

THE RETAIL INTERNSHIP: CHARACTERISTICS  
THAT CONTRIBUTE TO  
CAREER SUCCESS

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THE RETAIL INTERNSHIP: CHARACTERISTICS  
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**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

The work environment that many college graduates enter today is highly competitive and complex. A college degree alone is not enough to be competitive in today's job market. High on the list of criteria used by recruiters to select new employees is participation in some type of field experience, internship, or experiential education (Jones, 1994; Swerdlow, 1978). Thus, internships have become an integral part of the curriculum in many colleges and universities.

Internships offer benefits to students, employers, and universities. The student receives on-the-job training, gains a feel for "the dynamics of a real organization," (Bialac & Wallington, 1985, p. 67) and receives feedback on his/her work without threat of a full performance appraisal. Internships give exposure to techniques, opportunities and equipment not encountered in the classroom (Knechel & Snowball, 1987). They also increase self-confidence and help clarify career goals (Bialac & Wallington, 1985). The employer benefits by receiving students eager to apply classroom knowledge and gain work experience. Students

completing internships become candidates for future employment with companies where they intern (Scott, 1992). If a student is employed successfully after graduation the university gains recognition for placement of its graduates (Bialac & Wallington, 1985), reinforcing program value.

Internships are perceived as important by students, employers, and educators but little empirical evidence exists to validate the outcomes of internships (Feldman & Weitz, 1990; Gabris & Mitchell, 1989). Periodic program assessments are necessary to provide information to industry and universities to assist in evaluating the quality of the internship program (Gifford, 1986). Much of the previous research has involved student samples, frequently surveying persons who recently completed internships (Dye, 1990; Pedro, 1984; Taylor, 1988). Many of these students have yet to graduate and may not fully appreciate the experience in relation to their careers. The long-term effects of an internship on career progress should be evaluated to assist educators and employers in designing the internship experience.

Retailing is one of the many fields in which internships are utilized. The highly competitive, fast-paced nature of retail often makes it a field that does not easily attract entrants. Many students perceive that retail careers demand long hours with low pay (Swinyard, Langrehr, & Smith, 1991). Internships are crucial to attracting and

retaining capable people at the management level (Scott, 1992). A need exists to determine the characteristics of an internship program that may attract individuals to the retail field and aid in retaining them.

The internship has several key components that affect the quality of the internship experience (Cole, Kolko & Craddick, 1981; Feldman & Weitz, 1990). The components, work site, job characteristics, and supervisor support, may impact future decisions of the graduate to enter a chosen career field. Internship experiences may cause an individual to thrive in a chosen area and progress quickly or to decide that he/she is better suited to another career field.

The career progress of an individual may be affected by the internship experience. Career progress can be assessed by salary, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction. Comparing these variables from time of entry into the workforce full-time, to the present can help determine career progress. This information is valuable for graduates considering entry into the retail field as well as educators and retailers, who are designing and implementing internships. Characteristics of an internship need to be explored to determine what contributes to the attraction, retention, and career progress of retail graduates.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine those characteristics of a retail internship program that contribute most to career progress in the retail field.

## **Objectives**

1. To investigate internship experiences of former retail interns by work site characteristics, internship job characteristics, and supervisor support.
2. To assess career progress of former interns currently employed in retail management, using the career progress indicators of compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction.
3. To identify specific characteristics of the retail internship that may contribute to career progress in the retail field.
4. To identify former interns' perceptions regarding initial reasons for attraction to the company, value of the internship experience, and reasons for continued employment.

## **Hypotheses**

Based on the overall purpose and identified objectives, eight research hypotheses were investigated. The expected

relationships among variables are depicted in Figures 1 and 2. The variables are also outlined in detail in Appendix A, Relationship of Survey Questions to Variables of the Study. It is hypothesized that:

1. A significant relationship exists between internship work site characteristics and the career progress indicators of a) compensation, b) level of responsibility, c) rate of advancement, and d) job satisfaction.

2. A significant relationship exists between the internship job characteristics of a) variety, b) autonomy, c) task identity, and d) feedback and the career progress indicators of a) compensation, b) level of responsibility, c) rate of advancement, and d) job satisfaction.

3. A significant relationship exists between supervisor support during the internship and the career progress indicators of a) compensation, b) level of responsibility, c) rate of advancement, and d) job satisfaction.

4. A significant relationship exists between internship job characteristics and the former interns' perceptions regarding perceived value of the internship.

5. A significant relationship exists between supervisor support during the internship and the former interns' perceptions regarding perceived value of the internship.

6. A significant relationship exists between the

personal variables of a) age, b) gender, c) marital status, d) field of study, and e) overall grade point average and the career progress indicators of a) compensation, b) level of responsibility, c) rate of advancement, and d) job satisfaction.

7. A significant relationship exists between current job satisfaction and the former interns' perceptions regarding continued employment with the company.

8. A significant relationship exists between job satisfaction and the career progress indicators of a) compensation, b) level of responsibility, and c) rate of advancement.

### **Assumptions**

The following assumptions were made for the study:

1. Internship experiences are different for each individual.

2. Major differences in the internship experience are related to the characteristics of work site, internship job characteristics, and supervisor support.

3. Individuals employed as retail management display career progress by moving beyond the management trainee level.

## Limitations of the Study

The study will be limited to the population of former retail interns of a national retailer, in all fifty states, who are now members of retail management. Therefore, the results of the study will be generalizable to retail firms with similar intern programs.

## Working Definitions

1. Internship - "a temporary period of supervised work experience providing an opportunity to further develop student skills and abilities in their chosen occupational field" (Greenwood & Meszaros, 1983, p. 93).

2. Career progress - "the processes involved in achievement and the attainment of satisfaction in one's career" (Gillin, Davie, & Beissel, 1984, p. 54).

3. Work site - the location and physical setting of the intern's work experience.

4. Job characteristics - the core dimensions of a job including a) variety, b) autonomy, c) task identity, and d) feedback that affect an employee's behavior and attitudes (Hackman & Lawler, 1971).

5. Supervisor support - a relationship with an immediate supervisor which may provide "career guidance and information, performance feedback and challenging work



assignments that promote development" (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990, p. 67).

6. Job satisfaction - "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1983).

# Proposed Relationships Among Study Variables

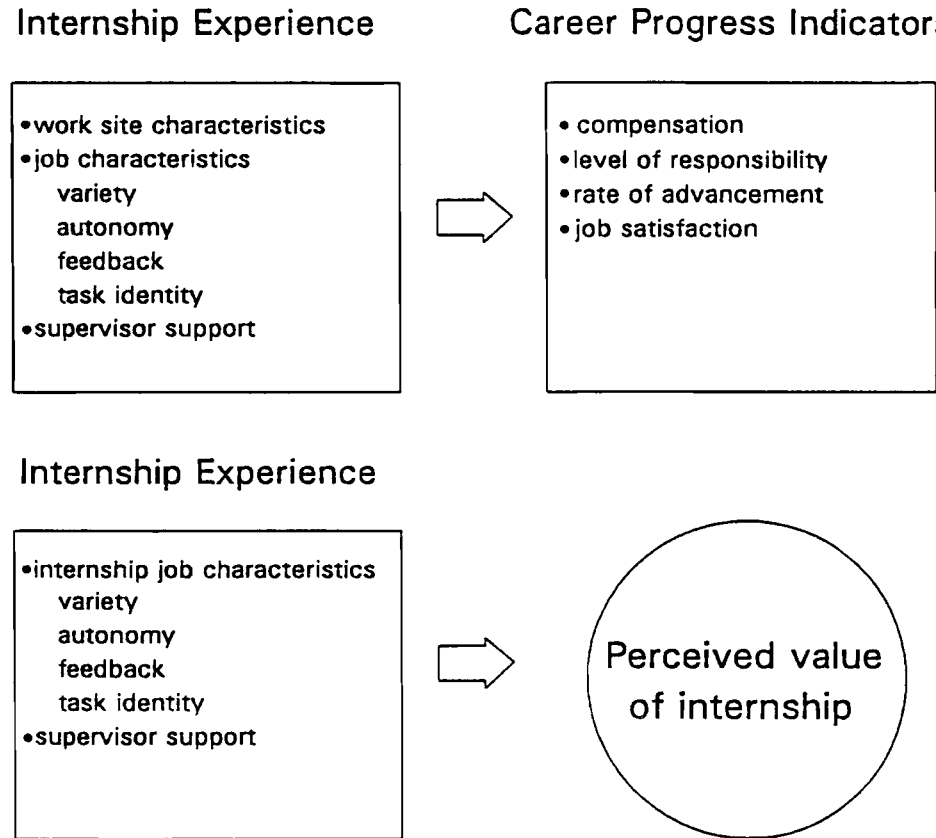


Figure 1. Internship components may influence career progress and perceived value of the internship.

# Proposed Relationships Among Study Variables

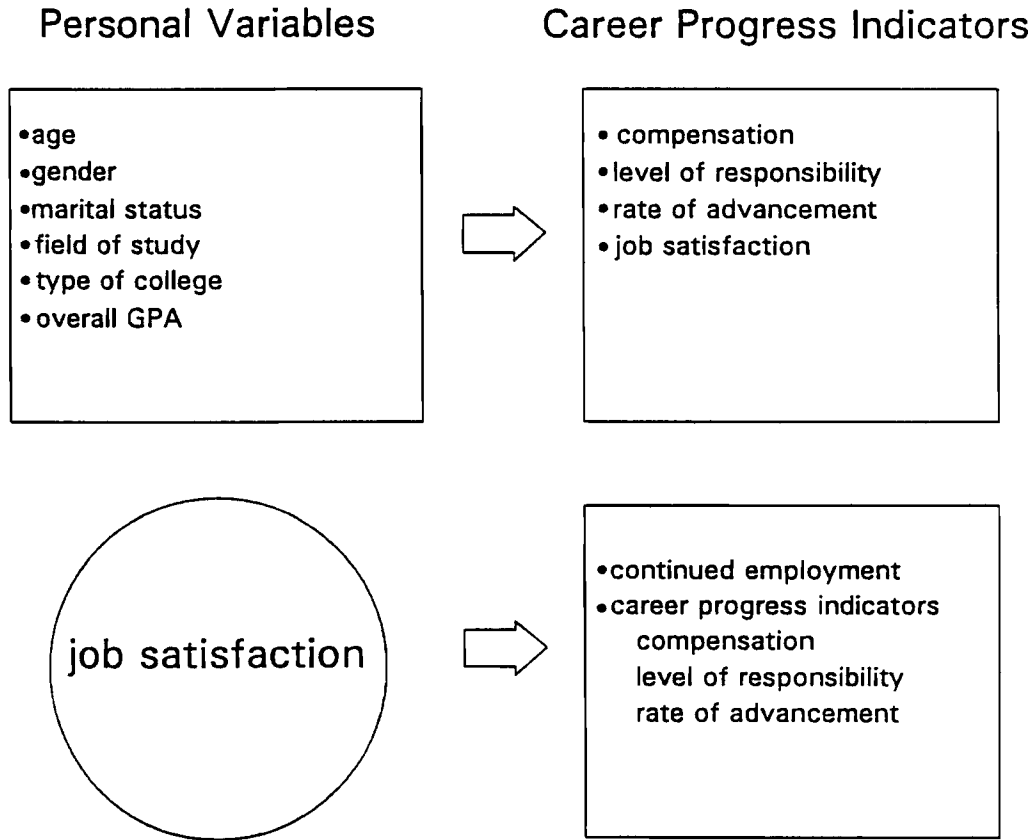


Figure 2. Personal variables and job satisfaction may influence career progress.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Experiential learning may be defined as learning by doing or learning by experience. This learning situation contrasts with learning "in which the learner only reads about, hears about, talks about, or writes about these realities but never comes in contact with them as part of the learning process" (Keeton & Tate, 1978, p. 2). Experiential learning is "manifested in many different forms - internships, field experiences, cooperative education, practica, cross-cultural and international learning, community and public service, and other forms of carefully monitored experience-based learning" (Kendall, Duley, Little, Permaul, & Rubin, 1986, p. 1). Internships are available in all types of organizations - corporations, non-profit agencies, government, neighborhood centers, and business. Individuals of all ages and backgrounds, from high school students to corporate executives to university faculty may participate. An internship may be on a paid or volunteer basis and can last from a few weeks to a year or more (Stanton, 1983).

## **Evolution of Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning dates back to the beginning of time (Stanton, 1983). The earliest method of learning was learning by doing as wisdom and skills were passed from parent to child. Apprenticeships, governed by craft guilds, later developed as a method of learning a trade (Houle, 1976). The apprentice learned from the master craftsman by observation, instruction, and actual work experience. When the craftsman felt the apprentice had gained mastery of skills and knowledge, he recommended the apprentice to be tested by the trade guild. Upon successful completion of his test, the apprentice became a journeyman and eventually a master (Houle, 1976).

One of the earliest systems of advanced learning was the university. Beginning around the close of the eleventh century, institutions of higher learning were often in direct opposition to experiential learning. Their focus was typically on theoretical application of knowledge. Students were required to master the content of books and lectures (Houle, 1976).

A shift back to practical "hands-on" education was made with passage of the Morrill Act by Congress in 1862. This legislation established land grant universities and mandated the practical study of agricultural and mechanical arts (Stanton, 1983). Findings were made available to those "on

the farm" who could use the information.

A form of experiential learning, the internship, was initiated in 1876, by William Osler, a professor of medicine at John Hopkins University. He "required his medical students to perform autopsies and observe his treatment of patients, a revolution in medical education at the time" (Stanton, 1983, p. 5). Later, other professions followed by developing practical experiences such as practice teaching and social work practica.

Cooperative education, another method of experiential learning, began in the early 1900s. Some colleges required students to alternate work or service with semesters of course work to supplement their degrees. Internships and cooperative education played only a minor role in higher education until the 1960s (Stanton, 1983).

Changing technologies and cultural mores prompted the growth of internship education (Stanton, 1983). Educators had to take a closer look at the "traditional" methods of education in preparing students to enter the world of work. Internships and practica were created in the social sciences to help students relate classroom learning to social issues of the day. The demand for "relevance" in education spurred growth of internship programs in many fields. University faculty reluctantly agreed that interpersonal communication, critical thinking, and problem solving skills were better acquired in the field than in the classroom (Stanton, 1983).

The 1970s saw the birth of several organizations devoted to development of experiential education and the internship as an integral part of educational curriculum. The National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE) was created in 1971. The Society of Field Experience Education followed in 1972. These two organizations merged in 1978, retaining the name National Society for Internships and Experiential Education (NSIEE) (What is NSIEE?, 1983). The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) began in 1972, united by the philosophy of learning, "that people learn best when they are actively involved in what they are trying to learn" (What is AEE?, 1983, p. 48). The Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL) began in 1973 as the Cooperative Assessment of Experiential Learning. This organization was created in response to a need for developing assessment practices and standards for non-traditional studies (Keeton & Associates, 1976).

During the last decade internships have moved from being a supplemental part of the educational process to an integral component of learning (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Educators, students and employers acknowledge that "hands-on" experience is vital to competing in today's workforce. Experiential learning will continue to be refined to better meet the needs of a rapidly changing society.

## The Experiential Learning Model

One of the earliest and best known experiential learning theories was penned by John Dewey in 1938. His work, Experience and Education, proposed a concept considered "progressive" as opposed to "traditional" education methods of that day. Dewey suggested that education should focus more on the learner and be based on a philosophy of experience. He proposed that experiences in the learner's present should stimulate a desire for more information to produce new ideas. In turn, new knowledge and new ideas should stimulate the desire for further experiences. Dewey (1938) called this process a continuous spiral of learning.

David Kolb (1976), building on the works of John Dewey, developed a model of experiential learning that is still widely used today. He proposed that learning occurs in four stages. First, a learner must be willing to involve himself fully and openly in a new experience (concrete experiences). Secondly, the learner must be willing to reflect on these experiences from different perspectives (reflective observation). Next, based on reflective observations, the learner creates concepts and generalizations that integrate his observations into theories (abstract conceptualization). Finally, these theories become the basis for further action called active experimentation where the learner tests the



theories he has developed. This experimentation will lead to new concrete experiences where the learning process will be repeated (Kolb, 1976; Lewis & Williams, 1994).

### **Current Applications of Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning has continued to grow and change. Apprenticeships are still a successful form of educational experience in Europe (Henton, Warfield, & Barry, 1992). Germany has gained an international reputation for its apprenticeship program (Hammer, 1993). Students, completing the 10th grade, can opt to begin an apprenticeship program for two to three years. During this time, students work for an organization three to four days a week while attending class the other one or two days a week. A test is given at the end of the apprenticeship program with successful completion resulting in full-time employment (Hammer, 1993).

Higher education within the United States currently uses three distinct types of experiential learning (Lewis & Williams, 1994). The newest type of experiential learning is classroom-based. This method is based on Chickering and Gameson's (1987) model of active learning where students do more than just listen in the classroom. Active learning involves talking about the subject, writing about it, applying it to one's own life, and incorporating it into one's self. Role playing, case studies, games, and

simulations are some of the methods used currently (Lewis & Williams, 1994).

A second type of experiential learning, credit for prior learning, has gained attention since the 1970s. Procedures and standards for evaluating prior learning have been developing during the last two decades. Higher education has recognized that learning can occur in informal settings and that educational credit can be given for such learning. Many adults who return to school have valuable knowledge and life experiences for which credit can be given. One of the most common methods used is the College Level Examination Program or CLEP test. Credit recommendations have also been made for instruction received in the military and corporate training programs (Lewis & Williams, 1994).

The oldest category of experiential learning, field-based experience, continues to remain popular. Practicum assignments, internships, cooperative education, and service learning are all methods used. Actual hands-on experience and socialization gained from these opportunities are invaluable when students enter or re-enter the job market (Jones, 1994).

### **Perceived Value of Internships**

Educators, employers, and students laud the benefits of

internships. A primary value for students is the actual work experience in the chosen career field (Bialac & Wallington, 1985; Gabris & Mitchell, 1989). Universities provide the theory while work in the real world provides a setting in which to witness theory in practice. Students have an opportunity to observe, experience, and interact with people in actual employment situations. Interns learn about workplace realities and can decide if they are suited to the job or the company (Scott, 1992).

Another value of internships is that students gain exposure to problems and situations that are not possible in a classroom setting (Knechel & Snowball, 1987). Often, interns attend management or staff meetings and observe how business is conducted. Students receive "hands on" experience using equipment not available on the college campus. Some organizations rotate interns among various departments to give the intern a perspective of how the entire organization functions (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989).

Development of interpersonal relationship skills is another benefit received from internships. Learning how to get along with people in a variety of situations is vital to success in any career. Internships help students "understand and cope with the nuances, needs, and behaviors of other people in organizational settings" (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989, p. 485). These interactions also establish a network of valuable contacts for use by the student.

The most important value of internships to students is career placement (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989). The student has an opportunity to look at the organization as a potential employer and the employer evaluates the student as a potential employee. Students who perform well during an internship may be offered a job with the company or agency where they interned (Scott, 1992; Taylor, 1988).

Internships are also of value to employers. Many employers use internships as a recruiting tool to identify and attract the best students to their organizations (Scott, 1992). Employers benefit from receiving interns who are eager to learn and apply their classroom knowledge (Bialac & Wallington, 1985). Scott (1992) reports that the internship is also considered a retention tool by some employers. Students who have completed an internship are better equipped to make an informed career choice, thus eliminating turnover after taking a full-time position.

Educators view internships as valuable to them as well. The college or university receives verification or rejection of its programs because of the preparation of students for their internships. Placement of students completing internship programs reinforces a university's degree program, which in turn aids in attracting new students (Bialac & Wallington, 1985).

## **Components of the Internship Experience in Career Development**

The internship experience is a potentially significant part of the college graduate's career development process (Feldman & Weitz, 1990). Career development theory posits that individuals proceed through several distinct stages during their careers. Super (1957, 1980) proposes four stages: (1) exploration, (2) establishment, (3) maintenance, and (4) decline. The first three stages characterize an individual's working life. Individuals will recycle through each of these stages as they make transitions in their life when changing jobs, upon entering or leaving the work force, or when disabled (Super, Osborne, Walsh, Brown & Niles, 1992).

In the exploration stage, an individual is concerned with identifying interests and abilities while gaining a sense of mastery in the chosen area. Apprenticeships, internships, and practicums are examples of programs that offer these opportunities. The establishment stage is characterized by the individual who has achieved competence in the chosen career field and is striving for growth and advancement. Growth is evidenced by upward career progress. Individuals in the maintenance stage have settled into a career pattern with a wide range of abilities and interests. The desire for promotion is not as strong, with more emphasis on mentoring others (Aryee, Chay, & Chew, 1994).

Decline in an individual's career may be evidenced by the inability to meet job requirements, thus retirement is considered.

During each career stage an individual has differing interests, abilities, and goals. The internship, as part of the exploration stage, allows the individual to explore a particular retail work site, company philosophy, supervisory practices, job design and characteristics, and other employment attributes. In this study, the components of the internship experience to be investigated are job characteristics (including variety, autonomy, feedback, and task identity), supervisor support, and work site characteristics. Each of these internship components may be related to progress in one's career. If so, this knowledge would be valuable in establishing recommendations for the design of internships.

### **Job Characteristics**

One component of the internship experience is the actual job. A model of job characteristics developed by Hackman and Lawler (1971) and later refined by Hackman and Oldham (1980) suggests that employee motivation, performance, job satisfaction, and turnover are determined by job design (task characteristics). These researchers propose four major dimensions of job characteristics that

relate to employees' reactions to their jobs. These dimensions are variety, autonomy, task identity, and feedback.

Variety is defined as the degree to which a job allows one to do a number of different tasks using different procedures. During the 1950s and 1960s a trend toward work simplification developed in which jobs were reduced to simple, routine tasks (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). This resulted in high employee dissatisfaction, increased absenteeism, and turnover. The trend was reversed, to job enlargement in which jobs were re-designed to incorporate more variety in skill and challenge in order to become more meaningful. Early research showed these attempts at job enlargement to be successful (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Job satisfaction of retail salespeople was higher when job variety was perceived as high (Dubinsky & Skinner, 1984).

Autonomy refers to the amount of independence an employee has in planning and completing work assignments. Hackman and Lawler (1971) suggested that employees need to feel some personal responsibility for their work and share in the success of the job's completion. Twenty years later, a 1991 Gallup poll revealed that the characteristic workers valued most in a job was the "ability to work independently" (Finegan, 1993, p. 62). This value of independence was confirmed in a study by Feldman and Weitz (1990) showing the job characteristics of autonomy, task identity, and skill

variety were important in interns' attitudes toward their jobs. These researchers concluded that the design of the work involved in the internship would play an important role in how the internship was evaluated.

Task identity refers to the completion of an entire task with the realization that the results of one's efforts are meaningful and important (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Task identity is significantly related to job satisfaction (Anderson, 1984). Jobs that are high in task identity may be characterized as having a) a transformation process with a distinct beginning and end, b) a visualization of the transformation by the worker, c) evidence of the transformation in the finished product, and d) value or importance in the transformation. Task identity is further enhanced when the individual can use skills and abilities he/she personally values.

Feedback is the information an employee receives while working, regarding the performance of the work (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Feedback serves two major purposes: a) to inform employees of their expected level of performance and how well they are performing and b) to motivate employees by reminding that performance is being monitored and that future rewards such as promotion and pay raises are determined by performance (Jaworski & Kohli, 1991). Positive feedback from supervisors serves an informational and motivational function and is the preferred way to



increase performance. Negative feedback provides information but does not motivate employees (Jaworski & Kohli, 1991).

Job characteristics are predictors of career commitment in various stages of one's career (Aryee, Chay, & Chew, 1994). Jobs high in motivating characteristics (high in variety, autonomy, task identity, and feedback) are important to achieving one's career goals and career commitment. The job characteristics of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback are related to job satisfaction (Anderson, 1984).

### **Supervisor Support**

Another component of the internship is supervisor support. The quality and quantity of supervision is a primary factor in determining the outcome of the internship experience (Cole, Kolko, & Craddick, 1981). Interns who were given narrow work assignments by their supervisors, had lower job satisfaction compared to interns who were given challenging and interesting work assignments by their supervisors (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989). Poor supervision was considered a major deficit by interns in a study done by Cole, Kolko, and Craddick (1981).

Supervisors play a critical role in creating or dispelling feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity an employee

has about a job and the organization (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994). Ambiguity and uncertainty can lead to job dissatisfaction, which in turn, can result in job turnover. A supervisor's behavior contributes directly to employee outcomes, especially job satisfaction. Supervisors who provided support, assisted in problem solving and goal setting, and gave feedback on job performance, had subordinates with less uncertainty and ambiguity and greater job satisfaction (O'Driscoll & Beehr, 1994).

### **Work Site Characteristics**

A third component of the internship that may impact internship outcomes is work site characteristics. The variety and type of learning experiences offered in a setting are important to the quality of the internship (Cole, Kolko, & Craddick, 1981). A vast difference was found in the satisfaction of psychology interns who interned in accredited and non-accredited sites. Characteristics of the site may be a determining factor in the types of experiences an intern may have. Knowing that certain internship site attributes enhance internship experiences will assist in planning. Examples of retail work site characteristics to be investigated include annual store sales volume, number of associates employed at the site, and number of other interns in the same store.

## **The Internship and Career Progress**

It is generally agreed that cooperative education and internships provide immediate benefits of improved academic performance and social maturity. However, the value of these types of learning is limited if the effects do not continue after the individual enters the workforce (Gilllin, Davie, & Beissel, 1984). Progress indicators in one's career when linked with components of the internship experience may be a powerful indicator of the long-term value of retail internships. Career progress may be indicated by: compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction.

### **Compensation**

Most people consider compensation or salary an important measure of career progress. Increased progression in one's career is evidenced by increases in compensation.

A recent survey by the National Retail Federation (Donnelly, 1994) reveals the range of total compensation for various job titles in the retail field. The current trend of retailers is to pay salary plus an incentive, based on performance. This accounts for the use of the term compensation instead of salary. A merchandise planner who is responsible for the buying and distribution of specific

merchandise categories has a current compensation range from a low of \$26,000 to a high of \$56,000 (Donnelly, 1994). The same survey reports a senior merchandise planner may see a range of \$40,000 to a high of \$82,300 in compensation.

Bretz and Judge (1994) investigated linkages between certain indicators of success in a career with how well an individual "fits" the employing organization. The extrinsic measures, salary and job level, were used as benchmarks to define career success. Results showed a significant relationship between person-to-organization fit, satisfaction, and tenure.

### **Level of Responsibility**

A second measure of career progress is level of responsibility. Increasing levels of responsibility are typically considered measures of career progress. Gillin, Davie and Beissel (1984) surveyed engineering graduates who had participated in cooperative education and compared them to graduates without cooperative education experiences. The cooperative education graduates were characterized by: greater self confidence entering the job market, higher beginning salary, higher beginning level of responsibility, and changing employers less but changing more within the same organization. After one to five years in the workforce the cooperative graduates still held positions with higher

levels of responsibility and experienced greater job satisfaction than graduates from non-cooperative programs.

Henry (1979) found different results in his study of public administration interns. Using the number of employees supervised as a measure of responsibility, Henry found former interns with one to five years of experience were supervising the same or fewer number of employees as non-interns. Henry attributed this finding to the fact that the former interns of his study were primarily characterized as female, non-white, and under 35 years of age.

### **Rate of Advancement**

Advancement is another measure of career progress of primary concern to most individuals in the work place today. The rate at which one advances in an organization may be affected by several factors. Factors which have the greatest impact should be identified and utilized.

Whitely and Coetsier (1993) examined the relationship of career mentoring to early career outcomes. Rate of advancement, salary, and general satisfaction were used as measures of career outcomes. Rate of advancement was measured by recording the number of promotions an individual had received since graduation. Promotions were defined as involving more than one of the following: significant increases in the scope of responsibilities, significant

increases in annual salary, changes in the hierarchical level in the employing company, change in offices or office decor, and becoming eligible for bonuses, incentive or stock plans (Whitely & Coetsier, 1993, pp. 425-426).

An analysis showed a significant relationship between career mentoring and the number of promotions. Individuals with more work experience received more promotions (Whitely & Coetsier, 1993). Internships as a type of work experience could impact promotion potential.

Powell (1974) examined career progress among individuals who were 10 years beyond completion of a degree. The study of MBA graduates investigated linkages between various factors concerned with the student, his/her life experiences (e.g., military service), student academic performance and major, employing organization upon graduation, and present job function. Results of the study indicated significant relationships between undergraduate major, MBA subject major, age at graduation, years of military service, rank in MBA graduating class, number of hours worked per week, size of employing organization, the present job function, and the career progress of the MBAs.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is a complex issue impacting the

employee and the employer. Two major components of job satisfaction are intrinsic job factors and extrinsic job factors (Gruneberg, 1979). Job content is the primary intrinsic job factor. Research has shown job satisfaction is influenced by job characteristics (Anderson, 1984; Dubinsky & Skinner, 1984; Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Pay, social interaction, and feedback are extrinsic factors affecting job satisfaction.

In a study of retail sales personnel, Teas (1981) found that job satisfaction was significantly related to the closeness of supervision, and the job characteristics of variety, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. A strong relationship was found between job satisfaction and performance feedback when the feedback was given by the supervisor.

Dye (1990) surveyed retail interns to determine the relationship between career salience, job satisfaction, and job involvement during the retail internship experience. Relationships between career salience, job satisfaction, and job involvement were positive, but not significant. Dye suggested that job satisfaction did not increase with career salience because of the temporary nature of the internship and because many students had not made a career commitment.

A review of literature in the retail field indicates that little is known concerning the impact of internships on career progress outcomes. Research on internships has

involved recently graduating students (Feldman & Weitz, 1990; Pedro, 1984; Taylor, 1988). A void exists in the knowledge base related to longer-term impacts of internships. With career progress as a clear indicator of the individual's success and satisfaction in a particular retail career, this study proposed to add additional knowledge regarding the long-term impacts and values of retail internships.

### **Summary**

Internships have become a vital part of retail education. The student, employers, and educators all benefit from a positive internship experience. Outcomes of internship experiences are influenced by the characteristics of the internship - work site, job characteristics, and supervisor support. These outcomes must be evaluated from a long-term as well as short-term perspective.

Career progress is one measure of the long-term benefits of retail internships. Compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction are measures of an individual's career progress. These progress indicators may be influenced by components of the internship experience. This knowledge would be valuable in designing internships programs that contribute most to career progress.



## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study was to determine those characteristics of a retail internship program that contribute most to career progress in the retail field. The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To investigate internship experiences of former retail interns by work site characteristics, internship job characteristics, and supervisor support.
2. To assess career progress of former interns currently employed in retail management, using the career progress indicators of compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction.
3. To identify specific characteristics of the retail internship that may contribute to career progress in the retail field.
4. To identify former interns' perceptions regarding initial reasons for attraction to the company, value of the internship experience, and reasons for continued employment.

## Selection of the Sample

The sample for the study consisted of former interns from a corporate listing of retail management employed by a national retailer. Individuals in positions of merchandiser and senior merchandiser, who were former interns of the retail corporate internship program were polled with a census survey. It was assumed that these individuals displayed career progress by moving beyond the level of management trainee. Sixty-five percent of the individuals had been employed with the national retailer for two to five years.

The national retailer distinguishes stores nationwide by four regions: Northeast, Southeast, Northwest and Southwest. The number of former interns currently employed in the two identified management positions from each region corresponds to a probability proportionate to size (PPS) sample. The proportion of interns from each region is approximately equal to the proportion of stores in each region to the company total. For example, the Northeast region comprises 23% of the company's total number of stores and 25% of the sample was from the Northeast. A total of 241 individuals from across the nation composed the research population.

## Development of Instrument

The questionnaire developed for collection of data incorporated the guidelines recommended by Dillman (1978). The survey instrument included multiple choice questions, questions with a five-point fixed response scale measuring extent of experience or amount of agreement, and open-ended questions. The first section obtained information about the individual's internship experience. Questions about internship job characteristics, supervisor support, and work site were included. Job characteristics were measured using a modified version of the Job Characteristics Inventory by Sims, Szilagyi, and Keller (1976). This inventory included fifteen questions using a Likert-type scale measuring the job characteristics of variety, autonomy, task identity, and feedback. Supervisor support was measured using a scale by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). This scale consisted of eight Likert-type questions used to measure the amount of perceived career support from one's supervisor. Questions concerning work site were developed specifically for this study.

The second section related to the individual's career progress with questions about compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured using scales developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975). Five questions using a Likert-

type scale measured satisfaction with the current position. Additional items were developed specifically for this study and are unique to the national retailer. The third section asked for age, gender, marital status, field of study and GPA to aid in describing the sample. The questionnaire was mailed in booklet form along with a postage-paid return envelope. A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

### **Data Collection**

The research population was contacted using a mail survey. Procedures for designing, constructing, and implementing the mail survey were conducted according to the Total Design Method developed by Dillman (1978, 1991). Each questionnaire was numbered, with the same number assigned to a name on the mailing list. When the questionnaire was returned the name was removed from the mailing list for successive mailings. A cover letter (Appendix B) was mailed with the questionnaire emphasizing the importance of the study, relaying that the respondent's participation was important to study success, and ensuring confidentiality. Three follow-up mailings were sent. One week after the initial mailing, a postcard (Appendix B) served as a thank-you or reminder. Three weeks after the initial mailing, a second cover letter (Appendix B) and replacement

questionnaire were mailed to nonrespondents. A memo was also enclosed from an executive representative of the national retailer encouraging participation in the survey. The final mailing, six weeks after the initial mailing, consisted of a reminder letter (Appendix B) and replacement questionnaire sent by certified mail to emphasize the importance of the recipient's response. Data collection was conducted during Spring 1995.

### **Response Rate**

During the process of mailing the questionnaires and the follow-up mailings, 25 individuals were excluded from the sample because they were no longer with the company. The final population consisted of 216 individuals in retail management. A total of 187 completed surveys were returned, resulting in a response rate of 86%. Table 1 shows the number of individuals surveyed and the number of responses from each region of the United States.

### **Data Analysis**

The questionnaires were coded, tabulated and analyzed using the SAS Statistical Package (SAS Institute, 1985). Frequency tables were constructed for each question. Chi-square analysis was used to determine statistically

significant relationships between characteristics of the retail internship and the indicators of career progress. Prior to conducting the chi-square analysis index scores were calculated for variety, autonomy, task identity, feedback, supervisor support and job satisfaction. Each index score was calculated by summing the numerical responses of all items on the scale. For each item, the response range was from 1 = Very Little to 5 = Very Much. Low scores indicated little of the characteristic present in the internship whereas high scores indicated a high level of the characteristic.

Cronbach's coefficient alpha was employed to assess the internal consistency (reliability) of the six scales used to construct the questionnaire. Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.70 to 0.91 were found and are reported in Table 2. These alpha coefficients indicate acceptable reliability levels for the type of research conducted in this study (Murphy and Davidshofer, 1988; Nunnally, 1978).

Index scores were calculated for the major variables of internship work site characteristics, compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, perceived value and reason for continued employment. These scores were calculated as described in the following paragraphs and then used in subsequent chi-square analyses.

The concept underlying the variable, Internship work site characteristics was that different opportunities and

experiences would likely be offered in stores of different sizes. Assumptions were made that sales volume and number of associates employed in the store would indicate store size and allow accurate size characterization of internship sites. To generate an index to represent internship store size, a numeral (1-4 range) was assigned to four answer options on each of the two identified questionnaire items. For the item on sales volume, 1 = Lowest Sales Volume and 4 = Highest Sales Volume. For the item on number of associates employed, 1 = Fewest Associates and 4 = Highest Number of Associates. The sum of the numeric code for the two items resulted in the internship work site index for use in subsequent analysis. The index range for each respondent's responses was 2-8 with a low index representative of a smaller store and a larger number representative of a larger store.

Progress in compensation was determined by calculating a difference in current compensation and beginning salary. Because the response options were ranges, a mid-point in each range was used to calculate the difference.

Level of responsibility was best operationalized by the dollar volume of merchandise lines a manager was responsible for and the number of associates supervised. The concept underlying this variable was that in most instances, the larger the dollar volume, the more associates one would likely supervise. For each respondent, an index score was

calculated by combining two numbers: (a) a value representing the dollar volume of merchandise lines the employee was responsible for (1-8 range) and (b) a value representing the associates supervised (1-4 range). A low number represented less responsibility whereas a higher number indicated more responsibility. The index range was 2-12 for each respondent.

Rate of advancement was calculated by dividing the number of job title steps an individual had passed (1 = Entry Level Sales Associate to 9 = Highest Job Level Reported) by the length of time the respondent was employed with the company. This ratio resulted in a rate of advancement index for each respondent.

Perceived value was calculated by combining the degree of value of the internship experience (1 = Little Value to 4 = Much Value) perceived by the individual and the number of areas in which he/she had grown (1-9). A low score represented little perceived value and a high score much perceived value.

A reasons for continued employment score was determined by summing the number of reasons the individual gave for remaining with the company.

Upon arriving at a score for each of the previously identified scales and variables for each individual, a minimum and maximum range was determined and the scores were evenly divided into groups. This was done to facilitate the



chi-square analysis. The research hypotheses were tested at  $p \leq 0.05$  level of significance. Tables showing mean scores on scale questionnaires, non-significant variable relationships and variable characteristics are given in Appendix C.

TABLE 1

## Retail Interns From Each Region of the United States

REGION	TOTAL SAMPLE		TOTAL RESPONSES	
	<u>n</u>	%	<u>n</u>	%
1 NORTHEAST	59	24.5	49	26.2
2 SOUTHEAST	48	20.0	37	19.8
3 NORTHWEST	75	31.0	58	31.0
4 SOUTHWEST	59	24.5	43	23.0
TOTAL	241	100.0	187	100.0

TABLE 2  
Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha Tests For Questionnaire Scales

Scale	Number of Items	Possible Range <sup>a</sup>	Mean	SD	Coefficient $\alpha$
Variety	4	4-20	3.74	0.34	0.70
Autonomy	5	5-25	3.80	0.11	0.75
Feedback	3	3-15	3.76	0.11	0.91
Task Identity	3	3-15	4.02	0.33	0.74
Job Satisfaction	5	5-25	3.51	0.67	0.79
Supervisor Support	7	7-35	3.87	0.36	0.91

<sup>a</sup>Five point, Likert-type scales were used (5 = Strongly Agree or Very Much, 1 = Strongly Disagree or Very Little).

**CHAPTER IV**

**MANUSCRIPT:**

**THE RETAIL INTERNSHIP: CHARACTERISTICS  
THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CAREER SUCCESS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Internships have become an integral part of the curriculum in many colleges and universities. One of the benefits of the internship experience is career placement followed by career progress. The purpose of this study was to determine those characteristics of a retail internship program that contribute most to career progress in the retail field. One hundred eighty-seven former interns currently in positions of retail management with a national department store retailer completed self-administered questionnaires. Findings indicate that internship supervisors are a vital component in the internship experience and can be important in the retention and career progress of retail graduates.

**THE RETAIL INTERNSHIP: CHARACTERISTICS  
THAT CONTRIBUTE TO CAREER SUCCESS**

"Hands-on" experience has become vital to competing in today's workforce. For this reason, internships have moved from a supplemental role in the educational process to an integral component of the curriculum in many colleges and universities during the last decade (Lewis and Williams 1994). A primary value for students is actual work experience in a chosen career field (Bialac and Wallington 1985; Gabris and Mitchell 1989).

Universities provide a theoretical framework through course work, while an internship in the workplace provides a setting where theory is put into practice. Students observe, experience, and interact with people in actual employment situations. Interns learn about workplace realities and can decide if they are suited for the job or company (Scott 1992).

Students also gain exposure to opportunities and situations that are not available in a classroom setting (Knechel and Snowball 1987). Often, interns attend management or staff meetings and observe how business is conducted. Some students receive experience using equipment not available on the college campus. Organizations may rotate interns among various departments to give them a perspective of overall organizational function (Gabris and

Mitchell 1989).

Development of interpersonal relationship skills is another benefit received from internships. Internships help students "understand and cope with the nuances, needs, and behaviors of other people in organizational settings" (Gabris and Mitchell 1989, p. 485). These interactions also establish a network of valuable contacts for students.

The most important value of internships to students is career placement (Gabris and Mitchell 1989). The student has an opportunity to look at the organization as a potential employer and the employer evaluates the student as a potential employee. Students that perform well during an internship may be offered a job with the company or agency where they interned (Scott 1992; Taylor 1988).

Although internships are perceived as important by students, employers, and educators, little empirical evidence exists to validate internship outcomes (Feldman and Weitz 1990; Gabris and Mitchell 1989). Periodic program assessments are necessary to provide information to industry and universities to assist in evaluating quality of an internship program (Gifford 1986). Previous research has often involved student samples, frequently surveying those recently completing internships (Dye 1990; Pedro 1984; Taylor 1988). Many of these students have yet to graduate and may not fully appreciate and comprehend the internship experience in relation to their careers. Longer term

effects (3-5 years) of an internship on career progress should be evaluated to assist educators and employers in designing internship experiences.

The purpose of this study was to determine those characteristics of a retail internship program that contribute most to career progress in the retail field. Our specific objectives were:

1. To investigate experiences of interns employed by a national department store retailer by work site characteristics, internship job characteristics, and supervisor support.

2. To assess career progress of former interns currently employed in retail management with a national department store retailer, using the career progress indicators of compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction.

3. To identify specific characteristics of the retail internship that may contribute to career progress in the retail field.

4. To identify former interns' perceptions regarding initial reasons for attraction to the company, value of the internship experience, and reasons for continued employment.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

The internship experience is a potentially significant part of the college graduate's career development process (Feldman and Weitz 1990). Career development theory posits that individuals proceed through several distinct stages during their careers. Super (1957, 1980) proposed four stages: (1) exploration, (2) establishment, (3) maintenance, and (4) decline. The first three stages characterize an individual's working life. Individuals will recycle through each of these stages as they make transitions in their life when changing jobs, upon entering or leaving the work force, or when disabled (Super, Osborne, Walsh, Brown, and Niles 1992).

In the exploration stage, an individual is concerned with identifying interests and abilities and gaining a sense of mastery in the chosen area. The establishment stage is characterized by the individual who has achieved competence in the chosen career field and is striving for growth and advancement. Individuals in the maintenance stage have settled into a career pattern with a wide range of abilities and interests. The desire for promotion wains and more emphasis is placed on mentoring others (Aryee, Chay, and Chew 1994). Decline in an individual's career may be evidenced by the inability to meet job requirements, thus retirement is considered.

At each career stage an individual has differing interests, abilities, and goals. An internship, as part of the exploration stage, allows the individual to explore a particular retail work site, company philosophy, supervisory practices, job design and characteristics, and other employment attributes. Key components of the internship, work site, job characteristics, and supervisor support affect quality of the experience (Cole, Kolko and Craddick 1981; Feldman and Weitz 1990). The internship experience may determine whether the graduate decides to enter, stay, or progress in a chosen career field.

### **Work Site Characteristics**

Variety and type of learning experiences offered in a setting are important to internship quality and may impact internship outcomes (Cole, Kolko, and Craddick 1981). Characteristics of the work site may be a determining factor in the types of experiences an intern may have. Size of the work site is one of these characteristics. Knowing what site attributes enhance internship experiences assists in internship planning.

### **Job Characteristics**

Four major dimensions of job characteristics have been

proposed relative to employees' reactions to their jobs. These dimensions are variety, autonomy, task identity, and feedback (Hackman and Lawler 1971; Hackman and Oldham 1980). Employee motivation, performance, job satisfaction, and turnover may be determined by job design (task characteristics).

Feldman and Weitz (1990) found that the job characteristics of autonomy, task identity, and skill variety were important in interns' attitudes toward their jobs. These researchers concluded that design of the work involved in an internship would play an important role in how the internship was evaluated.

Job characteristics are predictors of career commitment in various stages of one's career according to Aryee, Chay, and Chew (1994). These researchers concluded that jobs high in variety, autonomy, task identity, and feedback are important to achieving one's career goals and career commitment. The presence of these job characteristics also influence job satisfaction (Anderson 1984; Dubinsky and Skinner 1984).

### **Supervisor Support**

Quality and quantity of supervision is a primary factor in determining the outcome of the internship experience (Cole, Kolko, and Craddick 1981). Interns given narrow work

assignments by their supervisors had lower job satisfaction compared to interns given challenging and interesting work assignments (Gabris and Mitchell 1989). Supervisors play a critical role in creating or dispelling feelings of uncertainty and ambiguity an employee has about a job and the organization (O'Driscoll and Beehr 1994). Ambiguity and uncertainty may lead to job dissatisfaction, which in turn, could result in job turnover. A supervisor's behavior contributes directly to employee outcomes, especially job satisfaction. Supervisors that provided support, assisted in problem solving and goal setting, and gave feedback on job performance, had subordinates with less uncertainty and ambiguity and greater job satisfaction (O'Driscoll and Beehr 1994).

### **Career Progress**

Internship value is limited if effects do not continue after the individual enters the workforce (Gillin, Davie, and Beissel 1984). One measure of internship value is career progress which may be indicated by: compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction.

Salary has generally been used in research as a measure of career outcomes (Whitely and Coetsier 1993; Bretz and Judge 1994). The current trend of retailers is to pay

salary plus an incentive, based on performance; therefore the term compensation is used in this study instead of salary (Donnelly 1994). Increased progression in one's career is usually evidenced by increases in compensation.

Another measure of career progress is increasing levels of responsibility. One study indicates that many internship graduates begin their jobs at higher levels of responsibility than graduates not completing internships or cooperative education and continue at higher levels of responsibility one to five years later (Gillin, Davie and Beissel 1984).

The rate at which one advances in an organization may be affected by several factors. In one study, individuals with more work experience or those receiving career mentoring received more promotions (Whitely and Coetsier 1993). Research shows that the number of hours worked per week, size of employing organization and present job function along with personal variables of age, military service, and college major have also impacted career progress (Powell 1974).

Job satisfaction is also important as a measure of career progress. Evaluation of the work environment involving job characteristics, supervisor, compensation, and advancement allows one to decide if individual needs are being met with resulting satisfaction. Job satisfaction is influenced by a high degree of certain job characteristics

(Anderson 1984; Dubinsky and Skinner 1984; Hackman and Lawler 1971). Teas (1981) found that job satisfaction was especially strong when performance feedback was given by the supervisor.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Data in this study were obtained from three mailings to all individuals currently employed in positions of merchandiser and senior merchandiser, who were former interns of the corporate internship program of a national retailer. The initial research population was composed of 241 individuals from across the nation. Twenty-five individuals were excluded because they were no longer with the company resulting in a final population size of 216 former interns. A total of 187 completed surveys were returned representing an 86 percent response rate. Sixty-five percent of the individuals had been employed with the national retailer for two to five years. It was assumed that these individuals had displayed career progress by moving beyond the level of management trainee.

The national retailer surveyed distinguishes stores nationwide by four regions: Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest. The proportion of former interns currently employed in the two identified management positions from each region was approximately equal to the proportion of stores in each region to the company total.

For example, the Northeast region comprises 23 percent of the company's total number of stores and 25 percent of the sample was from the Northeast region.

### **Questionnaire and Variables**

The research population received a ten-page self-administered questionnaire during Spring 1995. Procedures for designing, constructing, and implementing the mail survey were conducted according to the Total Design Method developed by Dillman (1978, 1991).

The questionnaire developed for collection of data was divided into three sections. The first section obtained information about the individual's internship experience. Questions about internship job characteristics, supervisor support, and work site were included. Job characteristics were measured using a modified version of the Job Characteristics Inventory by Sims, Szilagyi, and Keller (1976). Supervisor support was measured using a scale by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). Questions concerning work site were developed specifically for this study.

The second section related to career progress with questions about compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured using scales developed by Hackman and Oldham

(1975). Additional items were developed specifically for this study and are unique to the national retailer. The third section asked for the demographic information of age, gender, marital status, field of study, and overall grade point average (GPA).

Prior to conducting data analysis index scores were calculated for variety, autonomy, task identity, feedback, supervisor support, and job satisfaction. Each index score was calculated by summing the numerical responses of all items on the related scale. For each item, the responses ranged from 1 = Very Little to 5 = Very Much. Low scores indicated little of the characteristic present in the internship whereas high scores indicated a high level of the characteristic.

Index scores were also calculated for the major variables of internship work site characteristics, compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, perceived value, and reasons for continued employment. These scores were calculated as described in the following paragraphs.

The concept underlying the variable, Internship work site characteristics was that different opportunities and experiences would likely be offered in different size stores. Assumptions were made that sales volume and number of associates employed in the store would indicate store size and allow accurate size characterization of internship



sites. To generate an index to represent internship site store size, a numeral (1-4 range) was assigned to four answer options on each of the two identified questionnaire items. For the item on sales volume, 1 = Lowest Sales Volume and 4 = Highest Sales Volume. For the item on number of associates employed, 1 = Fewest Associates and 4 = Highest Number of Associates. The sum of the numbers for the two items resulted in the internship work site index for use in subsequent analysis. The index range for each participant's responses was 2-8 with a low index representative of a smaller store and a larger number representative of a larger store.

Progress in compensation was determined by calculating a difference in current compensation and beginning salary. Because the response options were given in ranges, a midpoint in each range was used to calculate the difference.

For this study level of responsibility was operationalized by the dollar volume of merchandise lines a manager was responsible for and number of associates supervised. The concept underlying this variable was that in most instances, the larger the dollar volume, the more associates one would likely supervise. For each respondent, an index score was calculated by combining two numbers: (a) a value representing the dollar volume of merchandise lines the employee was responsible for (1-8 range) and (b) a value representing the associates supervised (1-4 range). A low

number represented less responsibility whereas a higher number indicated more responsibility. The index range was 2-12 for each respondent.

Rate of advancement was calculated by dividing the number of job title steps an individual had passed (1 =Entry Level Sales Associate to 9 = Highest Job Level Reported) by the length of time the respondent was employed with the company. This ratio resulted in a rate of advancement index for each respondent.

Perceived value was calculated by combining the degree of value of the internship experience (1 = Little Value to 4 = Much Value) perceived by the individual and the number of areas in which he/she had grown (1-9). A low score represented little perceived value and a high score much perceived value.

A reasons for continued employment score was determined by summing the number of reasons the individual gave for remaining with the company.

Upon arriving at a score for each of the previously identified scales and variables for each individual, a minimum and maximum range was determined and the scores were evenly divided into groups. This was done to facilitate the chi-square analysis.

## **Statistical Analysis**

Chi-square analysis was used to determine significant relationships between characteristics of the retail internship and indicators of career progress using the index scores described previously. The research hypotheses were tested at  $p \leq .05$  level of significance. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was employed to assess internal consistency (reliability) of scales used to construct a portion of the questionnaire. Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.70 to 0.91 resulted and are reported in Table 1. These alpha coefficients indicate acceptable reliability levels for the type of research conducted in this study (Murphy and Davidshofer 1988; Nunnally 1978).

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Insert Table 1 about here

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## **RESULTS**

Table 2 presents data describing personal characteristics of the sample. Seventy percent of respondents were female. The age of individuals ranged from 23 to 44 years of age with a mean age of 27.5 years. The sample was almost evenly divided with respect to marital status with 52 percent single and 48 percent married. Two-thirds (66.8 percent) of

respondents listed business as their field of study. Marketing and management were the business majors listed most frequently. Fashion merchandising was second (22 percent) as a major field of study. Other fields of study included Agriculture, Psychology, Education, Communication, Journalism, Criminal Justice, and Public Relations. Grade point averages ranged from 2.0 to 3.9 with the most respondents (60.4 percent) in the mid-range of 2.8 - 3.3.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Eighty-six percent of the sample began employment with the national retailer as management trainees. A first promotion for 89 percent of the sample was to Merchandiser which occurred within 7-12 months for 53 percent of the individuals. Twenty-five percent of the sample experienced a promotion within six months, while 16 percent were not promoted until 13-18 months had elapsed. Time with the company ranged from two to fourteen years. Many individuals had previous work experience with the company prior to their internship and counted this time when responding.

Internships occurred from 1980 to 1994 with 83 percent of respondents reporting internships that occurred between 1988 - 1992. Forty-four percent of the interns worked during 1990. Seventy-six percent of the former interns were not currently working at the store where they interned.

Just over half (51.9 percent) of former interns worked in a store with other interns. The number of other interns at a particular site ranged from one to twenty. One individual reported an internship at the corporate office with twenty other interns. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents interned in a store employing between 101 and 200 associates, with an annual sales volume ranging from \$11 - 30 million.

### **Work Site Characteristics and Career Progress**

Table 3 presents results of four chi-square analyses which tested relationships between work site characteristics and four career progress indicators. Only one significant relationship was identified. Chi-square analysis (chi-square = 12.7;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) indicated that work site characteristics significantly impacted former interns' current levels of responsibility. Individuals who had interned in larger stores had higher levels of responsibility in their current positions than interns from smaller stores.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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## **Job Characteristics and Career Progress**

Former interns responded to fifteen items related to job characteristics of the internship by indicating the extent of their experience. A Likert-type scale (5 = Very Much to 1 = Very Little) was used. Mean scores for the job characteristics were: variety, 3.74; autonomy, 3.80; task identity, 4.02, and feedback, 3.76. These mean scores indicated that overall, respondents evaluated their internship jobs as being above average in those four characteristics.

Two statistically significant relationships were indicated by the chi-square analysis related to job characteristics and the four career progress indicators. Data in Table 4 reveal that autonomy did have a statistically significant relationship with rate of advancement (chi-square = 11.1;  $p \leq 0.02$ ). Employees advanced more quickly when they had greater autonomy during the internship. Chi-square analysis (chi-square = 10.1;  $p \leq 0.04$ ) showed job feedback was significantly associated with job satisfaction (Table 5). Greater current job satisfaction was experienced when an intern received more feedback during the internship. No significance was found for the job characteristics of variety and task identity in relation to career progress.

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Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here

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### **Supervisor Support and Career Progress**

Overall, former interns gave their intern supervisors good ratings for their support during the internship. Former interns answered seven questions related to supervisor support during the internship experience indicating the amount of their agreement. A Likert-type scale (5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree) was used. The scale mean was 3.87 of a possible 5 indicating former interns received strong supervisor support.

Table 6 indicates only one statistically significant relationship was identified between supervisor support and the four career progress indicators. Supervisor support was significantly related (chi-square = 18.4;  $p \leq 0.00$ ) to job satisfaction. Greater current job satisfaction was derived when more supervisor support was shown during the internship. Thirty-eight percent of former interns reported spending ten hours or less per week with their supervisor. Twenty-four percent spent 11-15 hours per week, 21 percent indicated 16-20 hours were spent, and 17 percent indicated they spent more than 20 hours per week with their supervisor.

---

Insert Table 6 about here

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### **Perceived Value of Internship and Career Progress**

Two questions asked of former interns concerned perceived value of the internship in relation to their career progress. One question asked "Overall, to what extent do you feel participating in a retail internship has influenced your career progress with \_\_\_\_\_ (Company name)?" Forty percent of respondents indicated the internship had very much influence, 48 percent said much influence while only twelve percent said little or no influence on career progress.

Respondents were also asked if they had grown as a result of their internship and if so, in what areas. Ninety-seven percent affirmed they had grown and the areas of growth listed by at least 50 percent of respondents were leadership, decision-making, ability to supervise, communication, human relations skills, and problem solving.

### **Job Characteristics and Perceived Value of Internship**

The data in Table 7 reveal that all four job characteristics were significantly related to perceived



value of the internship. Perceived value of the internship was greater with higher levels of the job characteristics of variety (chi-square = 10.4;  $p \leq 0.03$ ), autonomy (chi-square = 11.1;  $p \leq 0.02$ ), task identity (chi-square = 17.3;  $p \leq 0.00$ ), and feedback (chi-square = 12.3;  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Perceived value of the internship was also greater when more supervisor support (chi-square = 19.4;  $p \leq 0.00$ ) was shown (Table 8).

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Insert Tables 7 and 8 about here

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### **Personal Characteristics and Career Progress**

Age was found to be significantly associated with compensation growth (chi-square = 37.6;  $p \leq 0.00$ ) and level of responsibility (chi-square = 10.2;  $p \leq 0.03$ ). As age increased, compensation growth and level of responsibility increased. A statistically significant relationship, was found between age and rate of advancement (chi-square = 21.6;  $p \leq 0.00$ ). Younger individuals were shown to be advancing faster than older respondents (Table 9).

---

Insert Table 9 about here

---

When gender was examined with each of the four career

progress indicators, compensation was approximately equal for males and females in the low and middle levels of compensation growth but more males showed growth in the highest compensation level (chi-square = 7.7;  $p \leq 0.02$ ) (Table 10).

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Insert Table 10 about here

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As indicated in Table 11, compensation growth was statistically related to marital status (chi-square = 7.1;  $p \leq 0.02$ ). Married individuals were in higher compensation growth categories. In contrast, single individuals demonstrated a faster rate of advancement (chi-square = 7.9;  $p \leq 0.01$ ) than married respondents.

---

Insert Table 11 about here

---

No statistically significant relationships were identified between field of study and the four career progress indicators. Due to the large percentage of business majors in the sample (66.9 percent), there was little opportunity for comparison with other fields of study.

As noted in Table 12 overall GPA was significantly associated with the career progress indicator of compensation growth (chi-square = 14.9;  $p \leq 0.00$ ). A

majority of respondents were in the middle GPA range and had higher compensation growth than respondents in other GPA categories.

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Insert Table 12 about here

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### **Job Satisfaction, Continued Employment, and Career Progress**

Current job satisfaction of retail management was measured by their amount of agreement with five job satisfaction items. A Likert-type scale (5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree) was used. Retail managers scored a mean of 3.5 of the possible 5 indicating above average job satisfaction.

No significant relationships were found between job satisfaction and continued employment or the career progress indicators of compensation, rate of advancement, and level of responsibility. Three primary reasons given for continued employment with the company, in order of importance were: 1) company stability and reputation, 2) company benefits, and 3) satisfactory career progress.

### **Interns' Perceptions**

A primary reason given by 33 percent of respondents for

attraction to the company as an internship site was a goal of working for the company in a permanent position. Reputation of the company's internship program was cited by twenty percent and convenience of interviewing on a college/university campus by sixteen percent. Prior work experience with the company was a reason given by twelve percent of individuals.

Company reputation was noted as a reason for continued employment by 79 percent of the sample. Sixty-six percent cited company benefits. Satisfactory career progress was given by over half the respondents as a reason for continuing with the company. Influence of the internship experience was cited by 29 percent of the respondents as a reason to stay.

## **DISCUSSION**

Internships continue to be vital to individuals considering a career in retailing. This exploratory study reveals the importance of certain internship characteristics to later career progress of retail graduates. The certainty and speed of career progress is important to graduates entering the retail field as well as to retailers who desire to retain highly qualified individuals.

This study is unique in that it has surveyed individuals in retail three to five years into their

careers. Individuals interned with the company, began full-time employment upon graduation and have progressed beyond the management trainee level; thus career progression is evident.

The high response rate (86 percent) may be explained with two reasons. First, no incentive was given for responding to the questionnaire; therefore it is evident that the survey topic was one in which former interns had a strong interest because of past experiences and current management involvement in training other employees. Secondly, the Total Design Method by Dillman (1978, 1991) was carefully followed in implementing the mail survey. This method involves multiple mailings, each increasing the response rate.

Results support the study of Cole, Kolko, and Craddick (1981) that variety of experiences offered by an internship work site are considered an important advantage. This study revealed that larger retail stores as internship sites tend to be more advantageous to career progress of interns. Perhaps, individuals are better prepared to assume responsibility of large departments and supervise more associates if exposed to those challenges as interns in larger stores. In larger stores, an intern is more likely to observe and work closely with management handling departments with high sales volume and more sales associates.

Two job characteristics, autonomy and feedback, were determined to be related to career progress. Autonomy contributed to rate of advancement and feedback to current job satisfaction. These findings are consistent with work by Aryee, Chay, and Chew (1994) who found job characteristics to be predictors of career commitment in all stages of one's career. Internships need to be structured so the work allows interns the autonomy to plan and complete projects. Constructive feedback should be encouraged from all levels - from the sales associates the intern works with to the store manager.

Findings indicate that the supervisor and his or her interest and support during the internship make a big contribution to later job satisfaction. These results confirm studies by Cole, Kolko, and Craddick (1981) and Gabris and Mitchell (1989). Findings are also consistent with work by O'Driscoll and Beehr (1994) who found that supportive supervisors had subordinates with greater job satisfaction. Many interns wrote comments on their questionnaires about their trainer such as "key to success of the intern," "the trainer has much influence over the intern," and "had an excellent internship because trainer took time to help me with the program." The support from the supervisor/trainer during the internship affects initial perception of the career and can impact the intern's decision to remain in that career field.

Job characteristics and supervisor support are viewed as important contributors to the perceived value of internships. This data agrees with findings by Feldman and Weitz (1990) that work design incorporating core job dimensions of autonomy, variety, and task identity were important in internship evaluations. As recommended by Gabris and Mitchell (1989), the supervisor's role is so vital to the success of the internship that an increased emphasis should be placed on education and training of supervisors.

The personal characteristic of age was significantly associated with each of the career progress indicators except job satisfaction. As expected, increase in age produced increase in compensation growth and level of responsibility. In contrast, age had a different relationship with rate of advancement. Younger individuals were advancing at a faster rate. Some possible reasons for this are that younger individuals have more energy and often, their life situations allow more flexibility to relocate or work unusual hours.

Gender was significantly related only to the career progress indicator of compensation growth. More males, as expected, were in the higher compensation growth category. The high percentage of women in management employed by this national retailer, as indicated by our sample, is a positive sign. However, the fact that men are still in the higher

compensation categories is an issue that needs to be addressed. Women are making advances in retail but the "glass ceiling" continues to be a reality (Gable, Fiorito and Topol 1994).

Marital status raised some interesting issues. Married individuals were found in the higher compensation growth categories but single people were advancing faster. A possible explanation for this is that by the time individuals have advanced and moved into the higher compensation categories they may also be at the life stage when they marry. Since single individuals are usually more mobile and more eager to take transfers, they may be in situations which are conducive to rapid advancement.

It would be expected that job satisfaction would be a primary reason for continued employment. However, findings of this study did not support that expectation. It would also be hypothesized that job satisfaction would be significantly influenced by the extrinsic factors of compensation, level of responsibility, and rate of advancement; these hypotheses were not supported. These findings differ from Whitely and Coetsier (1993) who found number of promotions significantly related to satisfaction.

A limitation of this study is that retail management from only one national retailer were surveyed; thus the results may not be generalizable to all other retail organizations. However, the results are likely to be



indicative of internship experiences offered by other major retailers with programs similar to the one surveyed. Interns from other retail categories (e.g., specialty retailers, discount mass merchandisers) should be surveyed to distinguish differences and similarities between internship programs and to assess career progress of management.

This study begins an exploration of long-term effects of internships. Individuals could be tracked as they progress further in their careers to provide longitudinal data on relationships between internships and career progress. Another perspective would be to survey retail management who did not participate in internships to determine their career progress and draw comparisons with managers who were interns. Overall, the present study serves as a solid base for more in-depth study of retail internships and the role of the internship in attracting and retaining high-quality managers.

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TABLE 1  
Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha Tests For Questionnaire Scales

Scale	Number of Items	Possible Range <sup>a</sup>	Mean	SD	Coefficient $\alpha$
Variety	4	4-20	3.74	0.34	0.70
Autonomy	5	5-25	3.80	0.11	0.75
Feedback	3	3-15	3.76	0.11	0.91
Task Identity	3	3-15	4.02	0.33	0.74
Job Satisfaction	5	5-25	3.51	0.67	0.79
Supervisor Support	7	7-35	3.87	0.36	0.91

<sup>a</sup>Five point, Likert-type scales were used (5 = Strongly Agree or Very Much, 1 = Strongly Disagree or Very Little).

TABLE 2

## Personal Demographic Characteristics of Sample

DEMOGRAPHIC TRAITS	n	%
Gender		
Male	55	29.4
Female	132	70.6
No response	0	0.0
Marital Status		
Single	93	49.8
Married	90	48.1
Divorced <sup>a</sup>	3	1.6
Separated <sup>a</sup>	1	0.5
No response	0	0.0
Age		
23-27 years	119	63.6
28-32 years	52	27.8
33-44 years	13	7.0
No response	3	1.6
Field of Study		
Business	125	66.8
Fashion Merchandising	41	21.9
Other	21	11.3
Agriculture		
Arts and Sciences		
Education		
Communications		
No response	0	0.0
Overall Grade Point Average		
2.0 - 2.7	27	14.4
2.8 - 3.3	113	60.4
3.4 - 3.9	37	19.8
No response	10	5.4

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N = 187

<sup>a</sup>Considered as single for data analysis.



TABLE 3

Relationships Between Work Site Characteristics and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			$\chi^2$	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			$\chi^2$	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Work site													
1	33.7%	28.6%	36.7%	46.1%	3.6	4	0.46	32.6%	36.7%	37.5%	3.2	4	0.51
2	33.2	33.3	32.2	38.5				36.2	20.0	31.3			
3	33.1	38.1	31.1	15.4				31.2	43.3	31.2			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
	Total	Level of Responsibility			$\chi^2$	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			$\chi^2$	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Work site													
1	33.7%	45.7%	22.7%	14.3%	12.7*	4	0.01	20.0%	33.0%	37.2%	1.7	4	.78
2	33.2	27.1	39.8	28.6				40.0	34.0	30.8			
3	33.1	27.2	37.5	57.1				40.0	33.0	32.0			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 4

Relationships Between Job Autonomy and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
<b>Autonomy</b>													
1	5.4%	4.8%	5.5%	7.7%	0.2	4	.99	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	11.1*	4	.02
2	48.1	48.8	47.8	46.1				42.5	73.3	50.0			
3	46.5	46.4	46.7	46.2				50.4	26.7	50.0			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
	Total	Level of Responsibility			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
<b>Autonomy</b>													
1	5.4%	5.4%	5.7%	0.0%	2.0	4	.73	13.3%	2.1%	7.7%	5.3	4	.25
2	48.1	50.0	47.7	28.6				53.3	50.0	44.9			
3	46.5	44.6	46.6	71.4				33.4	47.9	47.4			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 5

Relationships Between Job Feedback and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Job Feedback													
1	9.1%	8.3%	11.1%	0.0%	5.3	4	.26	10.6%	3.3%	6.3%	5.6	4	.23
2	32.6	27.4	34.5	53.9				31.2	46.7	18.7			
3	58.3	64.3	54.4	46.1				58.2	50.0	75.0			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
Job Feedback													
	Total	Level of Responsibility			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
1	9.1%	8.7%	10.2%	0.0%	2.5	4	.65	20.0%	7.5%	9.0%	10.1*	4	.04
2	32.6	32.6	30.7	57.1				40.0	40.4	21.8			
3	58.3	58.7	59.1	42.9				40.0	52.1	69.2			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 6

Relationships Between Supervisor Support and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			$\chi^2$	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			$\chi^2$	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Supervisor Support													
1	12.3%	15.5%	11.1%	0.0%	9.9	4	.04	11.3%	16.7%	12.5%	2.9	4	.56
2	28.3	19.0	33.3	53.9				30.5	26.7	12.5			
3	59.4	65.5	55.6	46.1				58.2	56.6	75.0			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
Supervisor Support													
	Total	Level of Responsibility			$\chi^2$	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			$\chi^2$	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
1	12.3%	14.1%	11.4%	0.0%	1.9	4	.75	6.7%	10.6%	15.4%	18.4*	4	.00
2	28.3	26.1	29.5	42.9				66.6	33.0	15.4			
3	59.4	59.8	59.1	57.1				26.7	56.4	69.2			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 7

Relationships Between Job Characteristics and Perceived Value of Internship<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Perceived Value			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3			
<b>Variety</b>							
1	6.4%	12.5%	6.2%	4.0%	10.4*	4	.03
2	47.1	66.7	47.8	36.0			
3	46.5	20.8	46.0	60.0			
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			
<b>Autonomy</b>							
1	5.4%	12.5%	4.4%	4.0%	11.1*	4	.02
2	48.1	54.2	54.0	32.0			
3	46.5	33.3	41.6	64.0			
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			
<b>Task Identity</b>							
1	11.2%	25.0%	13.3%	0.0%	17.3*	4	.00
2	40.7	41.7	44.2	32.0			
3	48.1	33.3	42.5	68.0			
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			
<b>Feedback</b>							
1	9.1%	20.8%	9.7%	2.0%	12.3*	4	.01
2	32.6	41.7	34.5	24.0			
3	58.3	37.5	55.8	74.0			
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 8

Relationship between Supervisor Support and  
Perceived Value of Internship<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Perceived Value			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p value
		1	2	3			
Supervisor Support							
1	12.3%	25.0%	11.5%	8.0%	19.4*	4	.00
2	28.3	50.0	30.1	14.0			
3	59.4	25.0	58.4	78.0			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 9

Relationship Between Age and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Age													
23-27 yrs.	65.2%	80.9%	60.0%	0.0%	37.6*	4	.00	56.0%	93.3%	93.7%	21.6*	4	.00
28-32 yrs.	27.8	15.5	33.3	69.2				34.8	6.7	6.3			
33-44 yrs.	7.0	3.6	6.7	30.8				9.2	0.0	0.0			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
	Total	Level of Responsibility			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Age													
23-27 yrs.	65.2%	72.8%	60.2%	28.6%	10.2*	4	.03	86.7%	62.8%	64.1%	5.6	4	.22
28-32 yrs.	27.8	21.8	33.0	42.9				13.3	31.9	25.6			
33-44 yrs.	7.0	5.4	6.8	28.5				0.0	5.3	10.3			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 10

Relationship Between Gender and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Gender													
Male	29.4%	23.8%	30.0%	61.5%	7.7*	2	.02	29.8%	23.3%	37.5%	1.0	2	.59
Female	70.6	76.2	70.0	38.5				70.2	76.7	62.5			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
	Total	Level of Responsibility			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Gender													
Male	29.4%	29.4%	27.3%	57.1%	2.8	2	.25	26.7%	29.8%	29.5%	0.06	2	.97
Female	70.6	70.6	72.7	42.9				73.3	70.2	70.5			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05



TABLE 11

Relationship Between Marital Status and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			χ <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			χ <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Marital Status													
Single	51.9%	61.9%	45.6%	30.8%	7.1*	2	.02	46.1%	66.7%	75.0%	7.9*	2	.01
Married	48.1	38.1	54.4	69.2				53.9	33.3	25.0			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

∞  
∞

	Total	Level of Responsibility			χ <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			χ <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Marital Status													
Single	51.9%	56.5%	47.7%	42.9%	1.6	2	.44	53.3%	56.4%	46.1%	1.8	2	.40
Married	48.1	43.5	52.3	57.1				46.7	43.6	53.9			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 12

Relationship Between GPA and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			χ <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			χ <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
GPA													
2.0 - 2.7	19.8%	19.1%	15.5%	53.9%	14.9*	4	.00	21.3%	6.7%	31.3%	8.7	4	.07
2.8 - 3.2	60.4	65.5	57.8	46.1				56.7	73.3	68.7			
3.3 - 3.9	19.8	15.4	26.7	0.0				22.0	20.0	0.0			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
GPA													
	Total	Level of Responsibility			χ <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			χ <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
2.0 - 2.7	19.8%	20.6%	19.3%	14.3%	0.4	4	.97	6.7%	18.1%	24.4	3.2	4	.52
2.8 - 3.2	60.4	59.8	61.4	57.1				66.7	60.6	59.0			
3.3 - 3.9	19.8	19.6	19.3	28.6				26.6	21.3	16.6			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

## **Executive Summary**

A highly desired characteristic of retail graduates entering the workforce is previous work experience. For this reason, internships have become an integral part of the retail/merchandising curriculum in many colleges and universities. The importance and benefits of internships to students, employers and educators have long been lauded but little study has been done to assess internship outcomes. Immediate outcomes are readily apparent but longer term benefits such as career progress have not been documented.

This study investigates retail internship characteristics that contribute most to career progress. Work site characteristics, job characteristics and supervisor support are the internship experiences examined. These experiences are examined in relation to career progress indicators of compensation, rate of advancement, level of responsibility, and job satisfaction.

Data for the study come from current retail middle management who were former interns with a national department store retailer. The initial mailing went to 241 individuals across the nation. Twenty five were excluded because they were undeliverable. A total of 187 questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 86 percent.

The research focused on individuals who had completed

an internship, had begun full-time employment upon graduation, and were currently employed in the retail management position of merchandiser or senior merchandiser. These individuals had displayed career progress by moving beyond management trainee level.

The findings of this study reveal certain internship characteristics that contribute to career progress. Specifically: (1) internship work site contributed to current level of responsibility. (2) The internship job characteristic of autonomy contributed to rate of advancement while feedback during the internship enhanced current job satisfaction. (3) Internship supervisor support contributed to current job satisfaction and perceived value of the internship. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents indicated their internship had very much or much influence on their career progress.

Our results have implications for retailers and educators involved in the design and implementation of retail internships. The results suggest that it is advantageous for students to be placed in larger retail stores (internship sites) to allow exposure to a greater variety of experiences and situations. The internship job should be designed so the student has some independence in planning his/her work and accepting responsibility for its completion. It is vital that interns receive timely and constructive feedback about job performance.

Supervisor/trainer interaction with the intern is critical in determining how the intern perceives the career and the company. Retail management should place individuals in supervisor/trainer positions who sincerely desire to spend time and effort helping interns learn and grow, ensuring a positive internship experience. Training programs for trainer/supervisors should also be implemented to assist in the instruction of interns assuring a high-quality program.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Competition in today's workforce demands that graduates have more than just a college degree. Work experience is often necessary to gain employment. This is a primary reason internships have become an integral component of the curriculum in many colleges and universities (Lewis & Williams, 1994). Internship outcomes must be assessed to provide information to employers and educators in evaluating quality and value of the experience (Gifford, 1986). Evaluations must be done from a short-term as well as a long-term perspective.

One long-term measure of internship value is career progress. Compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction are indicators of an individual's career progress. These progress indicators may be influenced by components of the internship. This information is valuable for designing internship experiences. The purpose of this study was to determine those characteristics of a retail internship program that contribute most to career progress in the retail field.

Specifically, the study objectives were: (a) to investigate experiences of interns employed by a national department store retailer by work site characteristics, internship job characteristics, and supervisor support; (b) to assess career progress of former interns, currently employed in retail management with a national department store retailer, using the career progress indicators of compensation, level of responsibility, rate of advancement, and job satisfaction; (c) to identify specific characteristics of the retail internship that may contribute to career progress in the retail field; and (d) to identify former interns' perceptions regarding initial reasons for attraction to the company, value of the internship experience, and reasons for continued employment.

A potential population of 241 individuals currently employed as retail management, who were former interns of the corporate internship program of a national retailer were identified. These individuals were employed in stores by a national retailer across the nation. During the process of mailing the questionnaires and the follow-up mailings, 25 individuals were excluded from the sample because they were no longer with the company. The final population consisted of 216 individuals in retail management. Data were gathered through a survey instrument designed to obtain information about the internship experience, career progress to date and demographic information. The Total Design Method (Dillman,

1978, 1991) was closely followed in the design, construction and implementation of the survey. A total of 187 completed surveys were returned, for an 86% response rate.

### **Research Hypotheses**

Chi-square analysis was used to determine significant relationships between characteristics of the retail internship and indicators of career progress. Research hypotheses were tested at  $p \leq 0.05$  levels of significance.

Research hypothesis 1 was partially supported. Relationships between work site characteristics and the four career progress indicators were tested with only one statistically significant relationship identified. Work site characteristics were found to significantly impact current level of responsibility.

Research hypothesis 2 was also partially supported. The four job characteristics of variety, autonomy, task identity and feedback were tested with four career progress indicators. Statistically significant relationships were found between internship job autonomy and current rate of advancement and between feedback during the internship and current job satisfaction. No relationships were found for the job characteristics of variety and task identity in relation to career progress.

Research hypothesis 3 concerning supervisor support



during the internship and career progress indicators was again partially supported. A significant relationship was identified between internship supervisor support and current job satisfaction. However, none of the other career progress indicators was associated with supervisor support.

Research hypothesis 4 was supported. Significant relationships were found between each of the core internship job dimensions (variety, autonomy, task identity and feedback) and perceived value of the internship. Hypothesis 5 regarding supervisor support during the internship and perceived value of the internship was also supported.

Hypothesis 6 which investigated the relationships between personal variables and career progress was partially supported. Age was found to be significantly associated with compensation growth, level of responsibility and rate of advancement but not job satisfaction. Gender and marital status were significantly associated only with compensation growth. Field of study showed no significant relationships with any of the career progress indicators. Overall GPA was significantly related to the progress indicator of compensation growth.

Hypotheses 7 and 8 were not supported. No significant relationships were found between job satisfaction and continued employment or the career progress indicators of compensation, rate of advancement and level of responsibility.

## **Conclusions**

### **Work Site**

This study indicated that larger retail stores as internship sites tend to be more advantageous to career progress of interns. In larger stores, an intern is more likely to observe and work closely with management handling departments with high sales volume and more sales associates. When possible, interns should be placed in larger retail stores to allow exposure to a greater variety of experiences and situations.

### **Job Characteristics**

Two internship job characteristics, autonomy and feedback, were determined to be related to career progress. Autonomy contributed to rate of advancement and feedback to current job satisfaction. This finding suggests that internships should be structured so the work allows interns the autonomy to plan and complete projects. Constructive feedback should be encouraged from all levels - from the sales associates the intern works with to the store manager.

## **Supervisor Support**

Findings indicate the supervisor and his or her interest and support during the internship make a vital contribution to later job satisfaction. The supervisor's role is so crucial to the success of the internship that an increased emphasis should be placed on education and training of supervisors (Gabris & Mitchell, 1989). Support from the supervisor/trainer during the internship affects initial perception of the career and can impact the intern's decision to remain in that career field. For this reason, much thought should go into selection of supervisors/trainers and there should be a genuine willingness on his/her part to work in that capacity.

## **Personal Characteristics**

Personal characteristics did play a role in career progress of the sample group. Age was significantly associated with each of the career progress indicators except job satisfaction. As expected, increase in age produced increase in compensation growth and level of responsibility. In contrast, age had a different relationship with rate of advancement. Younger individuals were advancing at a faster rate. Because single individuals are usually more mobile and more eager to take transfers,

they may be in situations which are conducive to rapid advancement.

Gender was significantly related only to the career progress indicator of compensation growth. More males, as expected, were in the higher compensation growth category. The high percentage of women in management employed by this national retailer, as indicated by our sample, is a positive sign. However, the fact that men are still in the higher compensation categories is an issue that needs to be addressed. This supports the finding that women are making advances in retail but the "glass ceiling" continues to be a reality (Gable, Fiorito and Topol 1994).

Investigation of marital status raised some interesting issues. Married individuals were found in the higher compensation growth categories but single people were advancing faster. A possible explanation for this is that by the time individuals have advanced and moved into the higher compensation categories they may also be at the life stage when they marry. Since single individuals are usually more mobile and more eager to take transfers, they may be in situations which are conducive to rapid advancement.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction was expected to be a primary reason for continued employment, but this study did not support

that expectation. Compensation, rate of advancement and level of compensation were also hypothesized to significantly influence job satisfaction. Again, these expectations were not supported. A possible explanation is that the majority of the retail management in the sample had been with the company two to five years, not long enough to become established in their careers and realize job satisfaction.

### **Interns' Perceptions**

A primary reason given by one third of respondents for attraction to the company as an internship site was a goal of working for the company in a permanent position. Reputation of the company's internship program, convenience of interviewing on a college/university campus, and prior work experience were commonly cited.

Eighty-eight percent of the respondents indicated their internship had very much or much influence on their career progress. Ninety-seven percent affirmed they had grown as a result of their internship. The areas of growth resulting from the internship listed by at least 50% of respondents were leadership, decision-making, ability to supervise, communication, human relations skills, and problem solving.

Company reputation was noted as a reason for continued employment by 79% of the sample. Sixty-six percent cited

company benefits. Satisfactory career progress was given by over half the respondents as a reason for continuing with the company. Influence of the internship experience was cited by 29% of the respondents as a reason to stay.

It is apparent that the company reputation was important in attraction and retention of these retail managers. Other retailers interested in developing their intern programs need to be aware of this finding. Positive intern experiences will lead to the attraction of more individuals. Positive intern experiences require careful planning and implementation.

Many interns expressed that the internship is an excellent opportunity to determine if retail and the company are right for the person as a career. Because of the fast paced, highly demanding nature of retail, internships will become even more important as a way to experience a career field before actually making the commitment.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study provides a basis for more in-depth study of retail internships and their role in the careers of retail graduates. The following are recommendations for further research:

1. Interns from other retail categories (e.g., specialty retailers, discount mass merchandisers) should be

surveyed to distinguish differences and similarities between internship programs and to assess career progress of management.

2. Specific components of the internship such as the mentoring role of supervisors in the internship process should be examined more closely to assist in proposing a model for selection and training of retail internship supervisors.

3. Individuals in this study could be tracked as they progress further in their careers in order to provide longitudinal data on relationships between internships and career progress.

4. Retail management who did not participate in internships should be surveyed to determine their career progress and draw comparisons with managers who were interns.

5. Investigations of internship supervisors' success levels in the training role and factors which contributed to success.

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## APPENDIXES

**APPENDIX A**  
**RELATIONSHIP OF SURVEY QUESTIONS**  
**TO VARIABLES OF THE STUDY**

## Relationship of Survey Questions to Variables of the Study

**Internship Job Characteristics** from Sims, Szilagyi & Keller (1976)

Variety #6, #9, #10 #17

Autonomy #5, #9, #11, #13, #16

Task Identity #7, #12, #18

Feedback #8, #14, #15

**Supervisor Support** from Greenhaus, Parasuraman & Wormley (1990)

#20, #21, #22, #23, #24, #25, #26 (#32 added for this study)

**Internship Work Site Characteristics**

**Personal Data**

#27 year of internship

#52 age

#28 movement since internship

#53 gender

#29 other interns

#54 marital status

#30 store volume

#55 field of study

#31 # of associates

#56 name of college

#56 location of college

#57 overall GPA

**Perceived Internship Value** #1, #3

**Attraction** #2, #4

**Retention/Continued Employment** #51

**Career Progress Variables**

Compensation #34 beginning #43 current

Level of Responsibility

#33 beginning title

#41 current title

#35 beginning & current lines of responsibility

#36 beginning & current \$ volume of lines

#44 # of associates supervised

#45 other job responsibilities

Rate of Advancement

#37 length of time for 1st promotion

#38 title of 1st promotion

#39 awards

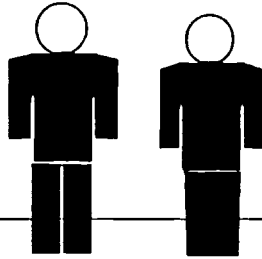
#40 years with Company

#42 next promotion

Job Satisfaction #46-#50 from Hackman and Oldham (1975)

APPENDIX B  
SURVEY, COVER LETTERS,  
AND REMINDER POSTCARD





***Retail Internships:  
Are They Valuable?***

**Please return this questionnaire to:  
Dept. of Design, Housing & Merchandising  
Oklahoma State University  
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078**

## The \_\_\_\_\_ Internship: Your Opinions and Memories

The following items refer to your opinions and memories of the \_\_\_\_\_ internship you completed. Circle the number(s) that best indicate(s) your opinion(s) or memories of the internship.

1. Overall, to what extent do you feel participating in a retail internship has influenced your career progress with \_\_\_\_\_? (Circle number)

- 1 VERY MUCH / A MAXIMUM AMOUNT
- 2 MUCH
- 3 LITTLE
- 4 NONE
- 5 NO OPINION / UNSURE

2. What one factor primarily attracted you to \_\_\_\_\_ as an internship site? (Circle number)

- 1 CONVENIENCE OF INTERVIEWING ON MY COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY CAMPUS
- 2 REPUTATION OF THE \_\_\_\_\_ INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
- 3 GOAL OF WORKING FOR \_\_\_\_\_ IN A PERMANENT POSITION
- 4 COMPENSATION (PAY DURING INTERNSHIP)
- 5 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Did you grow as a result of your internship? (Circle number)

- 1 NO
- 2 YES If yes, in which of these areas? (Circle all appropriate numbers)
  - 1 HUMAN RELATIONS SKILLS
  - 2 LEADERSHIP
  - 3 COMMUNICATION
  - 4 DECISION-MAKING ABILITIES
  - 5 PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS
  - 6 ABILITY TO SUPERVISE PEOPLE
  - 7 ORGANIZING
  - 8 TIME MANAGEMENT
  - 9 EXPOSURE TO TECHNOLOGY
  - 10 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What was the primary reason you participated in an internship? (Circle number)

- 1 IT WAS REQUIRED OF MY COLLEGE MAJOR
  - 2 TO EXPERIENCE A POTENTIAL CAREER FIELD
  - 3 TO MAKE CONTACTS IN THE BUSINESS WORLD
  - 4 TO MAKE ME MORE MARKETABLE IN THE JOB MARKET
  - 5 TO ACQUIRE NEW SKILLS
  - 6 I HAD A GOAL TO WORK FOR \_\_\_\_\_ UPON GRADUATION
  - 7 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Your \_\_\_\_\_ internship involved various experiences, responsibilities, and interactions. What was the extent of your experience for each of the questions below?

	Extent of Your Experience (Circle one answer for each question)				
5. To what extent were you able to do your internship job independently of others?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
6. How repetitious were your duties during your internship?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
7. To what extent did you see projects or jobs through to completion?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
8. How much feedback did you receive from your internship trainer/supervisor about how well you were doing?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
9. To what extent were you able to act independently of your immediate supervisor in performing your job function?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little

<p><b>Extent of Your Experience</b> (Circle one answer for each question)</p>
---

10. How much opportunity did you have to do a number of different things in your internship?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
11. How much were you left on your own to do your own work?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
12. How much opportunity did you have to do a job from beginning to end (i.e. the chance to do a whole job)?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
13. How much control did you have over the pace of your work?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
14. To what extent did you find out how well you were doing on your internship as you were working?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
15. To what extent did you receive information from your immediate supervisor about your job performance?...	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
16. How much opportunity did you have for independent thought and action in your internship?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
17. How much variety did you have in your internship?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
18. How much work were you involved with that was handled from beginning to end by yourself?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little
19. How varied were the tasks you performed in a typical day?.....	Very Much	Much	Moderate Amount	Little	Very Little

Involvement with your supervisor/trainer was a major part of your internship experience. How much do you agree or disagree with each statement below?

<b>Amount of Agreement</b>					
<b>(Circle one answer for each statement)</b>					

20. My internship supervisor cared about whether or not I achieved my career goals.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
21. My supervisor provided assignments that gave me the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
22. My internship supervisor took the time to learn about my career goals and aspirations.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
23. My supervisor kept me informed about different career opportunities for me in the organization.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
24. My supervisor assigned me special projects that increased my visibility in the _____ organization.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
25. My supervisor made sure I received credit when I accomplished something substantial during my internship.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
26. My internship supervisor gave me helpful advice about improving my performance when I needed it.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree

**The \_\_\_\_\_ Internship: Store Site Characteristics and Experiences**

These items relate to the internship you completed with \_\_\_\_\_. Please remember that your answers will not be linked with your name.

27. What year did you intern at \_\_\_\_\_? (Write year) \_\_\_\_\_
28. Did you intern at the store where you are currently working? (Circle number)
- 1 NO
  - 2 YES
29. Were there other interns in the store where you interned?
- 1 NO
  - 2 YES
- If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_
30. During your internship what was the approximate annual sales volume of the store where you interned? (Circle number)
- 1 \$5 - \$10 MILLION
  - 2 \$11 - \$20 MILLION
  - 3 \$21 - \$30 MILLION
  - 4 MORE THAN \$30 MILLION
31. How many associates were employed at the store where you interned? (Circle number)
- 1 LESS THAN 100 ASSOCIATES
  - 2 101 - 150 ASSOCIATES
  - 3 151 - 200 ASSOCIATES
  - 4 MORE THAN 200 ASSOCIATES
32. How many hours per week did you interact with your trainer/supervisor one-on-one? (Circle number)
- 1 10 HOURS OR LESS
  - 2 11 - 15 HOURS
  - 3 16 - 20 HOURS
  - 4 MORE THAN 20 HOURS

**Your \_\_\_\_\_ Career**

These questions relate to your first full-time permanent position with \_\_\_\_\_. All information is confidential.

33. What was your first job title when you began working with \_\_\_\_\_ after graduation? (Circle number)

- 1 SALES ASSOCIATE
- 2 MERCHANDISE ASSISTANT
- 3 MANAGEMENT TRAINEE
- 4 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

34. Which of the following categories best describes your beginning salary? (Circle number)

- 1 \$15,000 - \$18,000
- 2 \$18,001 - \$22,000
- 3 \$22,001 - \$25,000
- 4 GREATER THAN \$25,000

35. For which merchandise lines have you had responsibility? (Circle all appropriate numbers for each column)

BEGINNING STORE
1 DRESSES/SPORTSWEAR
2 LINGERIE
3 FINE JEWELRY/ ACCESSORIES
4 YOUNG MEN'S
5 MATURE MEN'S
6 SIMPLY FOR SPORTS
7 BOYS, GIRLS AND INFANTS
8 HOME
9 OTHER (specify)
_____
_____

CURRENT STORE
1 DRESSES/SPORTSWEAR
2 LINGERIE
3 FINE JEWELRY/ ACCESSORIES
4 YOUNG MEN'S
5 MATURE MEN'S
6 SIMPLY FOR SPORTS
7 BOYS, GIRLS AND INFANTS
8 HOME
9 OTHER (specify)
_____
_____

36. What is the dollar volume of the merchandise lines for which you have been responsible?  
(Circle number of one choice in each column)

FIRST POSITION	CURRENT POSITION
1 \$100,000 - \$500,000	1 \$100,000 - \$500,000
2 \$500,001 - \$1,000,000	2 \$500,001 - \$1,000,000
3 \$1,000,001 - \$2,000,000	3 \$1,000,001 - \$2,000,000
4 \$2,000,001 - \$3,000,000	4 \$2,000,001 - \$3,000,000
5 \$3,000,001 - \$4,000,000	5 \$3,000,001 - \$4,000,000

37. How long after beginning did you receive your first promotion? (Circle number)

- 1 1 - 6 MONTHS
- 2 7 - 12 MONTHS
- 3 13 - 18 MONTHS
- 4 LONGER THAN 18 MONTHS

38. What was the title of your first promotion?

- 1 MANAGEMENT TRAINEE
- 2 MERCHANDISER
- 3 SENIOR MERCHANDISER
- 4 OTHER (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

39. Have you received any awards in connection with your employment with \_\_\_\_\_ ?  
[Circle number and write award name(s)]

- 1 NO
- 2 YES [specify name(s) of award(s)]

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

40. How long have you worked for \_\_\_\_\_ in a permanent position?  
(Circle number)

- 1 13 MONTHS - 2 YEARS
- 2 25 MONTHS - 3 YEARS
- 3 37 MONTHS - 4 YEARS
- 4 49 MONTHS - 5 YEARS
- 5 OTHER (specify years) \_\_\_\_\_



41. What is your current job title? (Circle number)

- 1 MANAGEMENT TRAINEE
- 2 MERCHANDISER
- 3 SENIOR MERCHANDISER
- 4 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

42. Which of the following categories best describes how soon you expect to receive another promotion? (Circle number)

- 1 WITHIN 6 MONTHS
- 2 WITHIN 7 MONTHS TO 1 YEAR
- 3 WITHIN 13 - 18 MONTHS
- 4 WITHIN 19 - 24 MONTHS
- 5 LONGER THAN 2 YEARS

43. Which of the following categories best describes your current annual compensation? (salary + monthly incentives) (Circle number)

- 1 \$22,000 - \$25,000
- 2 \$25,001 - \$28,000
- 3 \$28,001 - \$31,000
- 4 MORE THAN \$31,000

44. How many associates do you currently supervise? (Circle number)

- 1 1 - 5 ASSOCIATES
- 2 6 - 10 ASSOCIATES
- 3 11 - 15 ASSOCIATES
- 4 MORE THAN 15 ASSOCIATES

45. What other job responsibilities do you currently have? (Circle all appropriate numbers)

- 1 OPENING AND/OR CLOSING THE STORE
  - 2 COORDINATING ADVERTISING
  - 3 PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING MONTHLY CREDIT CONTEST
  - 4 ACTING AS A TRAINER FOR A MANAGEMENT TRAINEE
  - 5 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Current Job Satisfaction**

Please indicate your current agreement or disagreement with each statement below. Remember that your name will not be linked with your answers.

	Amount of Agreement (Circle one answer for each statement)				
46. Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my current job.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
47. I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in my job.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
48. I frequently think of quitting this job.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
49. Most people on this job are very satisfied with this job.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree
50. People with my job title often think of quitting this job.....	Strongly Agree	Agree Some	Unsure	Disagree Some	Strongly Disagree

51. To which of the following factors do you attribute why you currently choose to work for \_\_\_\_\_? (Circle all appropriate numbers)

- 1 SATISFACTORY CAREER PROGRESS
  - 2 COMPATIBILITY WITH PERSONAL/FAMILY LIFE
  - 3 INFLUENCE OF THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE
  - 4 COMPANY BENEFITS
  - 5 COMPANY STABILITY AND REPUTATION
  - 6 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Data**

Please answer these questions about yourself to help us interpret the survey results.

52. What year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_

53. Are you male or female? (Circle number)

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE

54. What is your present marital status? (Circle number)

- 1 SINGLE
- 2 MARRIED
- 3 DIVORCED
- 4 SEPARATED
- 5 WIDOWED

55. In what field of study was your college major? (Circle number and specify major)

- 1 AGRICULTURE/NATURAL SCIENCES (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 ARTS AND SCIENCES (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 BUSINESS/BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 EDUCATION (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 HUMAN SCIENCES (HOME ECONOMICS) (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 TECHNOLOGY/COMPUTER SCIENCE (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 OTHER (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

56. From what college or university did you graduate? (Write complete name and location)

(specify name) \_\_\_\_\_

(specify location) \_\_\_\_\_  
(City) (State)

57. Upon graduation what was your overall grade point average? \_\_\_\_\_  
(Specify: of a possible \_\_\_\_\_ points)

**Is there anything else you would like to tell us about retail internships?  
If so, please use this space for that purpose.**

**Your contribution to this effort is very greatly appreciated. If you would like a summary of results, please print your name and address on the back of the return envelope (NOT ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE). We will see that you get it.**

---

**Funding for this project was provided by the JCPenney Retail Research Program of Brigham Young University.**

## COVER LETTER MAILED WITH SURVEY

April 10, 1995

First Name Last Name  
Company  
Address  
City, State Postal Code

Dear First Name:

Career progress is a concern of most young professionals today. Determining factors that contribute to career advancement would be of benefit to individuals entering the retail field as well as those already beginning careers. Internships are considered as one means of enhancing career entry and progress. However little has been done to document this.

\_\_\_\_\_ retail management from across the United States who are former interns are being invited to provide their opinions and experiences on this subject. Completing the questionnaire usually takes 10-15 minutes. In order that the results will truly be representative of former \_\_\_\_\_ interns, it is important that each questionnaire be completed and returned.

You are assured of complete confidentiality. The questionnaire has an identification number for mailing purposes only. This is so that we may check your name off our mailing list when your questionnaire is returned. Your name will never be placed on the questionnaire. Your individual participation will in no way be communicated to \_\_\_\_\_ and will not affect your employment.

Summaries of this research will be made available to \_\_\_\_\_ corporate officials and the academic community to assist in improving internship programs. You may receive a summary of results by writing "copy of results requested" on the back of the return envelope, and printing your name and address below it. Please do not put this information on the questionnaire itself.

I would be most happy to answer any questions you might have. Please write or call. The telephone number is (405) 744-5035.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Shiretta Ownbey Ph.D.  
Project Coordinator

**REMINDER POSTCARD MAILED ONE WEEK AFTER SURVEY**

April 17, 1995

Last week a questionnaire seeking your opinions and memories of your internship experience at \_\_\_\_\_ was mailed to you.

If you have already completed and returned it to us please accept our sincere thanks. If not, please do so today. The questionnaire was sent to only a small, but representative group of \_\_\_\_\_ retail management who are former interns. It is extremely important that your responses be included in the study if the results are to accurately represent the opinions of former \_\_\_\_\_ interns.

If you did not receive the questionnaire, or it got misplaced, please call me, or speak to our secretary (405-744-5035) and I will get another one in the mail to you today.

Sincerely,

Shiretta Ownbey Ph.D.  
Project Director

**COVER LETTER MAILED THREE WEEKS AFTER SURVEY**

May 1, 1995

First Name Last Name  
Company  
Address  
City, State Postal Code

Dear First Name:

About three weeks ago I wrote to you seeking your opinions and experiences of your retail internship with \_\_\_\_\_. As of today I have not yet received your completed questionnaire.

Our research unit has undertaken this study because of the belief that former interns' opinions and experiences are valuable in the design and implementation of internship programs.

I am writing to you again because of the significance each questionnaire has to the usefulness of this study. Your name was selected because you are currently a member of \_\_\_\_\_ retail management and a former \_\_\_\_\_ retail summer intern or a former student merchandise management trainee. Only 240 individuals from across the nation were a part of this census survey. In order for the results of this study to be truly representative of the opinions of all \_\_\_\_\_ interns it is essential that each person return their questionnaire.

In the event that your questionnaire has been misplaced, a replacement is enclosed. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Shiretta Ownbey, Ph.D.  
Project Coordinator

**FINAL COVER LETTER MAILED SIX WEEKS AFTER SURVEY**

May 22, 1995

First Name Last Name  
Company  
Address  
City, State Postal Code

Dear First Name:

I am writing to you about our study of retail internships with \_\_\_\_\_. We have not yet received your completed questionnaire.

The large number of questionnaires returned is very encouraging. But, whether we will be able to describe accurately how individuals in retail management feel about their internships depends upon you and the others who have not yet responded. Our past experience suggests that those you who have not yet sent in your questionnaire may hold quite different perspectives than those who have returned questionnaires.

As a member of management with \_\_\_\_\_, you recognize the respect that industry and education holds for your organization. As an organization that offers a variety of training opportunities, \_\_\_\_\_ is representative of retail in the United States. Therefore, the results are of particular importance to educators, employers and students in the design and implementation of retail internships. The usefulness of our results depends on how accurately we are able to describe the experiences of former interns.

It is for these reasons that I am sending this by certified mail to insure delivery. In case our other correspondence did not reach you, a replacement questionnaire is enclosed. May I urge you to complete and return it as quickly as possible.

I'll be happy to send you a copy of the results. Simply put your name, address, and "copy of results requested" on the back of the return envelope. We expect to have them ready to send early next fall. Your contribution to the success of this study will be appreciated greatly.

Sincerely,

Shiretta Ownbey Ph.D.  
Project Coordinator



APPENDIX C

TABLES

TABLE 13

## Work Site Characteristics

CHARACTERISTICS	N	%
<b>Other Interns in Store</b>		
No	89	47.6
Yes	97	51.9
No response	1	0.5
<b>Number of Other Interns</b>		
0	89	47.6
1	48	25.8
2	29	15.6
3	9	4.8
4	4	2.1
5	2	1.0
13	1	0.5
20	1	0.5
No response	4	2.1
<b>Sales Volume of Store</b>		
\$ 5 - 10 million	54	28.9
\$11 - 20 million	60	32.1
\$21 - 30 million	43	23.0
More than \$30 million	25	13.4
No response	5	2.6
<b>Number of Associates in Store</b>		
Less than 100 associates	41	22.0
101 - 150 associates	66	35.3
151 - 200 associates	39	20.9
More than 200 associates	38	20.3
No response	3	1.5

TABLE 14

Means For Variety Job Characteristics Scale  
by Item and by Scale

Statements Grouped by Job Characteristics Scales <sup>a</sup>	Item Mean	SD
Variety		
6. How repetitious were your duties during your internship? <sup>b</sup>	3.29	0.88
10. How much opportunity did you have to do a number of different things in your internship?	4.09	0.86
17. How much variety did you have in your internship?	3.86	0.78
19. How varied were the tasks you performed in a typical day?	3.72	0.76
Scale Mean	3.74	

<sup>a</sup>From "Impact of Job Characteristics on Retail Salespeople's Reactions to Their Jobs" by A. J. Dubinsky and S. J. Skinner, 1984, Journal of Retailing 60(2), p. 35-62.

<sup>b</sup>Item was reverse-scored for purposes of data analysis.

TABLE 15

Means For Autonomy Job Characteristics Scale  
by Item and by Scale

Statements Grouped by Job Characteristics Scales <sup>a</sup>	Item Mean	SD
<b>Autonomy</b>		
5. To what extent were you able to do your internship job independently of others?	3.84	0.80
9. To what extent were you able to act independently of your immediate supervisor in performing your job function?	3.80	0.83
11. How much were you left on your own to do your own work?	3.96	0.75
13. How much control did you have over the pace of your work?	3.67	0.93
16. How much opportunity did you have for independent thought and action in your internship?	3.74	0.82
Scale Mean	3.80	

<sup>a</sup>From "Impact of Job Characteristics on Retail Salespeople's Reactions to Their Jobs" by A. J. Dubinsky and S. J. Skinner, 1984, Journal of Retailing 60(2), p. 35-62.

TABLE 16

Means For Task Identity Characteristics Scale  
by Item and by Scale

Statements Grouped by Job Characteristics Scales <sup>a</sup>	Item Mean	SD
Task Identity		
7. To what extent did you see projects or jobs through to completion?	4.36	0.76
12. How much opportunity did you have to do a job from beginning to end (i.e. the chance to do a whole job?)	3.99	0.78
18. How much work were you involved with that was handled from beginning to end by yourself?	3.70	0.83
Scale Mean	4.02	

<sup>a</sup>From "Impact of Job Characteristics on Retail Salespeople's Reactions to Their Jobs" by A. J. Dubinsky and S. J. Skinner, 1984, Journal of Retailing 60(2), p. 35-62.

TABLE 17

Means For Feedback Job Characteristics Scale  
by item and by Scale

Statements Grouped by Job Characteristics Scales <sup>a</sup>	Item Mean	SD
<b>Feedback</b>		
8. How much feedback did you receive from your internship trainer/supervisor about how well you were doing?	3.89	0.98
14. To what extent did you find out how well you were doing on your internship as you were working?	3.72	0.99
15. To what extent did you receive information from your immediate supervisor about your job performance?	3.69	0.99
Scale Mean	3.76	

<sup>a</sup>From "Impact of Job Characteristics on Retail Salespeople's Reactions to Their Jobs" by A. J. Dubinsky and S. J. Skinner, 1984, Journal of Retailing 60(2), p. 35-62.

TABLE 18

Means For Supervisor Support Scale  
by Item and by Scale

Statements Grouped by Supervisor Support Scale <sup>a</sup>	Item Mean	SD
Supervisor Support		
20. My internship supervisor cared about whether or not I achieved my career goals.	4.19	1.01
21. My supervisor provided assignments that gave me the opportunity to develop and strengthen new skills.	4.17	0.95
22. My internship supervisor took the time to learn about my career goals and aspirations.	3.77	1.12
23. My supervisor kept me informed about different career opportunities for me in the organization.	3.36	1.20
24. My supervisor assigned me special projects that increased my visibility in the organization.	3.39	1.21
25. My supervisor made sure I received credit when I accomplished something substantial during my internship.	4.13	0.99
26. My internship supervisor gave me helpful advice about improving my performance when I needed it.	4.07	0.92
SCALE MEAN	3.87	

<sup>a</sup>From "Effects of Race on Organizational Experiences, Job Performance Evaluations, and Career Outcomes" by J.H. Greenhaus, S. Parasuraman and W.M. Wormley, 1990, Academy of Management Journal 33(1), p.64-86.

TABLE 19

Means For Job Satisfaction Scale  
by Item and by Scale

Statements Grouped by Job Satisfaction Scale <sup>a</sup>	Item Mean	SD
Job Satisfaction		
46. Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my current job.	4.00	1.03
47. I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in my job.	4.28	0.85
48. I frequently think of quitting this job. <sup>b</sup>	3.62	1.19
49. Most people on this job are very satisfied with this job.	2.91	1.02
50. People with my job title often think of quitting this job. <sup>b</sup>	2.75	0.96
Scale Mean	3.51	

<sup>a</sup>From "Impact of Job Characteristics on Retail Salespeople's Reactions to Their Jobs" by A. J. Dubinsky and S. J. Skinner, 1984, Journal of Retailing 60(2), p. 35-62.

<sup>b</sup>Items were reverse-scored for purposes of data analysis.



TABLE 20

Relationship Between Job Variety and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

Variety	Total	Compensation Growth			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
1	6.4%	9.6%	4.4%	0.0%	2.9	4	.58	7.1%	0.0%	12.5%	3.3	4	.51
2	47.1	45.2	47.8	53.9				46.1	53.3	43.8			
3	46.5	45.2	47.8	46.1				46.8	46.7	43.7			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

Variety	Total	Level of Responsibility			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
1	6.4%	6.5%	6.8%	0.0%	1.0	4	.90	13.3%	4.2%	7.7%	5.2	4	.27
2	47.1	44.6	48.9	57.1				40.0	54.3	39.7			
3	46.5	48.9	44.3	42.9				46.7	41.5	52.6			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 21

Relationship Between Job Task Identity and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Task Identity													
1	11.2%	9.5%	14.4%	0.0%	3.2	4	.52	11.4%	6.7%	18.7%	2.9	4	.57
2	40.7	40.5	38.9	53.9				38.3	50.0	43.8			
3	48.1	50.0	46.7	46.1				50.3	43.3	37.5			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
	Total	Level of Responsibility			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Task Identity													
1	11.2%	13.0%	10.2%	0.0%	5.0	4	.28	26.7%	9.6%	10.3%	9.1	4	.06
2	40.7	43.5	39.8	14.3				53.3	44.7	33.3			
3	48.1	43.5	50.0	85.7				20.0	45.7	56.4			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 22

Relationship Between Field of Study and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Field of Study													
Business	66.9%	57.1%	72.2%	92.3%	9.3	4	.06	68.8%	56.7%	68.7%	5.8	4	.21
Fashion Merch	21.9	29.8	17.8	0.0				19.9	36.7	12.5			
Other	11.2	13.1	10.0	7.7				11.3	6.6	18.8			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
Field of Study													
	Total	Level of Responsibility			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Job Satisfaction			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Business	66.9%	64.1%	68.2%	85.7%	2.8	4	.59	73.3%	71.3%	60.2%	8.6	4	.07
Fashion Merch	21.9	22.8	22.7	0.0				6.7	23.4	23.1			
Other	11.2	13.1	9.1	14.3				20.0	5.3	16.7			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 23

Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Continued Employment<sup>a</sup>

	Continued Employment			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p value
	Total	1	2			
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>						
1	8.0%	8.1%	7.2%	1.5	2	.47
2	50.3	51.4	35.7			
3	41.7	40.5	57.1			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = Low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 24

Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Career Progress<sup>a</sup>

	Total	Compensation Growth			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value	Rate of Advancement			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value
		1	2	3				1	2	3			
Job Satisfaction													
1	8.0%	7.1%	10.0%	0.0%	3.3	4	.50	8.6%	10.0%	0.0%	1.9	4	.75
2	50.3	47.6	50.0	69.3				48.9	53.3	56.2			
3	41.7	45.3	40.0	30.7				42.5	36.7	43.8			
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>				<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>			
	Total	Level of Responsibility			X <sup>2</sup>	D.F.	p-value						
		1	2	3									
Job Satisfaction													
1	8.0%	13.0%	3.4%	0.0%	8.14	4	.09						
2	50.3	43.5	55.7	71.4									
3	41.7	43.5	40.9	28.6									
	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>									

<sup>a</sup>Variable category: 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high.

\*p ≤ .05

TABLE 25  
Compensation Characteristics

Compensation Range	<u>n</u>	%
<u>Beginning</u>		
\$15,000 - \$18,000	30	16.2
\$18,001 - \$22,000	143	77.3
\$22,001 - \$25,000	11	5.9
Greater than \$25,000	1	0.5
No Response	2	1.0
<u>Current</u>		
\$22,000 - \$25,000	17	9.0
\$25,001 - \$28,000	64	34.2
\$28,001 - \$31,000	52	27.8
Greater than \$31,000	51	27.3
No Response	3	1.6
<u>Growth in Compensation</u>		
Group 1 current - beg < \$9667	84	44.9
Group 2 current - beg > \$9667 and            < \$13,334	90	48.1
Group 3 current - beg > \$13,334	13	6.9

TABLE 26

## Rate of Advancement Characteristics

Beginning Titles	N	%	Current Titles	N	%
Sales Associate	7	3.8	Senior sales Manager	1	.5
Merchandise Assistant	4	2.2	Merchandiser	117	63.2
Management Trainee	158	84.9	Senior Merchandiser	66	35.7
Management Intern	2	1.1	Assistant Store Manager	1	.5
Merchandise Manager	13	7.0	No response	2	1.0
BLA (Basic Logic Assistant)	1	0.5			
Merchandiser	1	0.5			
No response	1	0.5			
<b>Years with Company</b>					
2 years	16	8.6			
3 years	30	16.0			
4 years	43	23.0			
5 years	31	16.6			
6 years	15	8.0			
7 years	11	5.9			
8 years	7	3.7			
9 years	7	3.7			
10 years	9	4.9			
More than 10 years	16	8.6			
No response	2	1.0			

VITA

Sylvia Daniel Masters

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE RETAIL INTERNSHIP: CHARACTERISTICS THAT  
CONTRIBUTE TO CAREER SUCCESS

Major Field: Design, Housing and Merchandising

Biographical:

Education: Received Bachelor of Science in Fashion Merchandising from University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, Tennessee, 1976. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Apparel Merchandising at Oklahoma State University in December 1995.

Experience: Merchandiser, JCPenney, Jackson, Tennessee/Abilene, TX, June 1976 to March 1981; Research Assistant, Department of Design, Housing and Merchandising, Oklahoma State University, August 1991 to October 1992; Shoe Merchandiser/Office Supervisor, JCPenney, Stillwater, Oklahoma, October 1992 to August 1994; Research Assistant, Department of Design, Housing and Merchandising, Oklahoma State University, August 1994 to June 1995.

Professional Memberships: Phi Upsilon Omicron



OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 03-24-95

IRB#: HE-95-025

**Proposal Title:** THE RETAIL INTERNSHIP: CHARACTERISTICS THAT  
CONTRIBUTE TO CAREER SUCCESS

**Principal Investigator(s):** Sylvia Masters, Shiretta Ownbey

**Reviewed and Processed as:** Exempt

**Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s):** Approved

APPROVAL STATUS SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT  
NEXT MEETING.


APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR ONE CALENDAR YEAR AFTER WHICH A  
CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE SUBMITTED FOR BOARD  
APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR  
APPROVAL.

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Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Reasons for Deferral or Disapproval  
are as follows:

Signature:



Chair of Institutional Review Board

Date: March 27, 1995