The Career Project: An Intervention to Facilitate Career Development

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Abstract
Students face substantial challenges in readying for their professional lives. They must select a career field, conduct a job search and attain suitable employment in their chosen fields. Yet business schools often have limited resources to dedicate to this process. To aid with this, we present the career project, an efficient career- and self-exploration assignment. Situated within existing management coursework and requiring limited faculty oversight, the project comprises a resume assessment, identifying short-term and long-term career goals, backup plans, personal strengths and selling points, conducting organizational research, an informational interview with someone in their desired field, and a market assessment with a knowledgeable professional. We tested the project efficacy with 803 students (two treatment groups and two controls) during an 'Introduction to Management' undergraduate course, using a between- and within-subject quasi-experimental design. The results strongly demonstrate the effectiveness of the project for accomplishing career planning and job search goals. We also note the project can increase placement rates and salaries at graduation, which are major components of business school rankings and AACSB accreditation.

The Career Project: An Intervention to Facilitate Career Development

Every year, thousands of college students graduate and enter the workforce. This is a stressful time for them, marked by anticipatory anxiety about the transition to the workforce and concerns about their long-term career futures (Golden et al., 2020), while they are expected to take initiative in their learning and the shaping of their careers (Loon, 2021). Yet, since early 2020 the global COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted just how fragile employment security can be, and the importance of laying the groundwork for students to enter the labor market prepared to weather

unexpected career shocks (Hite & McDonald, 2020). The purpose of this research is to demonstrate how educators can and should contribute to students' career exploration and success by implementing a "career project" within the academic curriculum. It builds on previous research on career development interventions in higher education by using a quasi-experimental case study focused on a curricular career intervention that does not require significant curricular change or faculty investment. And it demonstrates how a low-investment curricular intervention can develop and improve students' career goals, backup plans, interview stories, market research, and mentoring networks.
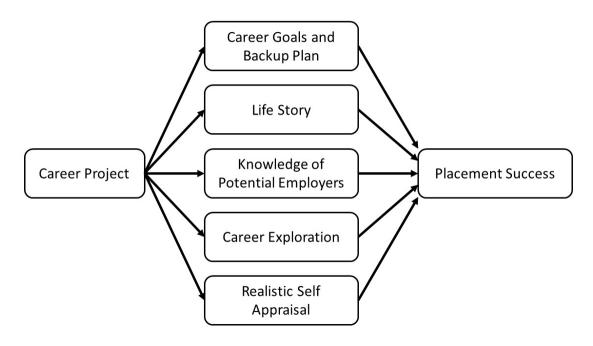
Background

Presented as a course assignment, the career project is a guided process in which students develop their short-term and long-term career goals through a structured exploratory process. The project is self-directed, and the recommended grading strategy is completion-based, so the time required of instructors is minimal. The completion-based grading strategy is supported by goal-setting literature that underscores the importance of setting learning goals prior to performance goals (Seijts et al., 2004), which aligns with the needs of students who are new to the career exploration process. In the career project, students set learning goals relative to understanding themselves, a company and a selected career. They then set performance goals to successfully attain and excel in that career, once they understand what is necessary for them to succeed both in the job search and in the field (Appendix A). In the context of career goals, Saks et al. (2015) argued that job seekers must first familiarize themselves with the job search process and gain confidence about engaging in various job search behaviors before focusing on outcomes. They found that an overemphasis on job search outcomes may be harmful, especially when introduced during the early stages of career exploration. Jiang et al. (2019) agrees that an ultimately successful career journey requires career exploration, where people reflect on themselves and their environments to drive behaviors and attitudes related to career success.

Career exploration can be described as "the exploration of the environment and the self with the aim of gathering career-related information" (Kleine et al., 2021). Past research has shown that career exploration contributes to a number of positive outcomes including greater self-awareness related to educational and career choices, greater chance of being invited for job interviews, higher self-perceptions of interview readiness, higher recruiter rating of interview performance, receiving job offers, and earning higher wages (Flum & Blustein, 2000; Praskova et al., 2015, Stumpf et al., 1984; Vuolo et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2019; Kleine et al., 2021). However, not all students engage in career exploration with the same intensity (Werbel, 2000), and as a result some may end up without a job, or with a job that is unrelated to their career aspirations. In addition, failing to make good career decisions early in their working lives can have long-term career consequences. For instance, Guvenen et al. (2021) examined individual earnings dynamics using panel data on millions of US workers and reported that the pay trajectory is determined in the first decade of employment. Yet despite the many studies asserting the importance of career exploration, a recent review of 194 peer-reviewed journal articles on career exploration, found only two studies had used an experimental design in their research (Jiang et al., 2019), creating a need for more, experimental research in this area.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

In designing and assessing the career project, we have focused on five areas. As seen in Figure 1, we propose that the career project enhances 1) career goal and backup plan definition, 2) development of a life story to share with recruiters, 3) knowledge of potential employers, 4) knowledge of potential jobs and careers, and 5) realistic self-assessment. These five factors, in turn, can positively influence placement success. In this study we test only the left half of the model.

Figure 1. The Conceptual Model (The Left Portion Was Tested in This Study)

Career Goals and Backup Plan

Research has demonstrated that career exploration activites, including goal-setting exercises, enhance the overall employability of graduates (Bates et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2019). Students with clear career goals are more focused and successful in achieving those goals (Pham & Jackson, 2020), whereas individuals without clear goals may put less effort into the job search process (Pham & Jackson, 2020) or suffer career indecision (Werbel, 2000).

The career project requires students to think about their career goals and plans for achieving those goals. In addition to discussing their immediate job and ultimate career objectives, students are required to investigate what professional and educational experiences could help them reach those goals and objectives. Students are also required to create a backup plan in case their original plan does not work out, since traditional career planning is often not enough to address unexpected obstacles (Lent, 2013; Hite & McDonald, 2020).

Hence, we propose that:

H1: Students completing the career project will have better developed career goals and a backup plan.

Life Story
Self-exploration includes thinking about one's interests and abilities. Stumpf et al. (1983) defined self-exploration as an examination of personal goals, values, skills, and needs in which individuals are required to reflect on how their past integrates with their future career goals. Examining one's past successes and failures as well as one's strengths and weaknesses requires the type of self-reflection and self-awareness that is invaluable in the career development process (Chen, 2003). Werbel (2000) argued that engaging in self-exploration entails a readiness or cognitive preparation to identify desirable job opportunities and is likely to lead to a more efficient and effective job search process.

As part of the career project, students are required to assemble a list of job-related information about themselves. This list is important because it can help students identify what type of work environment will be the most compatible with their personal qualities. In addition, the list may be used by students to prepare for the interview process. Important themes that students were required to reflect upon when creating the list are (a) high motivation, (b) high ability, (c) good time management skills, (d) leadership skills, and (e) interpersonal skills. These reflection activities result in a narrative that connects the student's knowledge, skills, and abilities to the needs of their targeted career path as well as an understanding of skill gaps the student should address while still in school or in internships.

> *H2: Students completing the career project will have a better life story to share with interviewers.*

Knowledge of Potential Employers.
Aside from self-exploration, another important component of career exploration is market exploration. Market exploration includes gathering information about different work opportunities and employers. While we all might have an idea about what a doctor, a lawyer or a financial analyst might do at their job, those notions are likely to be fairly superficial unless we have direct experience related to that job. Before transitioning into the world of work, young people form mental images about different jobs based on their observations from the outer world. These mental images can be unrealistically favorable or unfavorable (Osborn, 1990). Gathering information on different organizations and the types of jobs available helps students form realistic work expectations (Werbel, 2000). Students who learn more details about different organizational cultures as well as the challenges and benefits that a particular job entails, are in a better position to evaluate whether certain jobs match their work interests and abilities. Therefore we propose:

> *H3: Students completing the career project will report a more advanced capability to research potential employers and develop job relevant questions.*

Career Exploration.
As part of the career project, students are asked to interview someone who holds the type of job that they will seek. While it is possible for students to find career information online, completing the interview allows them to develop their mentoring network and learn about the more subtle social and political aspects of careers that are required for success. In order to help students develop a realistic image of the job, they are encouraged to ask questions such as: How do you like your

job? How did you get your job? How could someone like me land a position like yours? Do you know of any openings in this field? Has there been a time in your career that you struggled (e.g., lost a job, had difficulty finding a job)? If so, how did you handle this situation? Hence, we propose that:

> *H4: Students completing the career project will be more likely to have spoken to a professional in their proposed career field and explored the reality of the career.*

Realistic Self Appraisal.

The final component of the career project requires students to evaluate their employability. In addition to being realistic about the job market, it is also necessary for students to be realistic about how well they are prepared for their desired career path. Past research has shown that individuals are not accurate when it comes to assessing their skill and character. Kruger and Dunning (1999, p. 1121) argued that skills that engender competence in a particular domain are often the very same skills necessary to evaluate competence in that domain. Thus, some students may be under or over-estimating their employability. For that reason, students are required to find a person with in-depth knowledge of the field that they are interested in and gather feedback about the student's current strengths and weaknesses relevant to that field, and we propose:

> H5*: Students completing the career project will be more likely to have sought feedback on their career plans and credentials.*

Methods

Participants

The sample consisted of 803 students enrolled in four mass sections of an organizational behavior class during fall semester 2019 and spring semester 2020 by the same instructor on the same days. One section from each semester was selected as the treatment group (N = 449) and one section from each semester was designated as control (N = 354). During the fall semester, the early class was randomly selected to be the treatment group. During the spring semester, the later class was the treatment group to counterbalance time of day.

Of 993 total students enrolled in the four sections, 803 participated, a rate of 80.9%. The average age was 22.67 years. Gender composition was 376 females and 427 males. The sample was composed of 3 freshmen, 138 sophomores, 534 juniors and 128 seniors.

Research Design

The use of existing groups makes causal inference challenging because of the potential for confounds. To help address this challenge, we used a research design with three components. The first and second are quasi-experimental designs which do not use randomization. As Harris, McGregor, et al. (2006) note, quasi-experimental studies can use both nonrandomly selected control groups as well as pre-intervention and post-intervention measurements. We combine these two approaches. Our first research design component compares treatment and control groups. Our second component is a within-subject design as treatment participants are compared before and after the career project intervention. To provide richness, the third component is a collection of

open-ended verbal responses from treatment participants to the question, "Please comment on the value of the career project to you."

Experimental Manipulation

The experimental manipulation consisted of completing Parts 1 and 2 of the Career Project (Appendix A). For Part 1, participants composed resumes and evaluated them using VMock. VMock (https://www.vmock.com/site) is an artificial intelligence resume review tool which critiques individually uploaded resumes, offers suggestions for improvement, and provides an aggregate resume score which is compared to a relevant peer group selected by the tool itself. Students revised and resubmitted their resumes individually until they scored 60 or more out of 100 points.

For Part 2, participants (a) stated their career goals, (b) stated their strengths and selling points, (c) conducted organizational research and compiled three questions related to their potential employment, (d) conducted an informational interview with someone who does what they want to do as a career, and (e) obtained a critique of their resume and credentials by a knowledgeable professional in their field.

Dependent Measures

Single item measures were created to assess the efficacy of the career project with a focus on the five, key areas of the conceptual model (Appendix B). Participants stated their agreement using a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = somewhat agree; and 7 = strongly agree). In the assessment, questions 1 and 2 address career goals and backup plans, question 3 speaks to life story, question 4 ask about knowledge of potential employers, question 5 considers career exploration, and question 6 evaluates the pursuit of a realistic self-appraisal.

Procedures

During week 3 of the semester, the Career Project Parts 1 and 2 were assigned to the treatment group. During week 5, the treatment group completed Assessment Time 1. They completed the Career Project Part 1 (by week 6) and Part 2 (by week 11), and finally the Assessment Time 2 (during week 12). The control group completed the Assessment Time 1 (during week 5) and Assessment Time 2 (during week 12). The Assessments at Times 1 and 2 were the dependent measures. See Table 1 for a timetable of research procedures.

Table 1. *Research Timetable.*

	Treatment Group	Control Group
Week 3	Career Project Parts 1 and 2 Assigned	
Week 5	Assessment Time 1	Assessment-Time 1
Week 6	Career Project Part 1 due.	
Week 11	Career Project Part 2 due.	
Week 12	Assessment Time 2	Assessment-Time 2

Participants in both conditions received five extra credit points for completing the optional Time 1 and Time 2 self-assessments. In addition, participants in the treatment condition earned 50 points (out of 400 points for the class) for the career project. Participants in the control group were unaware that the career project was assigned to the treatment group.

Impact of COVID-19 on Research
The fall semester 2019 classes were conducted in-person during entire semester. The spring semester 2020 classes met in-person until spring break (week 8) and then moved to an online format. During spring semester, all treatment groups and controls were affected equally by the transition to online. No changes were made to the experimental procedures.

Data Analysis
For the six dependent measures, simple t tests were used for comparisons (1) between treatment group and control, and (2) for the treatment group between Time 1 and Time 2.

For verbal responses, two raters independently rated each response as positive, neutral or negative. There was 96.0% initial agreement. The raters worked together to jointly classify the responses on which there was disagreement, successfully reaching full agreement.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations
The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for independent and dependent variables are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables.*

	Mean	Std Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Treatment vs. Control	.55	.50						
2. Can state my career goals	5.40	1.34	.19***					
3. Have backup plan	5.02	1.68	.20***	.49***				
4. Can tell my story	4.79	1.70	.27***	.49***	.46***			
5. Can do company research	5.68	1.28	.15***	.45***	.34***	.45***		
6. Spoken with someone in career	5.58	1.74	.36***	.45***	.37***	.47***	.49***	
7. Received feedback	5.30	1.80	.37***	.45***	.37***	.49***	.47***	.78***

Note. Treatment group = 1, control group = 0; N= 803.

Hypotheses Testing

Treatment Group to Control Comparison
As seen in Table 3, treatment group ratings were significantly higher on all dimensions of career readiness relative to control group. Thus, all hypotheses were supported. Students who had completed the career project reported that they could better state their short-term and long-term

goals and were more likely to have a backup career plan. They had better developed career-relevant stories and could better research a company or organization. In addition, they were more likely to have spoken with someone in their field and sought feedback regarding their career plans and credentials.

Table 3. *Treatment Group vs. Control Group.*

Conditions	T-Test	Treatment Group Mean (Std Dev)	Control Group Mean (Std Dev)
1. I can state my short-term and long-term career goals.	5.38***	5.62 (1.26)	5.11 (1.38)
2. I have a backup plan in case my current career plan does not work out.	5.53***	5.32 (1.55)	4.65 (1.78)
3. I have developed my story, a career relevant summary of my life which I can share with recruiters.	7.84***	5.20 (1.50)	4.30 (1.80)
4. I can research a company/organization in order to (a) find information related to my employment, and (b) generate questions for gathering further information from the company officials.	4.28***	5.86 (1.16)	5.36 (1.39)
5. I have spoken with someone in the career I plan to pursue and asked them questions such as: What do you do? How do you like it? How could someone like me enter a career like yours?	10.25***	6.13 (1.28)	4.89 (1.98)
6. I have sought and received feedback from a knowledgeable professional who works in my field regarding my career plans and credentials.	10.72***	5.88 (1.41)	4.55 (1.97)

Note. *** $p<.001$. Treatment group n= 449, control group n = 354; N= 449.

Time 1 to Time 2 Comparison

As seen in Table 4, the treatment group scored significantly higher on all dimensions of career readiness at Time 2 when compared to Time 1. Thus, all hypotheses were supported. At Time 2, many students who had completed the career project reported better developed career goals and plans, could better state their short-term and long-term goals, and were more likely to have a backup career plan. They had developed better career-relevant personal stories and were able to properly research a company or organization. In addition, they were more likely to have spoken with someone in their field and sought feedback regarding their career plans and credentials.

Table 4. *Treatment Group: Time 1 (Before) vs. Time 2 (After).*

		T1	T2
Conditions	T-Test	Mean (Std Dev)	Mean (Std Dev)
1. I can state my short-term and long-term career goals.	6.58***	4.99 (1.44)	5.62 (1.26)
2. I have a backup plan in case my current career plan does not work out.	3.52***	4.24 (1.87)	5.32 (1.55)
3. I have developed my story, a career relevant summary of my life which I can share with recruiters.	5.10***	3.97 (1.74)	5.20 (1.50)
4. I can research a company/organization in order to (a) find information related to my employment, and (b) generate questions for gathering further information from the company officials.	2.81***	5.17 (1.46)	5.86 (1.16)
5. I have spoken with someone in the career I plan to pursue and asked them questions such as: What do you do? How do you like it? How could someone like me enter a career like yours?	5.31***	4.51 (1.92)	6.13 (1.28)
6. I have sought and received feedback from a knowledgeable professional who works in my field regarding my career plans and credentials.	5.29***	4.13 (1.99)	5.88 (1.41)

Note. *** $p<.001$. N = 449.

Verbal Evaluations of the Career Project by Participants

The raters concluded that 95.6% of the treatment group positively evaluated the career project, 2.2% offered neutral evaluations, and 2.2% offered negative evaluations. Participants commonly mentioned the benefits of a VMock analysis of their resumes, improved career goal clarity, useful career information, and helpful evaluations of their credentials from interviewees. See Table 5 for representative responses of positive, neutral, and negative responses.

Table 5. *Written Evaluations of the Career Project.*

Sample Positive Evaluations

The career project opened opportunities for me. The person I interviewed gave me the courage to be open to anything. He pushed me to put myself out there in LinkedIn and I was able to land an internship.

I enjoyed the career project assigned to the class because I received critical feedback that helps me position myself better in the workforce. Also, it gave me the opportunity to lay out my goals putting them into perspective.

I'm the type of person to stress over things I haven't done so much that I never end up doing anything. Due to a low self-efficacy, I never really attempted to define my career goals because I didn't believe I could achieve them. However, the career project forced me to think about my future and I realized that my career goals are not as unattainable as I initially thought.

It also helped me get my resume evaluated by them and seeing "strengths" and "weaknesses" I did not knew about.

I genuinely loved the project. It made me network and reach out to professionals which I loved. And it even connected me to two people who I hope to one day work under.

The career project allowed me to get my foot in the door asking about marketing for the real estate company I work for and has landed me an opportunity for an internship.

It was a terrific experience for my future career. Interviewing the person whose position I wanted showed me what I had to do to get where I want to go.

Sample Neutral Evaluations
The career project was not that valuable to me.

I just did it to pass the class.

Sample Negative Evaluations
The career project was a clever idea. But it doesn't benefit me at all considering I have a job in my field already.

This project is something that I have done on my own time prior to taking this class because I had recognized early on that having a game plan is essential in securing a job. I found it a bit redundant now just because I am currently a senior who, thankfully, was able to land a full-time job. However, I do believe this is a very helpful exercise for people who have not landed a full-time job. It also incentivized me to re-evaluate my plans for the future so as to not get too comfortable in my current position.

I thought it was pointless but it got me to interview with someone at a big company. The person who I interviewed has inspired me to be better at school and prepare for my future.

Discussion and Implications

There has been steady growth and support for career development courses at business schools over the past several decades (Smith et al., 2002). Yet, this can be expensive to implement, and it limits the number of disciplinary courses available to students. Our findings demonstrate that the career project achieves positive career development results for students without adding new courses or changing the existing curriculum at a college. The project can be easily incorporated in any business school class, since starting the project requires about 30 minutes of class time for the assignment and little time for efficient grading. During grading, instructors can also scan for opportunities to offer advice, invite a student for a one-on-one consultation, and offer a referral to a career counselor. This further helps students to develop career clarity, goals, and networks. And while no, single variable has been directly tied to placement success (Van Hooft et al., 2013), research has shown that starting the career development process early is associated with career success (Van den Hee et al., 2020). Therefore, including the career project in a course prior to the end of the student's academic career can promote an early start in the process and further support student placement success.

From a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective, the career project directly addresses communication skills, openness to experience, mentoring, and socialization skills necessary to overcoming challenges faced by those from less advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds (Pitesa & Pillutla, 2022). This is important, as the percentage of college student receiving financial aid grows annually, with more than 86% of undergraduate students currently benefitting from some kind of financial aid (Hanson, 2021). At the university where the career project was tested, nearly 2/3 of students in the college are on financial aid.

As an added benefit, the project also has relevance for business school accreditation, where learner progression—including placement outcomes for graduates—is one of the key accreditation factors for AACSB-accredited business schools (AACSB, 2020). Related to that, career success is a key driver for major business school rankings by organizations such as Poets & Quants (Allen, 2021), US News and World Report (Morse & Brooks, 2021), Financial Times (Financial Times, 2021), and Bloomberg (Allen, 2021). Thus, career outcomes impact not only the current students and graduates, but also prospective students who consult school rankings, which in turn impacts the future talent pool at the college (Graduate Management Admissions Council, 2019) and thereby overall college success. In addition, career outcomes impact alumni perception of the value of their degrees and can alter the perceived value of alumni by employers (Clarke, 2007).

In summary, our findings demonstrate that the implementation of the career project into an existing class in a business school can meaningfully influence student career success, and by extension the school's success, without requiring major curricular change or financial investment from the college.

Conclusion and Need for Further Research

As summarized in Table 6, the survey demonstrated a significant improvement in outcomes for all five hypotheses and areas of the conceptual framework both for the experimental group over the control group, and for pre and post measures of the experimental group. Completion of the career project is associated with students having better developed career goals and a backup plan. As well, those who complete the project have a better life story to share with employers. These students also demonstrate a more advanced capability to research potential employers and develop job relevant questions, as well as being more likely to have spoken to a professional in their proposed career field and explored the reality of the career. Finally, students completing the career project were more likely to have sought feedback on their career plans and credentials. All of these types of activities and outcomes are associated with employability and career success (Jiang et al., 2019).

Table 6: *Summary of Results*

Framework Concept	Hypothesis	Survey Question	T-Test Significance of mean increase over control group	T-Test Significance of increase T2 over T1
Career Goals and Backup Plan	H1: Students completing the career project will have better developed career goals and a backup plan.	1 & 2	5.38*** 5.53***	6.58*** 3.52***
Life Story	H2: Students completing the career project will have a better life story to share with interviewers	3	7.84***	5.10***
Knowledge of Potential Employers	H3: Students completing the career project will report a more advanced capability to research potential employers and develop job relevant questions	4	4.28***	2.81***
Career Exploration	H4: Students completing the career project will be more likely to have spoken to a professional in their proposed career field and explored the reality of the career.	5	10.25***	5.31***
Realistic Self-Appraisal	H5: Students completing the career project will be more likely to have sought feedback on their career plans and credentials	6	10.72***	5.29***

***$p<.0001$

While career preparation courses have been shown to provide similar outcomes that support employability of students (Gu et al., 2018), not all schools have been willing or able to make this type of curricular commitment (Smith et al., 2002). This study demonstrates that similar results can be achieved within existing curriculum with minimal investment of faculty time and resources. Because the career project is relatively simple to implement in any course, this research demonstrates that the adoption of the career project within an existing course is an efficient and effective way to influence student success without making significant financial investments or changes to the overall curriculum. In addition, this study addresses a shortage of quasi-experimental studies on career development interventions in higher education (Jiang et al., 2019).

This study was completed in an undergraduate business school environment, and further study would be needed to determine if the findings remain the same in other disciplines or at the graduate level. In addition, Van Hooft et al. (2013) noted that only 10% of the variance in job search success can be accounted for by job search quality, and that the rest is due to a wide variety of variables. Because of this, it is difficult to connect these results directly to placement success, so more research would be necessary to isolate the many variables impacting student outcomes in addition to the career project. In addition, it would be useful to separate the student populations by financial aid status to determine if the career project has a more profound impact on low-income students compared to more financially stable students. Even with the addition of this study, there is still a limited amount of experimental and quasi-experimental research on career development interventions in higher education (Jiang et al., 2019), so further research of this type is warranted.

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Appendix A

Career Project Assignment

Part 1: Assessing and Improving Your Resume with VMock
VMock, is an online resume-review tool which will critique your resume, provide suggestions for improvement, and provide an aggregate score on your resume. Upload your resume for an assessment and critique. Scores range from 0 to 100 and are based upon a comparison to a relevant peer group. You can upload your resume up to 9 times, using the feedback in the system as a guide to improve your resume and increase your score. You must reach a score of 60 out 100 on VMock to receive the 20 point credit for this portion of the assignment.

Part 2: Goals, Backup Plan, Research, and Interviews
The purpose of this project is to better prepare you for the external and internal job market. The five parts of the project are as follows: (1) A statement of your career goals (both short-term and long-term) and your plans for reaching them, (2) your strengths and selling points that you want to convey to the interviewer, (3) your research report of an organization, (4) a summary of an interview you conducted with an individual who holds the kind of job you are seeking, and (5) an assessment of your marketability. A more complete description of these parts is below.

Career Goals and Your Plans for Reaching Them. Include your immediate and ultimate career objectives. What job and educational experience will you seek out as you work towards your goals? What is your backup plan if the original plan does not work out? If you have not yet identified a first job or ultimate career goal, outline the general characteristics of the type of job or career you desire. Then, present a specific plan for deciding on your job and career objectives.

Strengths and Selling Points. This list will help you assemble important job-related information about yourself. Some interviewers will force you to provide structure for the interview; and this list can serve as a guide in that situation for describing yourself and your accomplishments. Interviews tend to be very short, and the interviewer will not ask you for everything that you want them to know. Therefore, it is important that you systematically assemble information and present it during the interview. Important themes for the list are: (a) high motivation, (b) high ability, (c) good time management skills, (d) leadership skills, and (e) interpersonal skills.

Organizational Research. Research an organization and its industry. Useful sources of information are company websites, annual reports, the CEO's letter to shareholders, library electronic resources, or even personal industry contacts. Identify three important strategic issues for the firm and briefly describe why each is important. For each strategic issue, list a question you could ask at an interview which directly relates your employment with the firm. The questions relating your employment to the strategic issue must include first person pronouns (e.g., I, me, my). Format for presenting the three important strategic issues: Use three paragraphs, one for each strategic issue. Within each paragraph, clearly label the strategic issue, the reason(s) why it is important, and the question relating your employment with the firm to the strategic issue. The questions relating your employment to the strategic issue must include first person pronouns (e.g., I, me, my) and must relate your employment directly to the issue. In a final paragraph, list the sources you have used in researching your organization and its industry.

Interview Someone Who Already Does What You Want To Do. Possible questions include: What do you do? How do you like your job? How did you get your job? How could someone like me land a position like yours? Do you know of any openings in this field? (Note: If you are interviewing your superior or their superior and you are also interviewing them regarding your promotability, skip the last question.) Has there been a time in your career when you struggled (e.g., lost a job, had difficulty finding a job)? If so, how did you handle this situation? Then, write a summary of what you have learned. This summary must be at least two full pages (double-spaced, one inch margins, no empty lines, at least 22 lines of text per page).

Assessment of Employability. Find a person with in-depth knowledge of the field that you are interested in. Give them a copy of your resume and ask them to you provide you with feedback on your employability. What do they see as your strengths and weaknesses? Your summary of their feedback must be at least two full pages (double-spaced, one inch margins, no empty lines, at least 22 lines of text per page). You may contact the same person for your 'Assessment of Employability' and your 'Interview of Someone Who Already Does What You Want to Do.' If you choose this option, the summary must be at least three full pages.

Note. For our evening MBA students, we add the option of assessing promotability. The instructions follow.

Promotability. Interview an appropriate person such as your boss, your boss's boss or an HR person. An ideal person is your second level supervisor. After describing your goals and your characteristics, ask him/her to assess your promotability or employability. Seek comments on your strengths and weaknesses and suggestions for eliminating any weaknesses. There may be circumstances which make it unwise for you to obtain this information. For example, 1) you may be a new hire or 2) your company may have recently been acquired and general turmoil exists with no one knowing what the future will hold.

Regarding promotability, who will make the decision regarding your promotion? How many positions can you be promoted into? Who is the competition for those promotions? What strategies does this person suggest for enabling you to land a promotion or new job? Finally, for you to assess, what is the likelihood of you being promoted in your current organization?

Appendix B. *Dependent Measures.*

1. I can state my short-term and long-term career goals.

2. I have a backup plan in case my current career plan does not work out.

3. I have developed my story, a career relevant summary of my life which I can share with recruiters.

4. I can research a company/ organization in order to (a) find information related to my employment and (b) generate questions for gathering further information from the company officials.

5. I have spoken with someone in the career I plan to pursue and asked them questions such as: What do you do? How do you like it? How could someone like me enter a career like yours?

6. I have sought and received feedback from a knowledgeable professional who works in my field regarding my career plans and credentials.

Note. Response scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 4 = somewhat agree; and 7 = strongly agree.