

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

1991

Effect of work experience on graduate students' anxiety for future work

Gila A. Azar

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Industrial and Organizational Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Azar, Gila A., "Effect of work experience on graduate students' anxiety for future work" (1991). *Theses Digitization Project*. 453.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/453>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

EFFECT OF WORK EXPERIENCE ON
GRADUATE STUDENTS' ANXIETY FOR FUTURE WORK

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State
University, San Bernardino

In Partial fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Psychology

by
Gila A. Azar
December 1991

EFFECT OF WORK EXPERIENCE ON
GRADUATE STUDENTS' ANXIETY FOR FUTURE WORK

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State
University, San Bernardino

by
Gila A. Azar
December 1991

Approved:


Gloria Cowan, Chair, Psychology

December 10, 1991


Jan Gottke


Ed Schneiderhan

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of work experience on the graduate student's apprehension towards future employment. Relevancy of past work to future work, success of past performance, and the amount of experience obtained were the variables expected to have the greatest effect on work apprehension. Subjects consisted of ninety graduate students (approximately 48 business and 38 social work majors) from California State University at San Bernardino, ranging in age from 23 to 51 years (mean of 34). General anxiety and self-efficacy were employed as control variables. Results showed that individuals with higher self-efficacy had lower work apprehension. Also, students who were older, had obtained more work experience (in months or in number of jobs held), or those who were enrolled part-time had high self-efficacy and low work apprehension. Success and relevance of prior work experience did not significantly affect levels of work apprehension. Recommendations for future studies are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members, Gloria Cowan, Jan Kottke and Ed Schneiderhan, for their support and patience. As kind and devoted individuals they offered much more than academic guidance. Thank you.

Gloria Cowan, my advisor, assisted me to accomplish what seemed at times to be an impossible task. She supported me through a personally traumatic time and gently urged me forward. I will always be grateful to her for helping me reach this goal.

I would also like to thank my family, Irene, Isaac, Dan, Oren, Terry, Molly, Arnold and Evelyn, with special love to Safta Sabine and little Alexander. They have all made their love so evident. I have been blessed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
METHOD.....	14
Pilot study.....	14
Main study.....	18
Subjects.....	18
Instruments.....	19
Method of computing scores for predictors...	20
Procedure.....	21
RESULTS.....	22
DISCUSSION.....	37
APPENDIX A - General anxiety scale.....	45
APPENDIX B - Self-efficacy scale.....	46
APPENDIX C - List of previous employment.....	48
APPENDIX D - Success of previous employment.....	49

APPENDIX E - Relevance of previous employment.... 50

REFERENCES..... 51

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Intercorrelations among items on work apprehension scale.....	15
2. Correlations for work apprehension scale items.....	17
3. Correlations among all variables.....	24

INTRODUCTION

The belief that an experienced individual performs at a higher level than someone with little experience is well accepted as fact by our society. This belief is most evident in places of employment. Today most employment advertisements request that applicants have had relevant experience, and once on a job, promotions are typically distributed with respect to how much time a worker has spent in a particular position. Educational institutions also reflect this ideology. Mandatory internships are common in many specialized programs as are state regulations requiring a period of experience before licenses may be issued. The government also has acknowledged the effects of experience and has developed numerous work study programs for students.

Research has shown that there is good reason for using past work experience as a major criterion in recruitment practices, for requiring internships, and for government funded work study programs (Delfin & Roberts 1980, Friedman et al. 1973, and Wilson & Lyons 1961). These investigators have examined various benefits of internship programs such as strengthening community ties, improving a university's image and developing students' marketable skills. One aspect of

this area however, the student's perspective, has generally been overlooked. How do students feel about their ability to perform well in a field in which they have had little or no work experience? Are these students more apprehensive about working upon graduation than their peers who have worked previously in related fields? This study addresses these questions to gain a better understanding of the personal effect work experience has on the student. Does work experience serve more than the functional purpose of increasing the student's marketable skills?

Although there exists little research in this particular area, I hope to build a stable basis for the hypotheses that individuals with "positive" past work experience (where they performed successfully and gained self-confidence) feel less apprehension about future work in their chosen field (upon graduation) and that the more relevant that work experience, the less apprehensive that student will be in regard to future work.

Studies have shown that experience does make a difference in performance. Research by McDaniel, Hunter and Schmidt (1988) revealed that both length of experience in a specific occupation and complexity of the job are related to level of performance. One study

by Pickering and Galvin-Schaefers (1988) looked at characteristic differences (ie., assertiveness, autonomy, etc.) between career women and women reentering the work place. The greatest difference between the two groups was the amount of experience each group had. When investigators measured personality characteristics for both groups, the career women had higher self confidence measures than did the reentry women. However, the final results showed that once the reentry woman gained work experience she developed the same self confidence in her work performance as the career woman. Assuming that there is a strong link between self confidence and lower anxiety, as Bandura has posited (1977), these findings suggest that obtaining experience plays a role in reducing apprehension towards work.

Other researchers have documented the benefits of work experience with regard to cooperative work study programs and internships. Watts (1983) theorized that prior work experience facilitated students' transition from school to work. He titled this the "anticipatory" objective of work experience. Watts reported on extensive research conducted by the Committee of the Study of Cooperative Education which involved seventeen institutions with cooperative programs and ten

institutions without cooperative programs. The committee found numerous advantages for the cooperative student. Just a few of these benefits included: developing an understanding of how theories are applied, increasing motivation in the classroom, increasing independence and sense of responsibility, increasing interpersonal skills, and clarifying career goals.

To a large extent, this proposal will be based on the underlying rationale and findings of Albert Bandura's (1977) study, *Toward a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change*. The main theme of Bandura's study was that thought processes are affected by "experience of mastery arising from effective performance" (p.191). Bandura posited that the experience one obtains or does not obtain affects one's "personal efficacy" and "efficacy expectations." He explained the distinction between efficacy expectations and outcome expectations in the following way:

An outcome expectancy is defined as a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes. Outcome and efficacy expectations are differentiated, because individuals can believe that a particular course of action will produce certain outcomes, but if they entertain serious doubts about whether they can perform the necessary activities such information does not influence their behavior. (p.193)

Bandura also described three factors which influence efficacy expectations: 1) magnitude, 2) generality, and 3) strength of the experience obtained. Magnitude refers to the complexity or difficulty of the tasks involved. One individual may have high efficacy expectations for simpler tasks and low efficacy expectations for more difficult tasks. Generality refers to whether an individual's efficacy expectations reflect confidence in performing well on a specific task or whether those expectations are generalized to many tasks. Strength refers to how easily high or low expectations are extinguished. Strong expectations may persist through discouraging events, while weaker expectations may extinguish after one bad experience if it disconfirms mastery of skills.

The result of experience (success or failure) was considered by Bandura to be the main predictor of feelings of mastery: "Successes raise mastery expectations; repeated failures lower them, particularly if the mishaps occur early in the course of events" (p.195). One hypothesis in this study predicted that experience perceived as successful will result in an individual having greater efficacy expectations and subsequently, having reduced anxiety regarding similar experiences in the future. In the case of this study,

those experiences measured were work related. Another predictor in the present study was the specificity of experience. The more related past experience is to future tasks, the more impact that experience has on expectations for similar tasks in the future. For instance, past experience which involved interpersonal activities, such as public relations or customer service, would increase confidence in the ability to deal effectively with others in future positions. Therefore, the extent to which tasks from past work experiences are relevant to tasks in future placements helps to determine an individual's confidence that he/she can and will execute those tasks effectively. Based on Bandura's research Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentic-Dunn, Jacobs and Rogers (1982) concluded that:

An individual's past experiences with successes and failure in a variety of situations should result in a general set of expectations that the individual carries into new situations. These generalized expectancies should influence the individual's expectations of mastery in the new situations. (p.664)

Sherer et al. suggested that past experiences affect an individual's general efficacy. This study attempted to confirm the relationship between past experience and self-efficacy and will show how both of

these factors affect work apprehension.

In comparison to other modes of obtaining experience, for example, through observing others, personal experience is most effective in predicting self efficacy. Bandura (1977) explained that personal experience creates stronger expectations that are less likely to change. When an individual experiences the connection between their behavior and an outcome, that connection is more credible and carries more weight than if the individual simply observes the relationship between behavior and outcome for others.

Bandura pointed to the use of desensitization therapy for phobic individuals as a clear demonstration that experience can be effective in reducing anxiety. He posited that desensitization through personally experiencing a situation is far superior to symbolic desensitization in altering behavior. As an aside, Bandura noted that long term experience is more likely to offer opportunities for success. In his words: "prolonged encounters that ensure behavioral improvements are more effective than distributed brief encounters that are likely to end before successful performance of the activity is achieved" (p.196). This might apply to the individual who does not receive

enough work experience (prolonged experience) to overcome fears and experience success.

Other studies which have shown increased confidence to be a result of training include one conducted by Delfin and Roberts (1980). This study attempted to assess students' perceptions of their ability in relation to how much graduate training the students had received. Two groups of eight graduate students at an APA approved clinical program were surveyed. All the students were in their first year of training. The main objective of this study was to determine if the curriculum was training students effectively; therefore, the instructors specified the "behavior objectives" which they hoped to find students developing. During the first year of training, assessments were made over four periods. Questionnaires asked students for self perceived confidence and incompetence attributes on a nine-point Likert scale. The results showed a significant increase in confidence after each successive period of training.

Another study performed at Columbia University by the Bureau of Applied Social Research (1973) compared the benefits of students working on campus to those working off campus in their field of study. The goal of this study was to offer statistical support for

increasing off-campus college work study programs. The results showed that the off-campus students felt more certain of career choice and believed they had acquired more useful career skills than the on-campus students. In addition, 80% of the employers of off-campus students felt that the students had developed "positive work attitudes" while only 25% of the employers for on-campus students reported seeing this development in their students.

Lunneborg and Wilson (1982) identified variables that affected job satisfaction for college graduates after finding employment. The main findings were that job relevancy to undergraduate field of study and length of time searching for employment were the most significant predictors of job satisfaction. More relevant to this research however, is that graduates repeatedly commented that relevant work experience before graduation (volunteer work, a part-time job or an internship) helped significantly in preparing them.

The apprehension graduate students experience regarding future work is the main focus of this study. As many different forms of anxiety have been investigated in past research, a distinction must be made between general anxiety and "work apprehension". Although varied terminology is used to describe sources,

levels and manifestations of anxiety, the theorists tend to agree on the concepts underlying the terms. First, it may be important to identify distinctions between the terms: stress, threat, and anxiety. According to Spielberger (1972) the word stress is most often used to describe the stressor or threatening stimulus that incites the anxiety state. The term threat is used most often to describe an individual, subjective perception of danger which has been elicited by some stress factor. The term anxiety pertains to the emotional response experienced during perceived threat. Spielberger stated that this response of anxiety can most reliably be detected by "introspective verbal reports and physiological-behavioral signs" (p.29). Spielberger also cautioned however, that an individual may use anxiety reducing strategies, cognitive or behavioral, making it difficult to detect their original response to threatening stimuli. In other terms, if an individual has dealt with his/her anxiety by repression or denial, a self report method measuring anxiety could be misleading.

When dealing with the issue of anxiety, another important consideration is the distinction between trait anxiety and state anxiety. Where trait anxiety is considered to be a relatively permanent personality

trait, state anxiety is thought to be transitory. To contrast these further, trait anxiety refers to a recurring tendency to perceive stimuli as threatening, while state anxiety is in response to a situation that is perceived as threatening by most individuals. The response in state anxiety is considered to be "normal" and appropriate to that instance. The possible "threatening stimulus" for state anxiety measures in the present study will be the graduate student's future work placement.

To control for the possibility that an individual is generally anxious, the GAS (general anxiety scale) (Sarason, 1958) was included in the present study. There may be several reasons why some individuals may measure significantly higher on general anxiety than others. Researchers such as Kobasa (1979), Katz and Kahn (1978), and Antonovsky (1979) have studied the effects of various personality traits and practices on perceived stress. The results of Kobasa's research (1979) suggested that three personality dispositions, commitment, control and challenge are related to the degree of stress produced by various life events. Kobasa used the term "hardiness" to describe one personality disposition that includes the three qualities, commitment, control and challenge. Katz & Kahn (1978)

showed that social support helped to reduce stress in life events. Antonovsky (1979) used the term "resistance resources" to describe the use of social support, health practices, and constitutional strengths in reducing stress. The term constitutional strength was explained as a genetically acquired resistance to illness. For the purposes of this study the measure of general anxiety is most relevant. In using the GAS I hope to discriminate between subjects who have predispositions for stressful reactions and those who are anxious due to future work apprehension.

Hypothesis 1

The more successful an individual perceives his/her past work performance to be, (average success for all past experience), the less apprehensive he/she is regarding future work.

Hypothesis 2

The more relevant an individual perceives his/her past work to be with regard to tasks he/she will perform in

future employment (average relevance for all past experience), the less apprehensive he/she is regarding future work.

Hypothesis 3

The more work experience an individual has obtained (measured in months) regardless of the successfulness or relevancy of that experience, the less apprehensive he/she is be regarding future work.

The assumption which underlies these hypotheses is that an increase in "work confidence" or increased self efficacy will result in reduced work apprehension for the graduate student who will soon be entering the field they are currently studying. According to Bandura and several other researchers, confidence levels are affected by self perception of ability rather than an individual's actual ability. Therefore, the hypotheses noted above refer to the individual's perception of whether his/her experiences were positive or negative and relevant or irrelevant to future work and whether they are anxious in regards to future work.

METHOD

Pilot study

The Work Apprehension Scale (WAS) included items which were not taken from past research but were constructed specifically for this study. Before the scale was included in the final survey, a pilot study was conducted to test for internal consistency of the scale. Subjects in the pilot study were psychology graduate students at California State University at San Bernardino. Before handing out the questionnaire, subjects were informed that participation was voluntary and confidential and that the survey was for a pilot study for research in anxiety. Items consisted of statements such as "I am confident that I will be competent in my future work" and "I am apprehensive about performing well once I am employed." Subjects were instructed to rate each item (a total of 12 items) on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree and 7=strongly disagree). In addition to these items, gender, age and number of years of work experience were obtained for each subject. They were also asked to comment on whether or not the items appeared to effectively assess anxiety

for future work.

Responses from 16 subjects were used to determine internal consistency of questions designed to measure work apprehension. Several different sets of items were tested for reliability. Inter-item correlations shown in table 1 were obtained for all variables employed for the subjects' work apprehension scores. The most reliable set of items was one which included all items but two ($\alpha=.86$). Shown in table 2, are the nine items used in the final analysis and the alpha for reliability when each item is omitted.

Table 1.--Intercorrelations among items on Work
Apprehension Scale

Item	Item			
	1	2	3	4
2	.50*			
3	.27	.40		
4	.43*	.78***	.34	
5	.67**	.82***	.27	.68**

Note: * p<.05
 ** p<.01
 *** p<.001

(table continues)

Table 1.--Continued

Item				
Item	1	2	3	4
6	.21	.64**	.71***	.71***
7	.31	.34	.37	.36
8	.39	.58**	.52*	.58**
9	.68**	.80***	.45*	.82***

Item				
Item	5	6	7	8
6	.59**			
7	.55**	.60**		
8	.46*	.68**	.62**	
9	.77***	.63**	.51*	.56*

Note: * p<.05
 ** p<.01
 *** p<.001

Table 2--Correlations for Work Apprehension Scale items

Item	item-total correlation	alpha if item deleted
1. I feel confident that I am prepared for my future job.	.52	.85
2. I will be efficient at my job.	.68	.84
3. I am apprehensive about performing well once I am employed.	.54	.86
4. I know that I will be a useful and productive worker.	.66	.85
5. I am adept in my field of study and will be competent wherever I work.	.72	.84
6. I am concerned that I will need more supervision and training at work than my co-workers.	.81	.83
7. It bothers me that I will not be as experienced as others in my future job.	.58	.86
8. I worry when I think of competing with others in my field once I am employed.	.71	.84
9. I feel certain that my knowledge will suffice to make me an effective employee.	.79	.84

Alpha = .86

Two items did not contribute to the scale reliability and were omitted. The first item was "I panic when I think about working in my field." (total correlation = .34, alpha if deleted = .85). The second item omitted was "I am eager to test myself at my future employment." (total correlation = .16, alpha if deleted = .86).

Main study

Subjects

A total of 90 responses were collected from graduate students at California State University at San Bernardino. Forty-eight responses were completed by business majors, thirty-eight by social work majors and four were returned without specification of the subject's field of study. With regard to gender, forty-eight responses were completed by females, thirty-two by males, and ten responses were unidentified. Subjects ranged in age from twenty-three years to fifty-one years, with a mean of thirty-four years. Thirty-six of the subjects were part-time students, forty-three were full-time students and eleven were unidentified. Lastly, with regard to years spent in their program, thirty subjects were first-year students,

forty-nine were second-year students and eleven were unidentified.

Instruments

The questionnaires consisted of five sections. The first section included Sarason's General Anxiety Scale (1958) shown in appendix A and the work apprehension scale discussed earlier. The second section was a scale for general self-efficacy, constructed and validated by Sherer et al. (1982) which consisted of seventeen questions and can be seen in appendix B. A seven point Likert scale was used again here where "strongly agree" reflected high self efficacy, and "strongly disagree" reflected low self-efficacy. As shown in appendix C, the third section assessed the students' work experience by requesting each subject to list his/her past employment (up to ten jobs), length of each position (number of months) and whether each position was full or part-time. On the fourth section, seen in appendix D, subjects were asked to rate how successfully they performed in each position. They were instructed to estimate the percentage of time they performed successfully on each job. As shown in appendix E, the fifth section

instructed subjects to rate the relevancy of each position he/she has held in regard to their future work goal. Here again subjects were asked to estimate the percentage of work performed on each job which was relevant to their expected future employment. This section concluded with questions assessing demographic information.

Method of computing scores for predictors

The following clarifies differences among some variables and how several were computed from the scales described above. Variables which have been discussed and are now easily understood by name are work apprehension, general anxiety and self-efficacy. The variable referred to as total job months describes the sum of all past experience, measured in months. The variable referred to as total job success describes the sum of success ratings given for each past job. The variable, total job relevance describes the sum of relevance ratings given for each past job. Two types of average success scores and average relevance scores were computed. The first average score was computed by adding all success or relevance ratings and dividing that sum by all past

experience measured in number of months. The second type of average score was computed by adding all success or relevance ratings and dividing by the total number of positions held.

It should be pointed out that total success scores and total relevance scores reflect the number of jobs a subject has held, but says nothing about how long these experiences were, whereas total job months describes how long a subject has been working.

Procedure

Questionnaires were handed out to approximately 160 students (60 to business majors & 100 to social work majors). Just prior to distribution a statement of informed consent and brief instructions were read aloud. No time limit was placed on completing the survey and all subjects returned responses after approximately fifteen minutes. Once all responses were collected, a statement of purpose was read and subjects were given the option to receive final results of the study when analysis was completed.

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

The hypothesis that average job success (total success/total months) would correlate significantly with work apprehension was not supported by the results ($r=.18$, $p>.05$).

Hypothesis 2

The hypothesis that average job relevance total (relevance/total months) would correlate significantly with work apprehension was not supported by the results ($r=-.08$, $p>.05$).

The average scores above were computed by dividing both total scores of relevance and success by total months of experience. Total months of work experience and total number of jobs held are simply alternate ways of measuring "amount of experience obtained." When results showed that the number of jobs held by a subject was a significant predictor of work apprehension,

average scores were computed again by dividing total scores by number of jobs held to see if this new average score would yield a significant correlation with work apprehension. Results showed that the average relevance score computed with number of jobs was the only average score significantly correlated with work apprehension. Average success scores (computed with number of jobs or with total months) and average relevance scores (computed with total months) did not correlate significantly with work apprehension.

Correlations shown in table 3 indicate that although three out of the four average scores (for relevance and success) did not significantly correlate with work apprehension, total scores (for relevance and success) did. This apparent difference between average and total scores will be discussed more fully later on.

Hypothesis 3

The hypothesis that all past experience measured in months would correlate significantly with work apprehension was supported by the results. Table 3 shows that more experience measured in months (or in number of jobs held) was related to lower work apprehension.

Table 3--Correlations among all variables.

	work apprehension	self- efficacy	general anxiety
self- efficacy	-.54***		
general anxiety	.15	-.23*	
total months experience	-.36***	.36***	-.23*
total success	-.32**	.19*	-.16
total relevance	-.35***	.14	-.25*
ave.success (success/ months)	.18	-.66***	.06
ave.relevance (relevance/ months)	-.08	-.62***	-.00
ave.success (success/ # of jobs)	.00	.05	.10
ave.relevance (relevance/ # of jobs)	-.29**	.17	-.19
number of jobs held	-.32**	.16	-.20*
field of study	.15	-.13	-.15

* p<.05
 ** p<.01
 *** p<.001

(table continues)

Table 3 continued--Correlations among all variables.

	work apprehension	self- efficacy	general anxiety
part/full- time student	.28**	-.26**	.19*
first/second yr student	-.14	.20	-.13
gender	.08	-.03	-.22*
age	-.20*	.29**	-.22*
time expected to find employment	.14	-.34**	.12
	total months experience	total success	total relevance
total success	.44***		
total relevance	.36***	.77***	
ave.success (success/ months)	-.45***	-.03	-.00
ave.relevance (relevance/ months)	-.36***	-.03	.12

* p<.05

** p<.01

*** p<.001

(table continues)

Table 3 continued--Correlations among all variables

	total months experience	total success	total relevance
ave.success (success/ # of jobs)	-.05	.29**	-.09
ave.relevance (relevance/ # of jobs)	-.10	.22*	.63***
number of jobs held	.51***	.83***	.82***
field of study	-.43***	-.31**	-.32**
part/ full-time student	-.28**	-.25*	-.06
first/ second yr. student	.05	.02	-.00
gender	.08	-.10	-.00
age	.78***	.26*	.23*
time expected to find employment	-.24*	.03	.07

* p<.05
** p<.01
*** p<.001

(table continues)

Table 3 continued--Correlations among all variables

	ave.success (success/ months)	ave.relevance (relevance/ months)	ave.success (success/ # of jobs)
ave.relevance (relevance/ months)	.95***		
ave.success (success/ # of jobs)	.02	-.06	
ave.relevance (relevance/ # of jobs)	.13	.32**	.04
number of jobs held	-.08	-.04	-.22*
field of study	.15	.11	.11
part/full- time student	.19	.19	.04
first/second yr. student	.05	.08	-.10
gender	-.13	-.06	-.11
age	-.35***	-.28**	-.09
time expected to find employment	.24*	.21	.12

* p<.05
 ** p<.01
 *** p<.001

(table continues)

Table 3 continued--Correlations among all variables

	ave.relevance (relevance/ # of jobs	number of jobs	field of study
number of jobs held	.19		
field of study	-.12	-.35***	
part/full- time student	.08	-.21*	.04
first/second yr. student	.08	-.01	.19*
gender	-.06	-.03	-.32**
age	-.07	.30**	-.50***
time expected to find employment	.14	-.00	.23*

	part/full- time student	first/second year student	gender
first/second yr student	-.13		
gender	-.00	-.05	
age	-.20	-.06	-.16
time expected to find employment	.13	-.29**	.15

* p<.05
 ** p<.01
 *** p<.001

Other variables not included to test the hypotheses were found to correlate significantly with work apprehension. Self-efficacy correlated most highly with work apprehension, where higher self-efficacy was related to lower work apprehension. Status as a student, part or full-time, also correlated significantly with work apprehension. Part-time students were generally less apprehensive than full-time students. Finally, age correlated significantly with work apprehension. Older students were less apprehensive about future work.

Age also correlated significantly with all but two variables, gender and first or second year status as a graduate student. As age increased, number of past positions, total months of experience, number of jobs held, total scores for relevance and success, and self-efficacy all increased while work apprehension decreased. Age also correlated with field of study where older subjects were mainly social work majors.

Other findings of interest

Although average scores did not correlate significantly with work apprehension, average scores did correlate significantly with self-efficacy. Surprisingly, higher average scores (for relevance and

success) were related to lower self-efficacy whereas higher total scores were related to higher self-efficacy. The possible reasons for this unexpected outcome will be discussed later on.

Results also suggested a significant correlation between gender and general anxiety. Women were largely more anxious than men. Yet, there were no gender differences in regard to self-efficacy or work apprehension. Another correlation between field of study and length of past work experience showed business majors to be less experienced than social work majors, which is explained by the finding that social work majors were generally older than business majors. Finally, several variables correlated significantly with expectations of finding employment soon after graduation. Business majors and older students expected to find employment more quickly than did social work majors or younger students. Those subjects with higher self efficacy and those who were in their second year of graduate school also expected to be hired in less time than those subjects low in self-efficacy or first year students. Many second year students had already found the jobs they would begin upon graduation.

Results of regression equations

Several multiple regression equations were run to first assess whether or not any variables improved prediction of work apprehension once the effect of self-efficacy was accounted for. The first equation was conducted to see general weights for all variables in predicting work apprehension. Variables included were general anxiety, self-efficacy, total months of experience, total relevance, total success, average relevance (computed with total months), average success (computed with total months), part or full-time status as a student, first or second year student, gender, age and estimated time to find employment. This equation resulted in multiple $R=.663$, $R\text{ square}=.439$, $F(9,60)=5.22$, $p<.001$. Self-efficacy held the only significant beta ($B=-.346$, $SE\ B=.082$, $Beta=-.622$, $p<.001$).

In the second equation, a stepwise regression, the same variables listed above were included as predictors of work apprehension. Self-efficacy entered first (Multiple $R=.480$, $R\text{ square}=.230$, $F(1,68)=20.4$, $p<.001$). Total job relevancy entered second (Multiple $R=.562$, $R\text{ square}=.316$, $F(2,67)=15.5$, $p<.001$, $R\text{ square change}=.085$, $F\text{ change}=8.36$, $p<.005$). Average job relevancy (total

relevance/total months) entered third (Multiple $R=.601$, $R\text{ square}=.361$, $F(3,66)=12.4$, $p<.001$, $R\text{ square change}=.045$, $F\text{ change}=4.64$, $p<.035$). Status as full or part-time student, entered last (Multiple $R=.633$, $R\text{ square}=.400$, $F(4,65)=10.8$, $p<.001$, $R\text{ square change}=.039$, $F\text{ change}=4.26$, $p<.04$). No other variables entered following these four. The significant F change contributed by average relevance (computed with months) was unexpected as this variable was not significantly correlated with work apprehension.

To assess whether or not average relevance contributed significantly to the prediction of work apprehension due to an interaction between total scores and amount of experience, a hierarchical regression equation was run employing the predictor variables total relevance, total months, and total relevance multiplied by total months, with work apprehension as the dependent variable. Self-efficacy, general anxiety and status as a full or part-time student were entered first as control variables (Multiple $R=.575$, $R\text{ square}=.331$, $F(3,67)=11.1$, $p<.001$). Total relevance was entered second (Multiple $R=.656$, $R\text{ square}=.430$, $F(4,66)=12.4$, $p<.001$, $R\text{ square change}=.099$, $F\text{ change}=11.4$, $p<.001$). Total months was entered third (Multiple $R=.658$, $R\text{ square}=.433$, $F(5,65)=9.93$, $p<.001$, $R\text{ square change}=.003$, F

change=.381, $p < .540$). The computed variable, total months X total relevance was entered fourth (Multiple $R = .662$, $R \text{ square} = .438$, $F(6,64) = 8.33$, $p < .001$, $R \text{ square change} = .005$, $F \text{ change} = .606$, $p < .44$).

The computed variable entered last in this equation did not contribute significantly in predicting work apprehension, suggesting that in the previous equation average relevance contributed significantly because the score reflects months of experience (a significant predictor of work apprehension). The significant contribution of total relevance suggests that relevance contributes in predicting work apprehension, beyond the effect of self-efficacy. However, it is also possible that total relevance (the sum of relevance scores for all positions held) is a significant predictor because it has been affected by number of jobs held. Noted earlier, number of jobs held was significantly correlated with work apprehension but not significantly correlated with self-efficacy. This could explain the significant contribution total relevance had (beyond the effect of self-efficacy) in predicting work apprehension.

To assess whether or not total relevance contributed beyond number of jobs held, and to see if number of jobs held and total months yielded similar

results, regression equations similar to those just described were run. The main difference was that relevance variables computed with months in the the last two regressions were re-computed here with number of jobs held. The first regression was a stepwise equation. Variables included as predictors were self-efficacy, general anxiety, total success, total relevance, number of jobs held, sex, status as full or part-time student, average success (computed with months) and average relevance (computed with number of jobs), with work apprehension as the dependent variable. Self-efficacy entered first (Multiple R=.535, R square=.287, $F(1,69)=27.7$, $p<.001$). Number of jobs held entered second (Multiple R=.613, R square=.376, $F(2,68)=20.5$, $p<.001$, R square change=.089, F change=9.71, $p<.003$). These results suggest that the number of jobs held is a better predictor of work apprehension than is average job relevance once self-efficacy is accounted for. Both number of jobs and average relevance (computed with number of jobs) were not significantly correlated with self-efficacy, and would have been entered had they contributed significantly to work apprehension. Results of this equation suggest that number of jobs accounted for any variance contributed by average relevance. To confirm the opinion that average relevance does not

contribute significantly to the prediction of work apprehension beyond the effect of number of jobs held, another hierarchical equation was run employing a computed variable of total relevance X number of jobs held. It was predicted that once total relevance and number of jobs held were entered, the computed variable representing an interaction of the two variables would not contribute further to predicting work apprehension.

The first variables entered were self-efficacy, general anxiety and status as a full or part-time student (Multiple R=.575, R square=.331, $F(3,67)=11.1$, $p<.001$). The next variable entered was total relevance (Multiple R=.656, R square=.430, $F(4,66)=12.4$, $p<.001$, R square change=.099, F change=11.4, $p<.001$). Number of jobs held was entered third (Multiple R=.658, R square=.433, $F(5,65)=9.92$, $p<.001$, R square change=.003, F change=.348, $p<.557$). Finally the computed variable, number of jobs held X total relevance was entered (Multiple R=.665, R square=.443, $F(6,64)=8.47$, $p<.001$, R square change=.010, F change=1.13, $p<.292$).

The computed variable did not contribute significantly to the prediction of work apprehension, once total relevance was entered. Number of jobs also did not contribute once total relevance was entered as these two variables are confounded. The results of

these regression equations suggest overall that number of jobs held contributes significantly to variance in work apprehension beyond the effect of self-efficacy. In addition, once the effect of number of jobs was accounted for average relevance did not strengthen prediction of work apprehension.

DISCUSSION

The measurement of self-efficacy was originally intended to be used in this study as a control variable. Results, however, showed it to be the best predictor of work apprehension. Bandura's research emphasized that self-efficacy, which increased through mastery of skills, reduces anxiety for future performance. However, Bandura also placed importance on the quality of experience, specifically on perceptions of success and relevance and on length of experience. This study was based on the belief that such factors (success, relevance and length of past experience) would have a significant impact on work apprehension regardless of self efficacy measures. Instead, results showed that degree of efficacy accounted for almost all variance in degree of work apprehension.

One difficulty in interpreting relationships between the variables employed in this study is that so many of the variables were highly correlated with each other. For example significant correlations were found between self-efficacy, age, and total length of all experience. As each of these variables increased, work apprehension decreased. Older subjects in general

accumulated more experience and felt less apprehension regarding future work. Older students were also most often part-time students which again correlated highly with low work apprehension. The hypothesis that successful and relevant experience reduces work apprehension regardless of how much experience an individual has obtained was not supported by the results. Total scores of relevance and success (for all past experience) were highly related to work apprehension, whereas average scores for success and relevance computed with months and average success scores computed with number of jobs had no impact on work apprehension. The one average score (relevance computed with number of jobs) which did significantly correlate with work apprehension was later shown, through multiple regression equations, to have had this effect only because the score represented an interaction between total relevance and number of jobs.

Several multiple regression equations were run to clarify the predictive value of average relevance for levels of work apprehension. Unexpectedly, the results of one stepwise regression showed that average relevance (computed with months) contributed significantly to the prediction of work apprehension. As no significant correlation was found earlier between average relevance

(computed with months) and work apprehension, it was posited that this average score contributed significantly because it represented an interaction between total relevance and total months (which had been significantly correlated with work apprehension). To confirm this assessment, a hierarchical regression equation was run employing a computed variable (total relevance X total months) representing an interaction between these two variables. It was posited that this computed variable would not contribute significantly to the prediction of work apprehension once total months was entered as a predictor. As anticipated the computed variable did not contribute significantly. To compare the predictive value of average relevance (computed with months) with that of average relevance (computed with number of jobs) another hierarchical regression equation was run employing the computed variable, total relevance X total months. Similarly, this computed variable did not contribute significantly to the prediction of work apprehension beyond the effect of number of jobs. Generally, the results of these regression equations showed that relevance was not a significant predictor of work apprehension, but that total months and number of jobs were. In addition, results demonstrated that number of jobs contributed significantly to the prediction of

work apprehension after self-efficacy was accounted for whereas the variable total months was too highly correlated with self-efficacy to contribute further to the prediction of work apprehension. Total months did however, correlate significantly with work apprehension, supporting the hypothesis that more past experience (in terms of time) results in reduced work apprehension. Overall, the findings suggested that self-efficacy is the best predictor of work apprehension and that the older, more experienced, part-time student is most likely to have higher self efficacy and subsequently lower work apprehension regardless of how successful or relevant their past experiences were.

One unexpected finding which warrants further discussion is that total scores (for relevance and success) and average scores (for relevance and success) were not correlated. The reason for this outcome may be explained by noting how age and length of prior experience impacted total scores and average scores differently. For instance, older students or those with more experience tended to have higher total scores whereas, these same students tended to have lower average scores than did students who were younger or less experienced.

It is easily understood how individuals with more

work experience achieved higher total scores simply by obtaining a greater number of experiences. However, it is not as clear why older students produced lower average scores than did younger students for successful and relevant experience. One possible explanation is that lower average relevancy scores for older students indicated their changing careers. Lower average success scores may have reflected the older student's dissatisfaction with his/her former career or performance in that field. Younger students, on the other hand, are most likely pursuing a career for the first time and have obtained recent experience which is more relevant to what they intend to pursue in the near future. It is also probable that these students perceived their recent work performance as successful or they would not have chosen to study a field relevant to past work experience. The rationale that an individual pursues a career relevant to past experience where he/she has been successful explains the significant correlation found between success and relevance.

One limitation of this study is the degree to which the results can be generalized. Although the study sought to gain an understanding of all graduate students, questionnaires were only distributed to social work and business majors. Keeping in mind that only two

fields were examined, one advantage is that the two fields chosen were fairly dissimilar.

Two other limitations of this study stem from the questionnaire, the first problem being its length. Subjects completed the survey within fifteen minutes, but many responses were returned with entire scales left blank. Most often these were the last scales in the questionnaire, regarding prior experience and percentages of success and relevance. This may have occurred because subjects simply became tired of answering the survey or it may have been due to the effort needed to recall all work experience and the quality of those experiences. The second problem with the questionnaire was that it contained one scale, measuring work apprehension, which was constructed solely for the purpose of this study. The scale's reliability, previously discussed was adequate, however the validity of this scale is in question largely because it relies on self report. Items on this scale overtly asked subjects how anxious they are regarding their ability to perform well in the future. Such high face validity may have reduced the credibility of responses. For many the topic of apprehension is a personal one, prompting the individual to consider his/her own inadequacies or fears of failure.

Subsequently, subjects may have resisted questioning their own competence and reporting honestly about their anxiety. Although the validity of this scale is not certain, its use in this study was unavoidable as no other scales were found to specifically measure work apprehension. Further research into the validity of this scale, and the construction of similar scales would add credibility to results found here and would allow others to investigate this area with greater confidence in their measurements.

As general self-efficacy was the best predictor of work apprehension it is important to consider the vast number of factors unrelated to past work experience which affect levels of personal efficacy. For instance, factors which have been shown to correlate significantly with self-esteem (Battle, 1982) such as social status, depression, and mental health, may predict work apprehension as well as factors related specifically to past work, such as length of experience. With regard to future studies in this area, investigators might choose to compare "work related efficacy" and general self-efficacy as predictors of work apprehension and examine how factors related and unrelated to past work affect both general and work efficacy measures.

Investigations of other related issues would also

help to clarify the implications of this study. For instance, it would be of interest to examine whether some degree of apprehension is functional for the new graduate entering his/her chosen field as it may encourage that individual to seek further training. Excessive apprehension on the other hand, may hinder the student's ability to perform well later on. Other related investigations might seek ways to reduce the impact of negative self-perception developed on the job, or ways to promote positive self perceptions, when a particular experience does not reflect the workers' abilities.

The results of this study showed that obtaining work experience not only produces practical benefits, such as improving job skills as past researchers have shown, but it also significantly relates to personal aspects such as self-efficacy and apprehension. Some of the subjects utilized in this study were practicing their skills in various placements prior to entering the mainstream workforce. However, students who do not have field work as part of their curriculum may need to research part-time employment or volunteer opportunities in the community. Understanding the benefits of work experience should help students in planning their transitions from full-time students to full-time workers.

APPENDIX A
GENERAL ANXIETY SCALE

For the following questions please answer true or false.

1. I am a high-strung person. ____
2. I don't seem to be able to control worrying about something even when I know there is no basis for it. ____
3. I am usually calm and not easily upset. ____
4. I sometimes get so excited that I find it hard to get to sleep. ____
5. I am inclined to take things hard. ____
6. I have had periods in which I have lost sleep over worry. ____
7. I have periods of such restlessness that I cannot sit long in a chair. ____

APPENDIX B
SELF-EFFICACY SCALE

Please choose one of the following responses for each statement below.

1
strongly
agree

2
moderately
agree

3
slightly
agree

4
neither agree nor disagree

5
slightly
disagree

6
moderately
disagree

7
strongly
disagree

- ___ 1. When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work.
- ___ 2. One of my problems is that I cannot get down to work when I should.
- ___ 3. If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can.
- ___ 4. When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them.
- ___ 5. I give up on things before completing them.
- ___ 6. I avoid facing difficulties.
- ___ 7. If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.
- ___ 8. When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it.
- ___ 9. When I decide to do something, I go right to work on it.
- ___ 10. When trying to learn something new, I soon give up if I am not initially successful.
- ___ 11. When unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them well.

APPENDIX B
SELF-EFFICACY SCALE
continued

- ___ 12. I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult for me.
- ___ 13. Failure just makes me try harder.
- ___ 14. I feel insecure about my ability to do things.
- ___ 15. I am a self-reliant person.
- ___ 16. I give up easily.
- ___ 17. I do not seem capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my life.

APPENDIX C
LIST OF PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

Please list all jobs (maximum ten) you have held since graduating highschool, starting with the most recent. Note the length of each experience and whether it was part or full time.

	Position title	no. years	P/T	F/T
1.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T
2.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T
3.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T
4.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T
5.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T
6.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T
7.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T
8.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T
9.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T
10.	_____	_____	P/T	F/T

APPENDIX D
SUCCESS OF PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

For each position you noted on the previous page mark the approximate percentage of time you were successful at that job. Mark any point or number on the line with an X. If you have been evaluated formally at the position by a supervisor, please be sure to indicate your perception of how well you performed rather than his/her perception.

1.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
2.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
3.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
4.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
5.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
6.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
7.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
8.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
9.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
10.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%

APPENDIX E
RELEVANCE OF PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

For each position you noted on the previous pages mark the percentage of work you perform(ed) at that job which is relevant to the job placement you expect to obtain upon graduation. Again, mark any point or number on the line with an X.

1.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
2.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
3.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
4.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
5.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
6.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
7.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
8.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
9.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%
10.
0%....20....40....60....80....100%

your age _____ male/female _____

status: Part-time _____ first year _____
Full-time _____ second year _____

graduate program & concentration _____
Position you hope to obtain upon graduation _____
Estimated length of time it will take to obtain that
position upon graduation _____

REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. 1977. Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. Psychological Review, 84:191-215.
- Battle, J. 1982. Enhancing self-esteem and achievement. Seattle: Special Child Publications.
- Delfin, P. & Roberts, M. 1980. Self-perceived confidence and competence as a function of training in the beginning graduate student in clinical psychology. Teaching of Psychology, 7:168-171.
- Friedman, N. et al. 1973. The Federal College-Work Study Program. Washington D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, Office of Planning, Budgeting and Evaluation, 1973 and Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia University.
- Katz, D. and Dahn, R. L. 1978. The social psychology of organizations. 2d ed. New York: Wiley.
- Kobasa, S. C., Maddi, S. R., & Kahn, S. 1982. Hardiness and Health: A Prospective Study. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology No.1 42:168-177.
- Lunneborg, P. and Wilson, V. 1982. Job satisfaction correlates for college graduates in psychology. Teaching of Psychology 9:199-201.
- McDaniel, M. A., Schmidt, F. L. and Hunter, J. E. 1988. Job experience correlates of job performance. Journal of Applied Psychology 73(2):327-330.
- Pickering, G. S. and Galvin-Schaefer, K. 1988. An empirical study of reentry women. Journal of Counseling Psychology 35(3):298-303.

- Sarason, I. G. 1958. Interrelationships among individual difference variables, behavior in psychotherapy, and verbal conditioning. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 56:339-344.
- Sherer, M., Maddux, J., Mercandante, B., Prentice-Dunn, S., Jacobs, B. and Rogers, W. 1982. The self-efficacy scale: construction and validation. Psychological Reports 51:663-671.
- Spielberger, C. D. 1972. Anxiety; Current Trends in Theory and Research. New York and London: Academic Press.
- Watts, A. G. 1983. Work Experience and Schools. London: Heinemann.
- Wilson, J. and Lyons, E. 1961. Work Study College Programs. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers.