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## DETERMINANTS OF MANAGERIAL CAREER ATTAINMENT: STUDENT PERCEPTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL REALITIES

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*This study explored the perceptions of managerial career attainment of graduating MBA students and compared them to previous research on the actual determinants of career attainment. Results suggest that students did seem to have a good grasp of which determinants are important to managerial career attainment. Business school faculty are encouraged to prepare MBA students for the organizational realities that they will likely experience during their careers.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of managerial career attainment of graduating MBA students and compare them to previous research on the actual determinants of career attainment. In the careers literature, researchers have conducted several studies to examine the determinants of career success in organizations and managerial career attainment (Baron, Davis-Blake & Bielby, 1986; King, Burke & Pemberton, 2005; Rosenbaum, 1989; Spilerman, 1986). While there has been a convergence on which determinants are important in research, it is not clear how aware individuals are of the determinants of managerial career attainment in either their own organizations or in the relevant labor market.

First time entrants to the labor market have historically been described as possessing fairly unrealistic expectations about jobs, organizations, and determinants of career attainment (Wanous, 1980; Wanous et al., 1992; Phillips, 1998). Unrealistic expectations may result in the "reality shock" many individuals confront in the early stage of their careers and contribute to the high turnover rates experienced by first time hires (Buda & Charnov, 2003). Recruitment research has long documented applicants' frustrations with recruiters regarding the amount of information they are provided with during the recruitment and selection process (Meglino, Ravlin & DeNisi, 2000). Candidates perceive that they do not receive basic job attribute information, let alone more complex organizational information such as the timing of promotion decisions in an organization and the determinants of occupational success (Breaugh & Stark, 2000). Organizations that provide future employees with inaccurate or ambiguous information about career paths in the firm may cause employees to misperceive organizational realities and to seek career options elsewhere

(Barksdale, Bellenger, Boles & Brashear, 2003; Granrose & Portwood, 1987). A better understanding of these determinants of career attainment perceptions may allow organizations to reduce candidates' unrealistic expectations regarding promotions and reduce the number of new hires who leave because their expectations regarding promotion and advancement are not met.

Research also has indicated that both managers making promotion decisions and employees affected by promotion decisions are often unaware of the factors related to career attainment in their firm (Rosenbaum, 1984; Vroom & MacCrimmon, 1968; Wier, Stone & Hunton, 2002). Employees have been found to both underestimate and overestimate their promotion probabilities. Rosenbaum (1984) found that lower and mid-level managers overestimated their chances for promotion. Lawrence (1984) found that employees frequently perceived themselves as behind schedule in terms of promotion. These beliefs are important since inaccurate perceptions led to negative attitudes towards their work (Lawrence, 1988).

A study done in a manufacturing firm investigated the relationship between the types of information managers stated they used to make promotion decisions and the information they actually used when making simulated promotion decisions (Taylor, 1975). Little congruence was found between the ratings and the actual usage. Managers stated that they used more objective and relevant types of information such as performance evaluations in their decisions. However, when they made simulated promotion decisions they actually used job evaluations the least, and mainly relied on information from other sources such as interview impressions and education. Friedman and Shapira (1979) surveyed employees in a large financial corporation in Israel about their awareness of promotion criteria. Approximately half of the employees responded that they

were unaware of the criteria for promotion.

More recently, a study of managerial accountants in three different industries found that lower and higher level managerial accountants had conflicting perceptions of the track to top management in their firms. The data explored 5,899 managerial accountants and found that both the perceptions of the lower level managerial accountants and the higher level managerial accountants were inaccurate (Wier, Stone & Hunton, 2002).

This study will focus on graduating MBA students' perceptions of the determinants of career attainment. The perceived determinants may or may not be aligned with the findings of past research on the actual determinants of career attainment. This sample is of interest because of their unique status in the labor market. They are positioned between first-time entrants into the labor market and mid-career professionals who have become entrenched in their beliefs (perhaps inaccurate) regarding the determinants of career attainment. They are also more likely to be open to learning the actual determinants of managerial career attainment because they have not spent 10-15 years in organizations where their beliefs about the determinants of managerial career attainment may be reinforced over time. Although we would expect their perceptions of managerial career attainment to be more accurate than those of first time entrants to the labor market, past research indicates that their perceptions may not reflect organizational reality. Their perceptions will be compared to past research on the actual determinants of career attainment. The next section of the paper reviews the literature on key variables which operate as determinants of career attainment.

## DETERMINANTS OF CAREER ATTAINMENT

### Entering Position

Research has suggested an employee's entering position is related to their career attainment. The tournament model of career mobility suggests that early job assignments have an impact on subsequent career attainment (Rosenbaum, 1989). Regardless of the positions employees obtain later in their careers, their early job status attainments will affect their later career attainment (Wier, Stone & Hunton, 2002). Structural models of career attainment would predict an even stronger effect, with early job status primarily determining which job ladder an employee is on and eventually their later career attainment (Bloemen, 2005).

An employee's functional area (or the department they are placed into) may play an important role in a manager's career attainment. Several studies have found that an employee's starting functional area may act as a signal affecting chances for promotion (Sheridan et al.,

1990). Some functional areas are associated with greater centrality in a firm's network, therefore leading to greater availability of information about the firm (Ibarra, 1993). Functional area has traditionally been investigated in terms of line versus staff departments. In many firms the functional areas leading to greatest centrality are the line departments (Kilian, Hukai & McCarty, 2005; Oakley, 2000).

Research has found that gaining line experience early in one's career enhances career success and is necessary for moving into upper management levels (Cox and Harquail, 1990; Larwood and Gattiker, 1987; McCauley et al., 1994). Rosenbaum (1984) found that those with line experience had higher rates of promotion than those without line experience. Forbes and Piercy (1991) found that firms in certain industries tended to choose their top managers from particular functional areas. Forbes (1987) investigated career attainment in an oil company and found that employees who entered through a technical department had higher levels of career attainment than those entering in administrative positions. A recent review of leadership research found that an important barrier to minority advancement into leadership roles was lack of line experience (Kilian, Hukai & McCarty, 2005). Lack of line experience has also been found to lead to an extremely low number of female CEOs (Oakley, 2000).

Another aspect of an employee's entering job status is whether they entered the organization on a part time versus a full time basis. Recent research has found that entering an organization as a part-time worker may lead to negative career outcomes such as lower pay and fewer promotions (Watson, 2005). A February 27, 2006 report found that women received lower pay than men because of the part-time job offers they accepted (Economist, 2006). A study of part-time workers in the Australian labor market found that part-time work led to lower pay and fewer career opportunities (Watson, 2005). Hirsh's 2006 study found that working part-time led to substantial wage penalties. Entering an organization as a part time employee may be viewed as a negative signal by managers making promotion decisions, thus, disqualifying part timers from further advancement (DiPrete & Soule, 1988).

### Career Velocity

Career velocity indicates whether employees have rapidly advancing careers. Other researchers have referred to the concept of career velocity as managerial momentum and have noted the importance of managerial momentum on promotions (Cannings & Montmarquette, 1991). Rate of promotion, whether operationalized as

career velocity or career momentum is one measure of internal career mobility. Rosenbaum's (1984) research on the tournament model of mobility has documented the importance of career velocity when exploring the determinants of career attainment. Perceptions of career velocity may be powerful predictors of intentions to look for opportunities outside of one's current firm. A 2003 study of black females found that rates of promotion were very cognizant to these women and led to a belief that if they had not received a promotion within five years they should look for work outside their firm (Livingston, 2003).

One indicator of career velocity is whether employees are younger than their peers in the same managerial level. High career velocity indicates an employee has received numerous promotions at a relatively young age or within a short tenure in the firm (Hurley & Sonnenfeld, 1998). In the careers literature, career velocity has been calculated in two ways. Kanter (1977) suggests that it be calculated as an employee's number of promotions divided by their age. This would indicate if the employee had received numerous promotions at a young age. Career velocity has also been calculated as the number of promotions an employee has received divided by their tenure in the firm (Rosenbaum, 1989; Kanter, 1977). This would indicate if an employee has received numerous promotions in a short time at the firm. The minimum career velocity a person can attain is zero, which occurs if a person had received no promotions. A career velocity of .25 would indicate that a person had received a promotion every four years. A career velocity of .50 would indicate that a person had received a promotion every 2 years. A career velocity of 1.0 would indicate that a person had received a promotion every year that they worked in that organization.

### Performance Evaluations

Performance is an important predictor of promotion and it is a signal of the likelihood of future promotions in organizations (Stumpf & London, 1981; Elvira & Town, 2001). Performance evaluations have been found to be directly related to higher pay and greater career attainment (Paulin & Mellor, 1996). A 2005 study of North Carolina workers found that those with the highest performance ratings had a higher likelihood of being promoted (Krull, 2005). However, some research has found that managers do not make promotion decisions based on performance evaluations (Elvira & Graham, 2002; Petersen & Saporta, 2004). Castilla (2005) found that men were given larger pay raises and more promotions than women even if they received the same performance evaluations.

### Education

Economists have often studied the rate of returns to education (James & Alsalam, 1993; Larkins, 2001; Psacharopoulos, 1985; Sicherman, 1991). Economists argue that the labor market will reward the human capital investments individuals make in themselves with higher salaries and more promotions (Becker, 1964). Research in labor economics and careers has indicated that the returns from educational attainment in terms of pay, promotions, job satisfaction level, and achievement of personal goals are significant (Baruch and Leeming, 2001; Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz, 1995; Psacharopoulos, 1985). In past studies, the positive effects of education have been attributed to factors such as quantity or years of education, quality of educational institution attended, or subject of studies (Black & Smith, 2004; Hurley-Hanson, Wally, Segrest-Purkiss & Sonnenfeld, 2005).

Education is often used to illustrate the investments individuals make in themselves. Early organizational studies often looked at leaders and compared where they went to college. For example, Pierson (1969) studied leaders found in the Dictionary of American Biography in America and found a small number of schools had produced a large number of these leaders. Useem and Karabel (1986) studied top managers from 208 large U.S. corporations and found it was important to have a bachelor's degree from a top ranked college or a master's degree in business in order to move into top corporate management. In fact, by the 1990s almost 60% of CEOs had MBAs (Black & Smith, 2004) and in 2005, MBA graduates were offered starting salaries and signing bonuses that were dramatically increased over those offered in 2004 (Salary Surveys, 2006). Recent studies have found that competition has led to some business majors being offered starting salaries 3.9 to 5.4% over 2005 (NACE, 2006).

### Department Experience

There is considerable debate as to whether top managers need a corporate-wide operating knowledge base or expertise in a core functional area in order to be promoted into top management (Michel & Hambrick, 1992). Research suggests that in firms where departments must cooperate for maximum performance, top managers must have knowledge of all corporate-wide operating activities in order to be successful (Hill & Hoskisson, 1987). The career implications for managers in these types of organizations is that they must gain this knowledge and experience through lateral career moves

and transfers between different departments. Marilyn Moats Kennedy (2004) writes that in today's competitive environment generalists are more valuable to organizations than specialists (Marketing New). A 2004 study found that organizations might consider fostering generalists instead of specialists so that managers would mentor each other rather than compete for the same jobs (Eguchi, 2004). Breadth of experience may allow top managers to have an organization-wide perspective and contribute to their accumulated human capital. Another way for employees to gain a broad knowledge base is to obtain an MBA degree. Business schools are seen as a place for students to gain a broad knowledge base (DiMeglio, 2006). This study explores the perceptions of managerial career attainment of graduating MBA students and compares them to previous research on the actual determinants of career attainment.

## METHODS

The following section describes the methodology utilized to gather the students' perceptions of managerial career attainment. These perceptions were identified with a policy capturing study. One of the strengths of policy capturing is that it allows researchers to understand how people use available information when making judgments. In essence, what is captured is the policy underlying the decision process utilized. Policy capturing allows researchers to see how people weight certain criteria when making decisions. The value of policy capturing is that it permits the inference of a rater's weighting policy. Policy capturing requests an overall evaluation of a ratee, rather than requiring explicit evaluations of individual criteria. Requesting an overall evaluation of a ratee enables the researcher to determine how raters weighted the information available to them. Additional advantages of policy capturing are that it avoids the problems of social desirability (Stahl, 1986) and poor cognitive insight which are documented in many studies where the respondents are asked to rate or rank individual criteria (Slovic, Fischhoff, & Lichtenstein, 1977; Stahl & Zimmerer, 1984).

For this study, 208 graduating MBA students were given descriptions of potential employees to rate in terms of promotability to top levels in a firm. These candidates varied along several criteria developed from previous literature on the determinants of career attainment. The survey also asked the respondents to rank the importance of each of the criteria to their decision after they had finished their judgments of the applicants. This study focused on the six determinants most frequently found to be related to career attainment in the career attainment literature. Two

questionnaires had to be developed in order to study the six variables of interest in this study. The number of criteria for each questionnaire was limited to four based on previous research (Pedigo & Meyer, 1979). Including all six variables in one questionnaire would require the respondents to rate 64 individuals at one time. Since Pedigo and Meyer (1979) found that respondents lost focus after 20 ratings, two questionnaires were developed in order to study the six determinants of career attainment of interest in this study. A regression was then run on each individual rater to see how they weighted each of the criteria. A regression equation was developed for each rater which described their method of combining and weighting information. The regression coefficients for each rater were then averaged to determine the effect of each criterion on all judgments of promotability.

## Exercise

A promotion decision exercise was developed and pretested until all respondents were able to fill out the questionnaire without questions and until the feedback from the respondents indicated the experimental manipulations were perceived as intended. The participants were asked to play the role of a vice-president of a large firm with the responsibility of evaluating the future managerial potential of current employees. Participants were given a description of a large firm with a pyramid shaped hierarchy. The firm had six managerial levels and the number of managers in each level was illustrated to show the difficulty of reaching level four or above.

The respondents also received a description of each of the four pieces of information they had on each candidate. The description detailed how each variable was coded and the mean for all managers on each variable. The participants then read descriptions of sixteen individuals at managerial level one. The respondents were asked to assess the probability of each person moving up to managerial level four or above. After this assessment, the participants were asked to rank order the four variables in terms of their importance to their assessment. In addition, the respondents were asked to fill out a one page questionnaire about their work experience and demographic information. Two questionnaires were used. The first include the managerial career attainment determinants of Career Velocity, Entering Department, Performance Evaluation, and Education. The second investigated the variables of career velocity and performance evaluation again, and included entering job status and number of departments previously worked in. tables 1 and 2 illustrate the attributes assigned to each of the 16 candidates in the two questionnaires.

**Table 1: Attributes Assigned to Candidates in Study 1**

Candidate	Career Velocity	Department Entered	Performance Evaluations	Education
1	59	0	65	BS
2	59	0	65	MBA
3	70	1	65	MBA
4	70	0	65	MBA
5	59	1	78	MBA
6	70	0	78	BS
7	59	1	65	MBA
8	70	0	78	MBA
9	70	1	78	MBA
10	59	0	78	BS
11	70	1	65	BS
12	70	0	65	BS
13	59	1	78	BS
14	59	0	78	MBA
15	59	1	65	BS
16	70	1	78	BS

**Table 2: Attributes Assigned to Candidates in Study 2**

Candidate	Career Velocity	Entering Status	Performance Evaluations	Number Departments
1	59	1	65	2
2	59	1	65	5
3	70	0	65	5
4	70	1	65	5
5	59	0	78	5
6	70	1	78	2
7	59	0	65	5
8	70	1	78	5
9	70	0	78	5
10	59	1	78	2
11	70	0	65	2
12	70	1	65	2
13	59	0	78	2
14	59	1	78	5
15	59	0	65	2
16	70	0	78	2

## Analyses

Regression analyses examined the relationships between the four independent variables and the assessment of each of the sixteen candidate's promotion chances. A regression analysis was run including all respondents and then a separate regression analysis was run for each of the respondents. To investigate the proportion of variance accounted for by each independent variable, the individual R square changes for each variable was then averaged across the respondents (Stumpf & London, 1981). These R square changes were equivalent to the proportion of variance accounted for by each independent variable.

## Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for all analyses was the individual decision maker's assessment of each of the sixteen candidate's promotion chances. The participants were asked to give a probability rating between 0 and 100

where 100 denotes the case where they thought the person would reach managerial level 4 without a doubt. The respondents were free to use any numbers between 0 and 100 in making their probability rating.

## Questionnaire 1

**Sample:** One hundred fifteen graduating MBA students filled out the questionnaire. The mean age for the respondents was 28.31. The respondents had an average of 6.44 years of work experience with an average of 3.0 organizations; 64% had managerial experience; 41% were women; and 58% were minorities.

**Independent Variables:** The participants were given information on each of the following four variables for each candidate: Career velocity, department first worked in, performance evaluation, and education. The age of all the candidates was controlled to be between 28 and 32.

Career velocity was described as the number of promotions a person had received relative to their tenure in



the company. It was scored on a scale from 1 (Very low) to 100 (High). The mean given for all managers was 59. The candidates had either a career velocity of 59 or 65. This allowed all managers to be at the mean or above and thus, avoided the elimination of all candidates below the mean. This was done to avoid the possibility of respondents automatically rejecting the candidates who were below the mean on this variable, thereby not considering the other variables, as would occur in an elimination by aspects model (Tversky, 1972).

The department first worked in was identified for each candidate. Candidates either worked in the operations department or the finance department. The participants had been informed about the importance of the operations line department to the hypothetical firm.

Performance evaluations were scored on a scale from 1 (must improve) to 100 (exceeds all expectations). The mean for all managers was given as 65. The candidates had performance evaluations of 65 or 78. Again, this prevented the exclusion of any candidates below the mean.

Education was coded as the highest degree a person had earned. All candidates had a Bachelor's degree and half of the candidates had an MBA degree.

Questionnaire 2

**Sample:** Ninety three graduating MBA students filled out the questionnaire. The mean age for the respondents was 28.01. The respondents had an average of 5.45 years of work experience with an average of 2.8 organizations; 69% had managerial experience; 28% were women; and 42% were minorities.

**Independent Variables:** The participants were given information on each of the following four variables for each candidate: Career velocity, entering job status, performance evaluation, and number of departments worked in. Career velocity and performance appraisal were used in both questionnaires because of their significant importance to career attainment indicated by previous research. These two variables were coded and scored exactly the same as in

questionnaire one. Again, the age of all the candidates was controlled to be between 28 and 32.

Entering job status indicated if the candidate entered the firm on a part-time or a full-time basis. Number of departments worked in has also been found to be significant to managerial career attainment. The candidates had either worked in 2 or 5 departments. The mean for all managers was 2.41.

RESULTS

Questionnaire 1

The regression analysis for all of the respondents together indicated that the most important variable to the decision makers was performance appraisal. Education and career velocity were also significant. All three variables were positively significantly related to the promotion ratings in the regression equation. The total R square for each individual was averaged across the 115 respondents. The R<sup>2</sup> was used as a measure of internal consistency and reliability (Stahl & Zimmerer, 1984; Karakaya & Stahl, 1989). The average R<sup>2</sup> was .78. This finding indicates that the respondents were very internally consistent in their decisions.

Table 3 shows the proportion of variance accounted for by each independent variable. The most important variable used by the sample was performance appraisal. On the average, it accounted for 32% of the variance in the promotion ratings. Career velocity was weighted less heavily and accounted, on the average for about 26% of the variance in rating, and education accounted for another 14%. Entering department accounted for 5% of the variance in rating. Table 3 also shows the mean rankings of each of the independent variables. The respondents ranked performance appraisal as the most important variable in their decision making. Career velocity was ranked as the second most important variable, followed by education, and then, entering department. These rankings correspond with the regression analysis results.

Table 3: Proportion of Variance and Mean Ranks

	Proportion of Variance	Mean Rank
Career Velocity**	.26	2.42
Entering Department	.05	2.31
Performance Appraisal**	.32	2.73
Education**	.14	2.50

\* p< .05, \*\* p<.01

Regressions were run separately for men, women, minorities, and whites to determine whether the decision making varied by subgroup. The only difference between

the analysis run for the women and the total sample regression was that career velocity was more important than performance appraisal to the women respondents. The

regression results for the men were the same as the total sample regression. The minority respondents were more inclined to use all of the information given to them. They used all four variables when making a decision. Also, although the T value and standardized beta are higher for performance appraisal, they are very similar to the values for career velocity. The regression results for whites were the same as the total sample regression.

## Questionnaire 2

The regression analysis for all of the respondents together indicated that the most important variable to the decision makers was performance appraisal. The other variables were also significant in the regression equation. The total R square for each individual was averaged across the 93 respondents. The  $R^2$  was used as a measure of internal consistency and reliability (Stahl & Zimmerer,

1984; Karakaya & Stahl, 1989). The average  $R^2$  was .68. This finding indicates that the respondents were very internally consistent in their decisions.

Table 4 shows the proportion of variance accounted for by each independent variable. Again, the most important variable used by the sample was performance appraisal. On the average, it accounted for 28% of the variance in the promotion ratings. Career velocity was weighted slightly less heavily and accounted, on the average for about 21% of the variance in rating, the number of departments worked in accounted for another 12%, and entering job status accounted for an additional 8%. All four variables were positively significantly related to the promotion ratings. Table 4 also shows the mean ranking of each of the independent variables. Performance appraisal was ranked the highest followed by career velocity, number of departments and entering job status. This corresponds to the results of the regression analysis.

**Table 4: Proportion of Variance and Mean Ranks**

	Proportion of Variance	Mean Rank
Career Velocity	.21	2.51
Entering Job Status**	.08	2.19
Performance Appraisal**	.28	2.88
Number Departments**	.12	2.49

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

Regressions were run separately for men, women, minorities, and whites to determine whether the decision making varied by subgroup. The results for all of these four subgroups resembled those of the total sample regression. All of the subgroups were inclined to use all of the information given to them.

## DISCUSSION

This study compared MBA students' perceptions of managerial career attainment with previous research on the actual determinants of career attainment. The perceptions of MBA students are important because of their unique status in the labor market. They are more experienced than recent college graduates but they may not have as many negative experiences as mid-career professionals. Moreover, they are demonstrating their determination to move up in their careers by returning to school to pursue the MBA degree. They recognize the role of the MBA degree in determining promotions in organizations.

The determinants used by the students in the policy capturing studies did not differ significantly from the ones found in previous research. Career velocity and performance appraisal were the two determinants examined

in both of the questionnaires. Performance appraisal was the most important variable in assigning ratings to candidates in both sets of questionnaires. It was positively significantly related to the ratings and it was ranked as the most important piece of information by the respondents in both questionnaires. These results are consistent with the human capital model of career attainment which would predict the importance of performance appraisals in explaining career mobility.

Career velocity was also found to be significantly positively related to career attainment in both questionnaires. These results are consistent with previous research on the determinants of career attainment and the tournament model of career attainment which would predict a positive relationship between career velocity and chances for promotion. Employees who are moving rapidly through the organization are perceived to have better promotion chances than those with lower career velocity. Higher levels of career velocity appear to be used by managers as a signal of an employee's promotability in an organization.

Education was positively significantly related to the promotion ratings in questionnaire one. The importance of education is not surprising since the respondents were students, and it might be expected that they would value



education when making promotion judgments. This study in questionnaire one also found the number of departments worked in to be positively related to career attainment. Employees who had worked in several different departments were perceived as having higher promotion chances than those who had worked in fewer departments.

The policy capturing study did not find that entering the organization in the operations department was significantly related to career attainment. The potential impact of the variable entering department may be specific to particular firms. Whereas the sample may have been able to evaluate the importance of variables such as performance appraisal, career velocity, and education, it may have been difficult for them to determine the impact of entering department in the absence of an organizational context. Even though the questionnaire attempted to explain the importance of entering the organization in the operations department, the respondents may have discounted this information since they had not experienced it themselves.

Entering the organization with part-time status was positively significantly related to career attainment in this study. This is somewhat surprising given that past research has found negative effects from entering a firm part-time. Although the students may have been working part-time, they may not have yet experienced this negative aspect associated with part-time work experience.

The results indicate that the determinants of career attainment examined in this study are important factors that influence the judgments made about an employee's promotion chances. The variables explored in this study are consistent with the actual determinants of career attainment found within organizations (Judge, et al., 1995). The students did seem to be aware of the importance of these variables, all of which have been found significant in previous research. Results of this research suggest that some variables might be industry dependent and firm specific, while others may be more generalizable across jobs and organizations.

Future research on determinants of career attainments should include exploring how determinants of career attainment vary by industry and managerial level. It may be that certain variables have a larger effect on the career attainment of lower or middle level managers than on top managers. Changing industry norms regarding obtaining promotions may influence how the importance of determinants vary by industry. Also, future research should explore the effects of social networks and image norms as potential determinants of managerial career attainment.

It is important that the relationship between student perceptions of the determinants of career attainment and actual career patterns are congruent. Incongruence may

lead to the types of negative attitudes found in Lawrence's (1984) work. MBA students entering (or reentering) the workforce may concentrate on erroneous aspects of their work in the false hope that it will help them to be more promotable. At the same time, managers may use promotion criteria that will not lead to future career success in the firm for their employees. For example, managers may feel they are helping an employee by getting them a promotion into a different department but it may turn out to be a dead end in terms of career advancement and future promotion rates. Employees receiving very low promotion rates may experience employee dissatisfaction, low motivation and even turnover.

It is important for top managers to have an accurate picture of the career paths in their own organizations in order to realistically help employees envision their own career paths. It is also important for faculty in business schools to prepare MBAs for the organizational realities that these students will experience during their careers within organizations. While students do seem to have a good grasp of the determinants that are important to managerial career attainment, faculty can help advise students as to which variables they should emphasize in planning their own career paths. Students should be provided a realistic preview of both external and internal labor markets. Students must be given a realistic look at the determinants of managerial career attainment if they are to understand their own career paths and engage in career planning strategies to assure career successes.

It is critical that researchers continue to examine the determinants of career attainment so that students have current information on the determinants of career attainment. Business school faculty are encouraged to prepare MBAs for the organizational realities that their students will likely experience during their careers within organizations.

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