

**DIFFERENCES IN CAREER ADVANCEMENT BY GENDER: EVIDENCE
FROM PERSONNEL DATA**

Stephen L. Mehay

Graduate School of Business and Public Policy

555 Dyer Road

Monterey, CA 93943

Phone: 831.656.2643

Fax: 831.656.3068

E-mail: smehay@nps.edu

Considerable attention has been devoted to determining the existence and causes of the 'glass ceiling' -- differences in promotion to an organization's highest ranks between men and women. Analyses of the 'glass ceiling' have often been based on the use of cross sectional data for a single organization or for a sample of firms. These data, however, do not permit controls for unobserved differences, such as in ability, which can bias estimated coefficients. Also, many prior studies have been handicapped by a lack of data on worker on-the-job productivity, which also create the potential for biased estimates of the effect of gender on promotion and may lead to incorrect inferences about causal relationships.

The purpose of this study is to examine the career experiences of individuals working in a single organization. The study exploits a unique database that contains selected job performance indicators for college-educated professional and technical employees of the U.S. federal government. The data set tracks the career profiles of all new hires in 1994 and 1995 through 2003. The panel data allow for fixed effects estimates and allow adjustment for selection effects due to retention decisions of employees. Performance measures that are analyzed include promotion, selection to a supervisory or managerial position, annual performance ratings by supervisors, salary levels, and salary growth. In addition, the data allow us to determine whether the employee achieves the highest career ranks in the federal government, the senior executive service. Also, the promotion models allow us to control for observed performance differences to determine the basis for any gender-based promotion differences.

The results indicate that the probability of promotion for women is higher than for men. In part, this is due to consistently higher performance appraisals received by women from their supervisors. Moreover, women are just as likely as men to be selected for supervisory or managerial positions. However, women leave the organization at a higher rate than men and are more likely to work part-time.