

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Is the boundaryless career an organisational benefit, liability or irrelevance?

An investigation into boundaryless career competencies, career success and intention to  
leave.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Arts in Psychology at Massey University, Albany

Charlotte Rebecca Boyd

2009

## ABSTRACT

This thesis asked whether contemporary organisations are faced with a paradox: are boundaryless career competencies linked to career success but also organisational turnover? Employees of a large New Zealand organisation (n= 568) were surveyed using an intranet based questionnaire. Through analysis using structural equation modelling, the best fit model showed that people who demonstrate a high level of investment in career competencies were also likely to show a high level of career success but, contrary to expectations, people who are successful in their careers are less likely to think about leaving the organisation. Therefore, contrary to boundaryless career theory, inter-organisational movement is not necessarily the goal for contemporary career actors. It may be that people stay in an organisation despite, or even *because*, they are investing in boundaryless career competencies. Furthermore, people who see internal opportunities for mobility are less likely to consider leaving, while people who see external opportunities for mobility will have a higher intention to leave. Hence whether people with high career success stay or go may depend on whether the organisation allows for expression of career competencies. It may be that internal opportunities 'trump' external opportunities, or vice versa. This research is valuable in three key ways, providing: (1) the operationalisation of career competencies, tentatively shown to link to career success, for use in career management and further research (2) findings which question the key boundaryless career assumptions of mobility and the end of the organisational career (3) an interpretation of results suggesting non-significant effects of age and gender may be due to allowance for shifting priorities and context in the model. In light of these findings

the 'Chameleon Career' is suggested as an alternative metaphor to the boundaryless career, to reflect the need for the individual and the organisation to adapt to the changing environment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give my thanks to my supervisor Dr Stuart Carr for his patience, and to Dr Richard Fletcher for his assistance with the statistical analysis. I am grateful to Trisha McEwan for being a source of inspiration, as well as her support in carrying out the survey. I also thank my family and friends for their encouragement throughout this process. Special thanks to Shane for all the ways he has helped, and to Mum for proofreading and organising the final stages of thesis completion.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
LIST OF TABLES.....	7
LIST OF FIGURES.....	8
THESIS	
Introduction.....	9
Boundaryless career competencies.....	18
Career success.....	23
Intention to leave.....	28
Method.....	32
Participants.....	32
Materials.....	33
Measures.....	34
Procedure.....	39
Results.....	41
Structural equation modelling.....	41
Measurement models.....	44
The structural model.....	53
Age and gender effects.....	60
Discussion.....	65
Summary of findings.....	65
Links to boundaryless career theory.....	66
Implications and value of the research.....	77
Limitations and suggestions for future research.....	80

CONCLUSION.....	84
REFERENCES .....	85
APPENDICES .....	95

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Sample characteristics.....	33
Table 2: Items for investment in ‘three ways of knowing’.....	35
Table 3: Initial pattern matrix for the career competencies scale, with items to be removed highlighted.....	46
Table 4: Fit statistics and alpha levels for each of the first order measurement models.....	53
Table 5: Fit statistics for each of the structural models.....	57
Table 6: Showing maximum-likelihood and bootstrap estimates for Model 3 relationships.....	58
Table 7: Fit indexes for invariance tests for Model 3.....	64

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: showing Model 1 hypothesised relationships between boundaryless career competencies, career success and intention to leave.....	17
Figure 2: showing Model 2 hypothesised relationships between boundaryless career competencies, career success and intention to leave.....	18
Figure 3: AMOS diagram for career competency measurement model.....	48
Figure 4: AMOS diagram for career success measurement model.....	50
Figure 5: AMOS diagram for intention to leave measurement model.....	52
Figure 6: AMOS diagram showing Model 1.....	55
Figure 7: AMOS diagram showing Model 2.....	55
Figure 8: AMOS diagram showing Model 3, including added paths.....	56
Figure 9: AMOS diagram showing Model 4, including age.....	60