heilman’s (1983, 2001) lack of fit theory, there is perceived incongruence between stereotypic attributes of women, such as nurturance, and stereotypic masculine attributes, such as forcefulness and achievement orientation, believed to be required for success in management positions, particularly at senior organizational levels. Relatedly, Eagly and Karau’s (2002) role congruity theory argues that prejudice against women in leadership roles is rooted in stereotypic perceptions of women that are inconsistent with male attributes believed to be required for success as a leader.

When female managers are perceived to be balanced, especially if it involves family responsibilities, this may exacerbate other people’s perceptions of these women’s stereotypic female attributes and thus heighten perceptions about their lack of fit with senior management or leadership requirements. Some evidence for this idea was provided by laboratory research showing that parental status harmed women’s but not men’s likelihood of being judged good candidates for promotion (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). On the basis of these theories and the research finding, we would predict that the relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential would be more negative for female managers than for their male counterparts.

However, according to gender role theory, men are expected to fulfill the breadwinner role and women the homemaker role; deviations from these societal expectations can result in negative evaluations (Eagly, 1987; Niewa & Gutek, 1980). According to this theory, involvement in nonwork activities might be viewed as less congruent with the male gender role than the female gender role. Consistent with this perspective, Lobel and St. Claire (1992) found that for employees with preschool-age children, merit increases reflected conformity to gender stereotypes, as family-oriented women received larger awards than family-oriented men, and career-oriented men received larger awards than career-oriented women. Also, laboratory research found that men who took parental leaves or missed work due to family reasons were penalized with fewer reward recommendations or lower performance ratings than were men without these family involvements, but women received similar reward recommendations or ratings regardless of their family involvements (Allen & Russell, 1999; Butler & Skattebo, 2004). Thus, on the basis of this theory and related research findings, we would predict that the relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential would be more negative for male managers than their female counterparts.

It is also possible that there are no gender differences in the relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential. For example, Judiesch and Lyness (1999) found that managers who had taken leaves of absence for family and other reasons were less likely to get promoted than were managers who had not taken leaves, but promotion penalties did not differ for female or male managers who had taken leaves. Because of the conflicting theories and research findings, and lack of multisource research, we posed the following:
Research Question 2. Will a manager’s gender moderate the relationship between perceptions of his or her work-life balance and career advancement potential?

National Gender Egalitarianism as a Moderator

Although there are few cross-national work–life studies, scholars have contended that it is important to consider national culture when studying these issues (e.g., Aryee, Fields, & Luk, 1999; Lyness & Kropf, 2005; Poelmans, 2005; Spector et al., 2004). Recently House and his colleagues conducted the Project GLOBE research to investigate cultural values in 62 societies, based on survey ratings by over 17,000 middle-level managers (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). The researchers identified nine dimensions of societal cultures, and we examined their gender egalitarianism dimension as a possible moderator of the relationship between perceptions of work-life balance and career advancement potential.

Just as the manager’s gender might moderate the relationship between perceptions of work-life balance and career advancement potential, it is also possible that societal values related to expected gender roles might moderate this relationship. The Project GLOBE dimension that measures this aspect of societal culture is gender egalitarianism, defined as “beliefs about whether members’ biological sex should determine the roles that they play in their homes, business organizations, and communities” (Emrich, Denmark, & Den Hartog, 2004). Low gender egalitarian cultures are characterized by belief in traditional gender roles (i.e., men as breadwinners and women as homemakers and mothers) as well as gender discrimination in organizations, with positions that are high in authority or status being held by men rather than women (Emrich et al., 2004). In high gender egalitarian cultures, however, there is less adherence to traditional gender role beliefs, and women’s organizational roles are more similar in authority and status to men’s (Emrich et al., 2004).

It is possible that because women are more likely to hold critical roles in high gender egalitarian cultures, they may be in positions where they can promote societal and organizational cultures that recognize individuals’ needs to balance work with family and other nonwork responsibilities (Haas & Hwang, 2000; Lyness & Kropf, 2005). For example, in Sweden (a high egalitarian country) women hold many key government positions, including close to half of the seats in parliament; the “dual-breadwinner” family is considered the ideal; and the government stresses equal rights and responsibilities in breadwinning, child care, household work, and public life and supports this with, for example, subsidized high-quality child care and paid parental leave for employed parents (Björnberg, 2000; Haas & Hwang, 2000). Consistent with the idea that work-life balance might be more valued in egalitarian societies, Corrigall and Konrad’s (2006) study of workers in 14 countries found that those in high gender egalitarian countries (based on Project GLOBE country scores) valued flexibility in work hours more than did workers in less egalitarian countries. Thus, on the basis of these theories and research suggesting that work-life balance is more valued and accepted in high egalitarian cultures than in low egalitarian cultures, we predicted that in high egalitarian cultures work-life balance would be more likely to be associated with career advancement potential than would be the case in low gender egalitarian cultures.

Hypothesis 1. Societal gender egalitarianism will moderate the relationship between perceptions of a manager’s work-life balance and his or her career advancement potential, such that relationships will be more positive in countries with high gender egalitarianism than in countries with low gender egalitarianism.

Because gender egalitarianism concerns the degree of differentiation in prescribed gender roles for men and women in a society, it is also possible that there will be a three-way interaction of focal manager’s gender, societal gender egalitarianism, and perceptions of work-life balance that is related to perceptions of career advancement potential. Gender differences might be particularly salient in low egalitarian societies, where greater emphasis is placed on traditional gender roles, with men expected to be breadwinners and women expected to be caregivers and homemakers. Thus, we would expect smaller gender differences in relationships of perceptions of work-life balance to career advancement potential in high egalitarian societies than in low egalitarian societies. However, as we explained earlier, because expected gender differences in the direction of the relationship of perceptions of work-life balance to career advancement potential based on gender role theory (Eagly, 1987; Nieva & Gutek, 1980) differed from those based on lack of fit theory (Heilman, 1983, 2001) and role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002), it was difficult to predict the direction of gender differences in the balance–advancement potential relationship, and it would be similarly difficult to make a prediction about the direction of the three-way interaction involving societal gender egalitarianism. Thus, we posed the following:

Research Question 3. Will a three-way interaction of societal gender egalitarianism, focal manager’s gender, and work-life balance perceptions be related to perceptions about the manager’s career advancement potential?

Method

Participants and Procedures

Our data were collected by the Center for Creative Leadership from 1999 to 2005 in connection with management development programs. The original sample was comprised of 10,943 managers in 33 countries who provided self ratings and were rated by their supervisors and peers, using the revised edition (version 2) of the Benchmarks® multirater feedback instrument, written in English (Center for Creative Leadership, 2004). Because we wanted to test our research questions and hypotheses with analyses based on self ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings of the same ratees, we restricted our sample to cases that contained ratings from all three sources and had no missing ratee demographic data (N = 9,627). The manager rates worked in over 3,000 organizations or business units located in 33 countries, with 44% of the sample from the United States (see Appendix A for a listing of samples by country and global region). About 28% of the managers were women (n = 2,679), with a higher proportion of women in the U.S. sample (31%) than in non-U.S. countries (25%). Average age of ratees was 42 years, and their average organizational tenure was close to 10 years; the majority (89%) had a bachelor’s degree or graduate degree, and 17% were expatriates.
As we had no personal identification numbers for peers or supervisors, and ratees worked at many different organizations, we assumed that a different set of raters was rating each ratee. We averaged supervisor ratings for cases with multiple supervisor ratings (n = 302) and averaged peer ratings for all cases for use in the analyses. Managers were rated by an average of 3.69 peers (median = 3). Peers were demographically similar to ratees, as 28% of the peers were women, their average age was 42 years, and about 87% had at least a bachelor’s degree. Twenty-six percent of the supervisors were women, average age of supervisors was 46, and 93% had at least a bachelor’s degree.

**Measures**

**Career advancement potential.** We measured career advancement potential with five career derailment scales from Section 2 of the Benchmarks® instrument (Center for Creative Leadership, 2004). These scales were developed using content analysis of interviews with senior U.S. and European executives who were asked to contrast successful managers, viewed as suitable for promotion, with managers who had reached comparable management levels but then plateaued or left the organization involuntarily (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996; Lombardo & McCauley, 1988; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). As these scales measure factors that are thought to differentiate promotable managers from non-promotable managers, the scales reflect perceptions about potential for career advancement. The scales include Problems With Interpersonal Relationships (10 items), Failure to Meet Business Objectives (7 items), Difficulty Building and Leading a Team (8 items), Difficulty Changing or Adapting (10 items), and Too Narrow Functional Orientation (5 items; see Appendix B for sample items). Raters were told, “Research has shown that some specific characteristics can lead to derailment—demotion, being fired, or plateaued—more often than others,” and were then asked to indicate the extent to which the ratee displayed each characteristic, using a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). We reverse-scored the items so that high numbers reflected perceptions of higher career advancement potential. Numerous studies of content validity, criterion-related validity, and reliability have been conducted with the original and revised Benchmarks® instruments, and they are generally considered to be psychometrically sound measures (e.g., Carty, 2003; Center for Creative Leadership, 2004; Spangler, 2003; Zedeck, 1995). On the basis of each rater’s ratings of the individual items, the alpha coefficients for the five scales ranged from .73 to .87 for self ratings, .87 to .95 for peer ratings, and .82 to .92 for supervisor ratings. We created a composite measure of career advancement potential by averaging the five scale scores for each rater; the alpha coefficients for the 5-scale composites were .88, .93, and .91, for self ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings, respectively.

**Work–life balance.** Perceptions of the ratee’s work–life balance were measured with the Balance Between Personal Life and Work scale from Section 1 of the Benchmarks® instrument; work–life balance was defined as “balances work priorities with personal life so that neither is neglected” (Center for Creative Leadership, 2004). The scale was comprised of four items that described behavioral characteristics of managers (e.g., “Does not let job demands cause family problems,” and “Acts as if there is more to life than just having a career”; Center for Creative Leadership, 2004). Each item was rated to indicate the extent to which the ratee displayed the characteristic using a 5-point response scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a very great extent). The alpha coefficients for the scale were .78, .88, and .82 for self ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings, respectively. High scores reflected greater perceived balance of work and nonwork priorities, and low scores reflected less balance due to focusing on job and career demands more than on nonwork activities or interests.

**Ratee gender.** Ratee gender was coded as 0 (female) or 1 (male).

**National gender egalitarianism.** We measured national gender egalitarianism with the country scores from the prior Project GLOBE research (House et al., 2004). The Project GLOBE researchers surveyed over 17,000 middle-level managers in 62 societies, as previously mentioned, and measured cultural practices, defined as “the way things are,” and cultural values, defined as “the way things should be,” using 7-point scales (Javidan, House, & Dorfman, 2004). However, 7 out of 9 empirical relationships between societal value scores and corresponding practice scores were negative, which the researchers interpreted as reflecting “deficits” because societal members thought that their cultures should be different from what they were (House et al., 2004). We used the GLOBE country practice scores as our measure of gender egalitarianism because practice scores better reflected current societal cultures than did GLOBE value scores, and thus practice scores were more appropriate for our test of whether societal culture moderated the relationship between work–life balance and career advancement potential. The Gender Egalitarianism scale measured “the degree to which . . . a society minimizes gender role differences while promoting gender equality” (House & Javidan, 2004). This scale had five items in the GLOBE study, with higher scores reflecting more egalitarian cultures, and an alpha coefficient of .66 (House et al., 2004). Information about the validation of the scales and correction for response bias is available in House et al. (2004).

**Control variables.** Five ratee demographic characteristics were used as control variables in the analyses. Three were related to human capital: age and organizational tenure were measured in years, and education was measured as highest degree attained (coded as 1 = less than bachelor’s degree, 2 = bachelor’s degree, 3 = master’s degree, or 4 = Ph.D. or professional degree). Also, we controlled for ratee expatriate status (coded as 1 = yes or 0 = no) because responses might differ when ratees were not members of local cultures.

**Analyses**

We conducted multilevel analyses using HLM version 6 (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, Congdon, & du Toit, 2004) to test our research questions and hypothesis because raters were nested in countries and we wanted to examine individual-level effects as well as cross-level interactions. We used random coefficient regression analyses that allowed for random variation at both individual and country levels of analysis. Each question was tested with both within-source analyses (to examine relationships from each source’s perspective) and multisource analyses (to eliminate common source variance that could have occurred in within-source
relationships). Three sets of within-source analyses of relationships between work–life balance and career advancement potential, based on self ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings, were conducted. It was important to examine these relationships on the basis of the manager’s own perspective, as most prior work–life research has been based on self ratings, whereas supervisor and peer relationships shed light on the perspectives of others in the workplace who may be involved in organizational decisions about the focal manager. In the multisource analyses we chose rating sources on the basis of assumptions about sources likely to have the information or perspective to make the most accurate ratings (i.e., self and peer ratings of the ratee’s work–life balance, and supervisor and peer ratings of the ratee’s career advancement potential). In the multisource analyses we related self balance ratings to supervisor advancement potential ratings, self balance ratings to peer advancement potential ratings, and peer balance ratings to supervisor advancement potential ratings. Thus, six tests of each research question and hypothesis were conducted.

We carried out two-level HLM analyses, with ratees nested within countries and with the composite career advancement potential rating variable as the outcome measure. Research Question 1 was tested by examining significance of the fixed effect of work–life balance ratings as a Level 1 predictor of advancement potential ratings, controlling for ratee demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age, education, organizational tenure, and expatriate status). Research Question 2 was tested by adding the work–life balance rating by ratee gender interaction to the Level 1 model and examining significance of its fixed effect.

We tested Hypothesis 1 with the Level 1 work–life balance slope estimates (γ10) as the outcome variable and examined the significance of the fixed effect for the Level 2 country gender egalitarianism scores as a predictor to detect cross-level interaction effects. In other words, we wanted to see whether gender egalitarian practices moderated the relationship between work–life balance and career advancement potential ratings. We conducted these analyses by entering the country characteristic as a Level 2 predictor for both the intercept (γ00) and work–life balance slope (γ10), which is consistent with Raudenbush and Bryk’s (2002) recommendation that the same predictors be included in both models. Similarly, Research Question 3 was tested with the Level 1 gender by work–life balance slope estimates as the outcome variable.

The Level 1 data were group-mean centered, as is recommended when Level 2 variables are tested as moderators of Level 1 relationships (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). The power for detecting cross-level interaction effects was relatively low because we had only 33 Level 2 units (i.e., countries), and therefore, consistent with other multilevel research studies (e.g., Smillie, Yeo, Furnham, & Jackson, 2006; Yeo & Neal, 2004), we set the criterion for cross-level effects at the p < .10 level and for other effects at p < .05.

Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations of the Level 1 variables are shown in Table 1. These correlations indicate that perceived work–life balance was positively related to career advancement potential on the basis of both within-source ratings (r = .25, .34, .28, p < .001, for self, peer, and supervisor ratings, respectively) and multisource perspectives (r = .09, .06, .13, p < .001, for self balance–peer advancement, self balance–supervisor advancement, and peer balance–supervisor advancement ratings, respectively).

### Work–Life Balance and Career Advancement Potential

We tested Research Question 1 with work–life balance ratings as a predictor in the Level 1 models, with ratee gender, age, education, tenure, and expatriate status as control variables (see Table 2). All three within-source main effect analyses showed that work–life balance had a significant positive relationship to career advancement potential, γ10 = .15, .29, .23, p < .001 (columns 1, 2, and 3), for self ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings, respectively. The multisource main effect analyses indicated that work–life balance had a significant positive relationship to career advancement potential based on self balance–peer advancement potential ratings, γ10 = .03, p < .01 (column 4), and peer balance–supervisor advancement potential ratings, γ10 = .13, p < .001 (column 6), but the relationship based on self balance–supervisor advancement potential ratings was not statistically significant (column 5). As we will discuss later, a significant three-way interaction of balance, ratee gender, and country gender egalitarianism was found on the basis of self balance ratings and supervisor advancement potential ratings, and thus perhaps the overall

### Table 1

**Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Individual-Level Variables**

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<td>1. CAP–Self</td>
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<td>2. CAP–Peer</td>
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<td>3. CAP–Supervisor</td>
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<td>4. WLB–Self</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.25*</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.06*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. WLB–Peer</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.34*</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. WLB–Supervisor</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.07*</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.42*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ratee gender</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>—0.04*</td>
<td>—0.02</td>
<td>—0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Ratee age</td>
<td>41.13</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>—0.03</td>
<td>—0.06*</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.10*</td>
<td>0.06*</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ratee education</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04*</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ratee tenure</td>
<td>9.79</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>0.07*</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.06*</td>
<td>0.06*</td>
<td>0.08*</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Ratee expatriate status</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>—0.03*</td>
<td>—0.01</td>
<td>—0.05*</td>
<td>—0.06*</td>
<td>—0.06*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>—0.05*</td>
<td>0.09*</td>
<td>—0.05*</td>
<td>—0.05*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 9,627. CAP = career advancement potential; WLB = work–life balance.

*p < .01.
balance–advancement potential relationship examined here was not significant due to the opposite effects for ratee gender in cultures that differed in gender egalitarianism. The significant positive relationships found in five out of six Level 1 analyses indicated that managers who were rated higher on work–life balance were rated higher on career advancement potential than were managers who were rated lower on work–life balance.

We computed effect sizes for work–life balance as a predictor in the five significant relationships using the Raudenbush and Bryk's (2002) formula to compute Level 1 explained variance associated with adding a predictor to the model. The explained variance in career advancement potential ratings associated with adding work–life balance ratings to the Level 1 models was higher in within-source analyses (i.e., 6.15%, 12.29%, and 9.20%, for self ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor ratings, respectively) than in multisource analyses, where explained variance associated with work–life balance was only .79% for self balance–peer advancement potential ratings and 2.00% for peer balance–supervisor advancement potential ratings.

**Gender as a Moderator**

Research Question 2 was tested to see whether ratee gender moderated the balance–advancement potential relationship by adding the ratee gender by work–life balance interaction term to the Level 1 models (see Table 3). Ratee gender did not moderate this relationship on the basis of fixed effect coefficients in any within-source analyses, $\gamma_{g0} = .02, .05, .00, ns$ (columns 1, 2, and 3, respectively), or multisource relationships, $\gamma_{g0} = .01, .01, .01, ns$ (columns 4, 5, and 6, respectively). Thus, the strength of the overall relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential did not differ depending on whether

---

### Table 2

**HLM Analyses Predicting Career Advancement Potential With Work–Life Balance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Within-source ratings</th>
<th>Multisource ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CAP–Self/ WLB–Self</td>
<td>CAP–Peer/ WLB–Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CAP–Supervisor/ WLB–Self</td>
<td>CAP–Supervisor/ WLB–Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept ($\gamma_0$)</td>
<td>4.35*** (0.02)</td>
<td>4.06*** (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLB ($\gamma_1$)</td>
<td>0.15*** (0.01)</td>
<td>0.29*** (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender ($\gamma_2$)</td>
<td>0.05* (0.02)</td>
<td>0.13*** (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ($\gamma_3$)</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.00)</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education ($\gamma_4$)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure ($\gamma_5$)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.02)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate ($\gamma_6$)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.02)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Random effects**

| Intercept ($\mu_x$) | .006*** .006*** .005*** |
| Balance slope ($\mu_z$) | .003* .015* .005 |

---

### Table 3

**HLM Analyses Predicting Career Advancement Potential With Work–Life Balance and the Work–Life Balance by Ratee Gender Interactions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Within-source ratings</th>
<th>Multisource ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CAP–Self/ WLB–Self</td>
<td>CAP–Peer/ WLB–Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CAP–Supervisor/ WLB–Self</td>
<td>CAP–Supervisor/ WLB–Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept ($\gamma_0$)</td>
<td>4.35*** (0.02)</td>
<td>4.06*** (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLB ($\gamma_1$)</td>
<td>0.15*** (0.01)</td>
<td>0.29*** (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender ($\gamma_2$)</td>
<td>0.05* (0.02)</td>
<td>0.13*** (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age ($\gamma_3$)</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.00)</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education ($\gamma_4$)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure ($\gamma_5$)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.02)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate ($\gamma_6$)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.02)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Random effects**

| Intercept ($\mu_x$) | .006*** .006*** .005*** |
| Balance slope ($\mu_z$) | .003* .015* .005 |

---

*Note. $N = 33$ countries. Level 1 entries are unstandardized coefficients (SE). CAP = career advancement potential; WLB = work–life balance. $^{*}p < .10$. $^{* *}p < .05$. $^{* ***}p < .01$. $^{* ****}p < .001$.**
the focal manager was a man or a woman. However, as we will discuss later, we did find evidence of three-way interactions involving ratee gender and national gender egalitarian practices, on the basis of two multisource analyses.

We also examined the possibility that rater gender might moderate the relationship of work–life balance ratings to career advancement potential ratings, using cases where rater gender was available (n = 8,404). Mean rater gender was calculated for each rating source when there were multiple raters (i.e., peers or supervisors), and HLM analyses were conducted with the mean rater gender by work–life balance interaction terms added to the Level 1 models (not shown). On the basis of these analyses, we found no evidence that rater gender moderated the relationship of work–life balance to advancement potential, as none of the fixed effect coefficients for the interaction terms were statistically significant.

**National Gender Egalitarianism as a Moderator**

We tested Hypothesis 1 with the Level 1 work–life balance slope estimates as outcomes and the Level 2 fixed effect for national gender egalitarianism to see whether there were any significant cross-level interactions indicating that national gender egalitarian practices moderated the balance–advancement potential relationships (see Table 4). Among the within-source analyses, we found significant negative coefficients for the work–life balance slope by gender egalitarian practices interactions on the basis of self ratings, γ11 = −.07, p < .05 (column 1), and supervisor ratings, γ11 = −.08, p < .10 (column 3). The interactions were not significant for peer ratings (column 2) or any of the multisource relationships (columns 4, 5, and 6).

In order to facilitate interpretation, we graphed simple slopes of the significant interactions for low egalitarian cultures, which were 1 SD below the mean, and high gender egalitarian cultures, which were 1 SD above the mean, in combination with work–life balance ratings that were 1 SD below and 1 SD above the mean, using procedures developed for graphing cross-level interactions (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006). Both graphs showed the same pattern, so we displayed only the graph based on supervisor ratings (see Figure 1). As can be seen in Figure 1, there were weaker positive balance–advancement potential relationships (i.e., smaller slopes) in high gender egalitarian practice cultures than in low gender egalitarian practice cultures, which was in the opposite direction from our prediction (Hypothesis 1). However, both slopes were positive and fairly similar in magnitude. We computed effect sizes for the cross-level interactions using Raudenbush and Bryk’s (2002) formula and found that the gender egalitarian practice interactions explained 51.69% of the random effects (i.e., the random variation in country balance slopes) for self ratings and 33.66% of the random effects for supervisor ratings.

To further understand the cross-level interactions, we examined regional differences in gender egalitarian practices by conducting an analysis of variance (see the nine regions in Appendix A). We found significant regional differences in gender egalitarian practices, F(8, 24) = 2.54, p < .05, η2 = .46, and a Tukey HSD post hoc test of paired mean comparisons showed that among all regions, only the Nordic region (i.e., Denmark, Finland, and Sweden; M = 3.76) and Confucian Asian region (i.e., Hong Kong, Japan, People’s Republic of China, Singapore, and South Korea; M = 3.09) were significantly different, p < .05, from each other. However, it should be noted that the Middle East region also had a low gender egalitarian practice score (3.02) but had to be excluded from this post hoc analysis because our sample included only one country (Turkey) in this region.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Within-source ratings</th>
<th>Multisource ratings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CAP–Self/ WLB–Self</td>
<td>CAP–Peer/ WLB–Peer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1: Individual-level fixed effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept (γ00)</td>
<td>4.35*** (0.13)</td>
<td>3.79*** (0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WLB (γ10)</td>
<td>0.39** (0.10)</td>
<td>0.28 (0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (γ20)</td>
<td>0.05* (0.02)</td>
<td>−0.02 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (γ30)</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.00)</td>
<td>−0.01*** (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (γ40)</td>
<td>−0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure (γ50)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.00)</td>
<td>0.01*** (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate (γ60)</td>
<td>0.05 (0.02)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2: Country-level fixed effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept × Gender Egalitarian Practices (γ01)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.04)</td>
<td>0.08* (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance Slope × Gender Egalitarian Practices (γ11)</td>
<td>−0.07* (0.03)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random effects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept (μ0)</td>
<td>.007***</td>
<td>.005***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance slope (μ1)</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.008***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 33 countries. Level 1 and Level 2 entries are unstandardized coefficients (SE). CAP = career advancement potential; WLB = work–life balance.

*p < .10. * * p < .05. * * * p < .01. ** * * p < .001.
Next we tested the three-way interactions among work–life balance slope, focal manager gender, and national gender egalitarian practices (Research Question 3) with the Level 1 balance by gender slope estimates as the outcome variable (see Table 5). None of these three-way interactions were significant in the within-source analyses (columns 1, 2, and 3). Among the multisource analyses, we found significant three-way interactions in both the self balance–supervisor advancement potential relationship for female ratees (see Figure 1), with stronger positive relationships (i.e., steeper slopes) for high gender egalitarian practices (–1 SD) than for low gender egalitarian practices (1 SD). We found the opposite pattern for male ratees (see Figure 3), with significant positive balance–advancement potential relationships (i.e., steeper slopes) for high gender egalitarian practices (–1 SD) than for low gender egalitarian practices (1 SD). In fact, the slopes were not statistically significant for female ratees in low gender egalitarian cultures or for male ratees in high gender egalitarian cultures.

Supplementary Analyses

Because managers in the United States made up 44% of our sample, we conducted separate analyses of the balance–advancement potential relationship with the U.S. data. We found significant positive balance–advancement potential relationships for all within-source analyses (partial $r = .26, .37, .31, p < .001, n = 4,192$, for self, peer, and supervisor ratings, respectively, controlling for ratee gender, age, education, tenure, and expatriate status) and multisource analyses (partial $r = .16, .09, .12, p < .001$).
.001, for self–peer, self–supervisor, and peer–supervisor combinations of balance and advancement potential ratings, respectively). Thus, in contrast to results based on the total sample, there was a significant positive relationship between self balance ratings and supervisor career advancement potential ratings.

In addition, we repeated all of the HLM analyses testing our research questions and hypothesis without the U.S. data. We found that all results for the other 32 countries were consistent with those reported above using the entire sample. However, without the U.S. data, the analysis based on self balance ratings and supervisor advancement potential ratings testing the three-way interaction of work–life balance, ratee gender, and gender egalitarianism reached a higher level of statistical significance, $r_{11} = -.18, p < .05$, and results followed the same patterns as those shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Finally, because prior scholars have often identified individualism–collectivism as a key cultural dimension for understanding work–family or work–life relationships (e.g., Aryee et al., 1999; Spector et al., 2004; Yang, 2005), we conducted additional HLM analyses to find out whether national in-group collectivistic practices (using Project GLOBE country scores) moderated the balance–advancement potential relationships. This interaction was not statistically significant for any of the within-source analyses or multisource analyses. Thus, we found no evidence that national in-group collectivistic practices moderated the relationship between work–life balance ratings and career advancement potential ratings.

**Discussion**

Our most notable result was that, on the basis of a sample of 9,627 managers from 33 countries, we generally found a positive relationship between perceptions of their work–life balance and perceptions of their career advancement potential, as indicated by ratings on factors found in prior research to differentiate promotable managers from nonpromotable managers. An important contribution of our research is that this is the first cross-national examination of this relationship. Moreover, we tested our research questions with multisource ratings rather than relying on only self-reports, as has been common practice in prior studies of work and nonwork interface issues (Casper et al., 2007). We also conducted multilevel analyses to examine two national cultural characteristics (i.e., gender egalitarianism and in-group collectivism) as potential moderators of balance–advancement potential relationships. Between these two cultural characteristics, we found evidence that only gender egalitarian practices moderated the balance–advancement potential relationship, based on within-source analyses of both self and supervisor ratings. In addition, on the basis of two multisource analyses we found significant three-way interactions, indicating that balance–advancement potential relationships were moderated by both the focal manager’s gender and national gender egalitarian practices.

**Work–Life Balance and Career Advancement Potential**

We found a positive relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential based on all three within-source analyses (i.e., self, peer, and supervisor ratings) as well as two multisource analyses (i.e., self balance–peer advancement potential ratings and peer balance–supervisor advancement potential ratings). Although the self balance–supervisor advancement potential main effect was not statistically significant, we did find a significant three-way interaction of work–life balance, ratee gender, and national gender egalitarian practices, and evidence of some positive balance–advancement potential relationships based on ratings by these sources for some combinations of ratee gender and national culture.

In the single-source analyses, work–life balance ratings explained 6%–12% of the residual variance in career advancement potential ratings, after controlling for ratee demographics representing human capital (i.e., education, organizational tenure, and age) as well as ratee gender and expatriate status, whereas in the multisource analyses work–life balance ratings explained 2% or less of the residual variance in career advancement potential ratings. The larger effects in the single-source analyses could have been due in part to common source variance. Nevertheless, the
single-source results are important because they may reflect raters’ values or beliefs about relationships between work–life balance and career advancement potential for managers, and this enabled us to look for possible differences in perspectives across different types of raters. Thus, it is noteworthy that we found consistent positive balance–advancement potential relationships based on self, peer, and supervisor ratings, suggesting that raters might have viewed work–life balance as both desirable and positively related to the likelihood of career advancement.

We also found significant positive balance–advancement potential relationships in two multisource analyses (i.e., self balance–peer advancement potential and peer balance–supervisor advancement potential) and significant three-way interactions of balance by ratee gender by gender egalitarian practices based on self balance–supervisor advancement potential ratings and self balance–peer advancement potential ratings. The significant three-way interactions suggested that the positive balance–advancement potential relationship held for only some combinations of ratee gender and cultural gender egalitarianism (i.e., women in high egalitarian cultures and men in low egalitarian cultures), which helps to explain the lack of a significant overall relationship in the self balance–supervisor advancement potential analysis and the small effect for this relationship in the self balance–peer advancement potential analysis.

Earlier we explained that on the basis of the scarcity and depletion hypotheses (Goode, 1960; Rothbard, 2001), we would predict a negative relationship between work–life balance and career advancement potential, whereas on the basis of enrichment theory (Rothbard, 2001; Sieber, 1974) and expansionist theory (Barnett & Hyde, 2001) we would predict a positive relationship between these variables. Taken together, our results showing positive balance–advancement potential relationships and no evidence of a negative balance–advancement potential relationship were more consistent with the prediction based on enrichment and expansionist theories than on the scarcity and depletion hypotheses. Nevertheless, the small effect sizes for the balance–advancement potential relationships based on multisource analyses could be interpreted as raising questions about the extent that work–life balance facilitates performance in both work and nonwork domains, as suggested by enrichment and expansionist theories. However, the consistent U.S. positive balance–advancement potential relationships based on all of the within-source and all combinations of multisource ratings are in line with predictions based on enrichment and expansionist theories.

Greenhaus and Powell (2006) suggested that participation in multiple roles (implying work–life balance) could lead to positive outcomes because individuals “learn to be tolerant of discrepant views and flexible in adjusting to the demands of diverse role senders” (p. 73). Such outcomes might counteract some important causes of career derailment—such as problems with interpersonal relationships, difficulty changing or adapting, and not being prepared for promotion due to a narrow functional orientation—that were identified by Leslie and Van Velsor’s (1996) research. Moreover, exposure to novel job situations and breadth of work experiences have been shown in other research to foster development of new skills and new ways of coping as well as to predict career success for managers (e.g., Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984; Lyness & Thompson, 2000; McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994), and diversity of life experiences, which seems to be inherent in work–life balance, might be similarly developmental for managers. As we mentioned earlier, it is also possible that managers who are genuinely competent might be more capable of engaging in multiple work and nonwork roles and thus more likely to advance in their careers.

It is interesting to note that this positive balance–advancement potential relationship differs from earlier U.S. research findings. The AT&T studies in the 1950s and 1970s reported strong positive correlations between managers’ primacy of work (and work involvement) and assessors’ overall evaluations of their advancement potential (Bray et al., 1974; Howard & Bray, 1988). However, because these studies used measures of “primacy of work” and “work involvement” rather than work–life balance, the difference in measures could provide an explanation for why their findings differed from those of the subsequent U.S. studies that did measure work–life balance.

In the late 1980s researchers at the Center for Creative Leadership found no relationship between supervisors’ ratings of managers’ work–life balance, using the same Benchmarks® scale that we used, and a one-item rating of promotability (McCauley & Lombardo, 1990; McCauley et al., 1989). As noted above, for our sample of U.S. supervisors, the relationship between their ratings of focal managers’ work–life balance and career advancement potential (using our five-scale composite) was positive, partial $r = .31, p < .001, n = 4,192$. Thus, there is some evidence that in the United States the relationship between perceptions of a manager’s work–life balance and perceptions of career advancement potential has changed over time, from a negative relationship several decades ago, to no relationship in the late 1980s, and then to a positive relationship in the present study.

This shift parallels the evolution of the work–life literature from its earlier emphasis on work conflicting with family or other nonwork interests to today’s exploration of possibilities for enrichment as well as depletion between work and nonwork domains (e.g., Graves et al., 2007; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Rothbard, 2001; van Steenbergen, Ellemers, & Mooijaart, 2007). Moreover, it is possible that the historical changes in the direction of the balance–advancement potential relationship might also reflect a shift in managers’ values. In his well-known book The Organization Man, Whyte (1957) described the centrality of work for managers in the 1950s: “Work, then, is dominant. Everything else is subordinate and the executive is unable to compartmentalize his life. Whatever the segment of it—leisure, home, friends—he instinctively measures it in terms of how well it meshes with his work” (p. 161), as well as the relationship between work centrality (i.e., lack of balance) and organizational advancement: “... they are not well rounded for the simple reason that if they had been well rounded, they wouldn’t have gotten to be executives in the first place” (p. 156). In contrast, more recently scholars have stressed the importance of work–life balance for success as a business leader. For example, Friedman (2006) described the concept of “total leadership,” which, he said, “aims to help participants increase business results by enriching lives, to learn to lead in new ways that integrate work, home, community, and self for mutual gain” (p. 1270).

We found no evidence that ratee gender moderated the overall balance–advancement potential relationship, but there was some evidence of a three-way interaction involving ratee gender, work–life balance, and gender egalitarian cultural practices. For the most
part, however, the positive relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and perceptions of career advancement potential appeared to be similar for women and men. This overall finding contradicts predictions based on gender role theory, as well as predictions based on job–gender incongruity theories, and does not help to resolve inconsistencies in the prior gender-related research findings that we reviewed. However, as we will explain later, gender role theory was helpful for interpreting some of the three-way interaction results.

National Gender Egalitarianism as a Moderator

We found that gender egalitarian practices moderated within-source balance–advancement potential relationships based on self ratings and supervisor ratings, with slightly weaker three-way interactions in high gender egalitarian cultures than in low gender egalitarian cultures. Also, the lack of a significant three-way interaction (with ratee gender) based on these two within-source analyses indicates that the weaker positive relationships in high egalitarian than in low egalitarian cultures did not differ for female and male rates. The direction of the moderation is opposite from our prediction, and future research is needed to explore these issues.

Even more intriguing were our significant three-way interactions of work–life balance ratings, ratee gender, and national gender egalitarian practices in two multisource analyses (i.e., self balance–peer advancement potential ratings and self balance–supervisor advancement potential ratings). With both of these multisource analyses we found an opposite pattern of results for female and male ratees, such that there were stronger positive balance–advancement potential relationships for female managers in high gender egalitarian cultures, but stronger positive balance–advancement potential relationships for male managers in low gender egalitarian cultures. In fact, the balance–advancement potential relationships were not statistically significant for women in low egalitarian cultures or for men in high egalitarian cultures.

A possible explanation for the gender difference in high egalitarian societies is that the enrichment and expansionist theories are more applicable to female managers than their male counterparts. Support for this idea is provided by van Steenbergen et al.’s (2007) research in the Netherlands, which was ranked eighth highest among our sample of countries in gender egalitarian practices. Van Steenbergen and her colleagues contended that because of traditional gender role expectations, men are expected to work, whereas women who do not have to work because of financial necessity may choose to work because of the perceived benefits of combining work and family roles. The researchers found that, consistent with these ideas, not only did women report more facilitation between their work and family roles than did men, but also, even after controlling for work–family conflict, facilitation between work and family roles better predicted work outcomes for women than for men. Although van Steenbergen et al. did not include career advancement as a work outcome, their findings are consistent with those of the present study showing a positive balance–career advancement potential relationship for women but not for men.

However, in low gender egalitarian societies, where greater emphasis is placed on traditional gender roles, with men expected to be breadwinners and women expected to be caregivers and homemakers, we found a positive balance–career advancement relationship for male managers and no relationship for female managers. These findings are consistent with two studies conducted in India, which was ranked second lowest in gender egalitarianism among the 33 countries in our sample. Larson, Verma, and Dworkin’s (2001) study of Indian men found that, consistent with traditional gender roles, the men gave highest priority to their work, but the researchers concluded that there was “a functional relationship between the two parts of men’s lives” (p. 218) because when the men were with their families, they relaxed and recuperated from the stress and strains associated with their work roles. Moreover, Aryee, Srinivas and Tan’s (2005) research in India found that due to traditional gender role expectations, Indian men had greater discretion about their participation in family roles than did Indian women; also there were stronger relationships between family–work facilitation and job involvement for men than for women. Thus, these Indian studies suggest that enrichment and expansionist theories might be applicable to male managers, as there was evidence of facilitation between their nonwork (i.e., family) and work roles, which is consistent with our findings of positive balance–career advancement relationships for men in low gender egalitarian societies. However, we found no relationship between perceptions of work–life balance and career advancement potential for women in low gender egalitarian cultures, which may have occurred because organizational expectations for commitment to the work role, which would be required for career advancement, conflict with traditional societal gender role expectations that women should give their highest priority to nonwork roles associated with family and home. This suggests that enrichment and expansionist theories might be less applicable to women, as there does not appear to be facilitation between their nonwork (i.e., family) and work roles.

Our findings of three-way interactions among work–life balance ratings, ratee gender, and gender egalitarian practices could have some important implications, particularly because (a) these findings were based on the sources most likely to provide accurate ratings, that is, self ratings of work–life balance, and “other” (i.e., supervisor and peer) ratings of career advancement potential; (b) the findings were consistent across two different multisource analyses; and (c) common source variance was not a problem. However, the three-way interactions raise questions about the extent to which expansionist or enrichment theories are universally applicable, as we found that the positive balance–advancement potential relationships did not hold for some combinations of ratee gender and national gender egalitarian practices.

Implications for Practice

Our research findings have important implications for managers and their employers. Most importantly, we found evidence that perceptions of managers’ work–life balance were positively related to perceptions of their career advancement potential, based on self ratings as well as ratings by peers and supervisors. It is particularly noteworthy that we found this relationship based on supervisor ratings of both variables, suggesting that (whether or not their perceptions were accurate) supervisors had a positive view of subordinates’ work–life balance, as reflected in higher career advancement potential ratings; this raises the possibility that supervisors might consider their own perceptions of subordinates’
work–life balance when making career-related organizational decisions, such as promotions.

The positive balance–advancement potential relationships are somewhat surprising given the high-pressure work environments many managers face, and these results represent a departure from prior U.S. research findings. However, as we explained above, it is possible that involvement in nonwork roles and activities might enhance managers’ skills and adaptability in ways that allow them to advance in their careers. Thus, these findings should be of particular interest to employers who have implemented programs to help their managers balance work with nonwork responsibilities and activities, as well as to managers seeking to lead balanced lives.

Much of the prior work–life research has been conducted in single countries, especially Anglo countries (Poelmans, O’Driscoll, & Beham, 2005). Yet, our research suggests that national context should be taken into account, as we found that relationships between perceptions of work–life balance and perceptions of career advancement potential varied depending on national gender egalitarian practices, based on self and supervisor ratings, as well as three-way interactions of balance, ratee gender, and gender egalitarian practices, based on multisource ratings. Our findings indicate that work–life balance may be perceived more positively in some cultures than in others as it relates to career advancement potential for managers, and that within a particular cultural context perceptions about whether work–life balance is positively perceived may vary depending on the manager’s gender. These results could have implications for multinational employers, as perceptions of the importance of work–life balance programs as well as the consequences of such programs might differ depending upon the cultural context.

Limitations and Ideas for Future Research

Despite the strengths of our study, there are also limitations. First, it is important to note that in spite of the large number of raters, the statistical power in the HLM analyses was limited by our relatively small sample of 33 Level 2 units (i.e., countries), and the restriction of range in our dependent variable may have hampered our ability to find relationships to other variables and limited the size of relationships we found. Also, our sample of managers who were participating in some type of management development activity and were able to respond to English-language surveys may not have been representative of broader samples of managers in their respective countries, which may have limited our ability to detect moderation by national cultural characteristics. Moreover, we used a cross-sectional design and cannot draw conclusions about causality, and it is also possible that some important unmeasured variable influenced ratings of both work–life balance and career advancement potential.

Another limitation is our reliance on perceptual measures of both work–life balance and career advancement potential, and it is possible that raters in different countries may have interpreted the items somewhat differently. The importance of establishing measurement equivalence/invariance across groups has been recognized for some time, and considerable progress has been made in developing and evaluating methods for assessing measurement invariance (Byrne, Shavelson, & Muthén, 1989; Little, 1997; Millsap & Hartog, 1988; Raju, Laffitte, & Byrne, 2002). However, there are many unanswered questions about procedures for testing invariance, and researchers have been advised not to assume that current procedures are necessarily accurate (French & Finch, 2006; Millsap, 2005; Vandenberg, 2002). For the present study it was not appropriate to assess the measurement equivalence of the two scales across countries for at least two reasons. First, the median country sample size was only 86, and 20 of the 33 countries had sample sizes of less than 100, making it virtually impossible to accurately test for measurement equivalence using either factor analytic or item response theory methods (Meade & Lautenschlager, 2004a, 2004b). Second, a complete analysis of measurement equivalence across 33 countries would be impractical and difficult to interpret because it would require 528 pairwise comparisons. Moreover, to date it appears that no one has developed a method for dealing with a many-group multilevel random effects analysis that is workable and available (R. E. Millsap, personal communication, November 12, 2007). Thus, our inability to accurately evaluate measurement equivalence of the scales across countries is a limitation. In addition, our work–life balance measure was somewhat asymmetrical in that low balance was limited to being overly focused on work, and thus we could not differentiate perceptions of managers with low balance due to being overly focused on nonwork activities, nor could we distinguish perceptions related to family involvement from other types of nonwork activities.

Nevertheless, our study is notable because we used a sample of over 9,000 managers from 33 countries, and we explored several new research questions as well as revisited important findings from prior research. Thus, our results have important implications for future research. Whereas there has been little prior investigation into linkages between work–life balance and career outcomes, our study suggests that this may be a fruitful area for further exploration. Also, much of the work–life literature has focused on conflicts between work and nonwork domains, but our results generally indicated that managers who were perceived to be higher in work–life balance were perceived to be higher in potential for career advancement as well. This raises questions for future research, such as whether these perceptions about work–life balance were accurate, and if so, what enabled some managers to balance their work and nonwork involvement. Also, it would be interesting to find out whether strategies that facilitate work–life balance differ across cultures.

Another pressing question, which would require longitudinal research, is whether our findings suggesting that more-balanced managers were perceived to be more likely to advance would prove accurate. The older studies that we discussed found that relationships of work–life balance ratings (or similar constructs) to predictions about managers’ career advancement were in the same directions as relationships of work–life balance ratings to measures of actual advancement. Thus, it would be interesting to see whether the positive ratings-based relationships that we found would similarly hold, such that managers who were perceived to lead more balanced lives were in fact more likely to advance in their careers. Although our within-source findings provide compelling evidence that work–life balance was viewed favorably, the smaller multisource relationship effect sizes raise questions about the extent to which perceptions of work–life balance were related to actual higher likelihood of career advancement. Further explo-
ration of these differing possibilities could inform theory as well as practice.

Conclusions

In conclusion, our most notable and consistent finding was the positive relationship between perceptions of managers’ work–life balance and perceptions of their career advancement potential. Moreover, we found that this relationship generally held for both genders and was reflected in single-source ratings by the managers themselves, their supervisors, and their peers, as well as two out of three analyses based on multisource ratings. Our findings of larger effect sizes for within-source analyses than for multisource analyses suggest that future work–life research should incorporate multisource measures rather than rely solely on self-reports, as has been common practice in the past. Furthermore, we found evidence that national context, as represented by gender egalitarian organizations, moderated the balance–advancement potential relationships in some instances. These findings underscore the importance of conducting international work–life research rather than assuming that research findings will generalize across national boundaries. Finally, our results also raise the intriguing possibility that work–life balance may actually be related to positive career outcomes for managers.

References

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WORK–LIFE BALANCE AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT POTENTIAL


Vandenberg, R. J. (2002). Toward a further understanding of and improvement in measurement invariance methods and procedures. *Organizational Research Methods, 5*, 139–158.


Appendix A

### Country and Gender Distribution of Manager Ratees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural region/countries</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anglo</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>1,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>1,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1,318</td>
<td>2,874</td>
<td>4,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,024</td>
<td>4,702</td>
<td>6,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confucian Asian</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>186</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern European</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Germanic</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>282</td>
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<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>323</td>
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<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>158</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latin American</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latin European</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

### Sample Items From the Benchmarks® Career Derailment Scales (Center for Creative Leadership, 2004)

#### Problems With Interpersonal Relationships (10 items)
- 1. Tends to resist input from other departments.
- 2. Orders people around rather than working to get them onboard.

#### Difficulty Leading and Building a Team (8 items)
- 1. Does not resolve conflict among direct reports.
- 2. Does not help individuals understand how their work fits into the goals of the organization.

#### Difficulty Changing or Adapting (10 items)
- 1. Is not adaptable to many different types of people.
- 2. Resists learning from his/her mistakes.

#### Failure to Meet Business Objectives (7 items)
- 1. Makes a splash and moves on without really completing a job.
- 2. May have exceeded his or her current level of competence.

#### Too Narrow Functional Orientation (5 items)
- 1. Would not be able to manage in a different department.
- 2. Is not ready for more responsibility.