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Publication Date

2012

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Women and Graduate Program Choice:

The Decision To Apply to Full-Time MBA Programs

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Anne Janet Dela Cruz

2012

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Women and Graduate Program Choice:

The Decision To Apply to Full-Time MBA Programs

by

Anne Janet Dela Cruz

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Patricia M. McDonough, Co-Chair

Professor Linda P. Rose, Co-Chair

Compared to other graduate programs in law and medicine where women represent 50 percent of incoming cohorts, business schools attract fewer women despite extensive outreach programs and budgets. This study investigated the decision-making process of women who decided to apply to full-time MBA programs. The study will contribute research to help bridge the gap by looking at women who have successfully applied to and enrolled in an MBA program using business school marketing material content analysis, event observation, online surveys and interviews. The sample was comprised of 59 survey respondents and 33 interview participants from two highly-ranked business schools. Once the data were collected, I identified patterns relating to resources and influencers, admissions criteria, costs, and benefits considered by MBA

students during the application process.   I compared data across the methods to identify similarities and differences between students and the two business schools. My findings showed that female students value key resources including websites, rankings, and interpersonal experiences when looking at MBA programs. Students mentioned the financial costs associated with the MBA program, but non-pecuniary costs including moving away from family and reduced time with loved ones emerged as concerns. Benefits to pursuing an MBA outweighed the costs for the students, leading to personal and professional development opportunities. My findings suggest that business schools must be able to demonstrate the value of an MBA through the various communications and marketing methods while providing prospective students with a realistic view of what the full-time MBA experience entails and the resources available during the program.

The dissertation of Anne Janet Dela Cruz is approved.

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University of California, Los Angeles

2012

DEDICATION

I dedicate this manuscript to my parents Leonila and Eleuterio Dela Cruz, who taught me the value of working hard to achieve your goals. Through their support and encouragement, I have discovered my passions in life including my interest in education access and professional development. My dedication to learning is a gift that my parents instilled in me, and I hope that I can foster the same enthusiasm in others.

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CHAPTER ONE

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the efforts that business programs put into recruiting women in MBA programs given women's representation in the United States workforce, fewer women make up full-time MBA classes. The U.S. Department of Labor reported that 66 million women were employed full-time and part-time in 2009, and women account for an estimated 51.2% increase of the total labor force between 2008 and 2018. Yet, the same report demonstrates that women's median weekly earnings ($657) are only 80% of men's earnings ($819). Women represent a population targeted by business education programs. Graduate schools of business and management have launched diversity initiatives to increase the number of women in their MBA programs, yet women continue to represent only about 30% of MBA students in business schools (Catalyst, 2000). Top-ranked MBA programs report that women make up 25 to 45% of their full-time MBA classes, with more women represented in MBA programs at private universities (Boyd, Bergh, & Ketchen, 2010; Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Rockoff, & Wyckoff, 2008; "U.S. News & World Report Best Business Schools," 2010).   Seen from a modern feminist perspective, increasing the number of women in MBA programs aligns with the societal focus on diversity and individuality (Cott, 1987)

The movement to increase the number of women in the MBA classroom is stymied by the small number of women in the MBA classroom, including female students and faculty. The number of women CEOs in Fortune 500 companies grew from 0.2% in 1995 to 3% in 2009 while female board members in Fortune 500 companies grew from 9.6% in 1995 to 15.2% in 2009. These numbers are relatively low given that women represent 46.7% of the U.S. labor force as of 2009 (Catalyst, 2010). Given these numbers, business schools need to understand

why more women are not pursuing an MBA despite the programs' increased efforts and women-focused marketing budgets. The increase of women in MBA programs not only promotes diversity in business schools and in management positions, but it also provides for an increased number of female graduate student role models for younger women interested in the field.

Compared to other types of graduate professional programs, female MBA students represent a smaller percentage of the full-time MBA classes at approximately 30% (Catalyst, 2000). Women represent 49% of the law school application population according to the American Bar Association, and there are typically 100,000 applicants for 43,500 openings (ABA, Prelaw Insider, 2007). The Law Schools Admissions Council (LSAC) reported that 42,500 women out of 87,870 total applicants applied to U.S. law schools in 2006. Like law schools, a higher proportion of women apply to medical schools. The Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) stated that there were 42,269 applications for medical school in the entering class of 2009-2010, and women represented 47.9%. Medical schools have seen an increase in female applicants from the 32.7% of women's applications in 1982-1983 to today's figures (AAMC, 2010).

Women's colleges realize the potential of women in MBA programs and a movement among women's colleges to get the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation is emerging. Simmons College made history by becoming the first women's AACSB accredited college, and they have seen a 20% increase in enrollment. Similar schools moved toward accreditation to counter concerns that a women's college would have "MBA-lite" programs, or less rigorous business programs with fewer math courses (Damast, 2010). In addition to the academic program offerings, women's colleges provide female students with the opportunities to focus on female leadership, meet women executives who come to the

school, and other offerings relating to gender dynamics. Several studies show that female undergraduate students in women's colleges are more engaged than their counterparts at coeducational institutions (National Survey of Student Engagement, Kinzie et. al, 2007). Women's colleges hope that their graduate programs yield the same results, yet they compete with the long established and highly-ranked coeducation programs.

The Problem

The Graduate Management Admission's Council (GMAC) 2009 Applications Trends Survey reported that women represent 32% of the full-time MBA programs' incoming cohorts. Comparatively, women represent 37% of part-time programs and 25% of executive MBA programs. Despite their increased marketing budget and outreach efforts, female students in business schools have hovered at the 30% enrollment rate since 1994 according to various GMAC reports (Catalyst, 2000). Barriers to entry for women interested in MBA programs include cost, family responsibilities, careers, and work-life balance among other factors (Ibeh, Carter, Poff, & Hammill, 2008; Kelan & Jones, 2010; Schein, 2001; Simpson, Sturges, Woods, & Altman, 2005). Proposals for increasing the number of women getting MBAs have included increasing female faculty, mentorship programs, scholarships, flexible programs, expanded student services, and other outreach efforts (Marx, 2002; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; R. Simpson, 2006). Despite efforts to bridge the gap between the barriers to entry and proposals, business schools face ongoing budgetary and resource constraints. The efforts to increase the representation of women in business school remains a key initiative for various educational institutions as noted on some business school websites and other articles (Page, 2007). Business schools increase budgets to reach out to female MBA prospects, yet the number of women in MBA programs remains flat. Most studies about women in business programs to date mainly use

quantitative research to document the experiences of current female MBA students and alumni. When qualitative research is done, smaller samples address classroom experiences of MBA students as opposed to their decision-making process to pursue an MBA.

A study by *Catalyst* in conjunction with the University of Michigan's Center for the Education of Women in 2000 administered a survey to MBA students (888 women and 796 men) from 12 top-ranked business schools. The study revealed that rewarding experiences included involvement in classes and student life, curriculum and class size, opportunity for group work, acquiring managerial and business skills, career development and job placement, strong knowledgeable faculty, good relationship between students and faculty/administration, diversity of program/support for minority and women's issues, and supportive environment for learning. However, the study indicated that fewer women than men said they felt included in business school environments (Catalyst, 2000). In the study, 20% of the women felt that they were perceived as less qualified than their male counterparts as opposed to the 6% men. The study also stated that strategies to attract more women to business school included the following: provide additional academic support (25% women versus 17% men), improve marketing and outreach (21% women versus 18% men), work with companies (17% women versus 10% men), feature alumni and women executives (17% women versus 14% men), show flexibility of MBA course offerings (15% women versus 9% men) and value and promote diversity (8% women versus 7% men). Although not much difference shows in these findings, business schools continue to invest in marketing, outreach, and promotion of diversity.

Other studies about the female MBA experience reveal their concerns. Sinclair (1997) interviewed 16 female MBA students in Australian and English business schools regarding their point of view about the MBA. The researchers identified four major themes including 1)

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centralization versus decentralization of authority in the classroom, 2) defense of admissions versus uncertainty and ignorance, 3) learnings by looking outwards versus inwards, and 4) knowledge by analytical repetition versus imaginative or emotional engagement. The first theme showed that women found learning in pairs and groups more rewarding than lecture-based classroom experiences. The second theme revealed the women's concern that asking questions was construed as ignorance or lack of abilities. Women also expressed the desire to tie learning to actual experiences in the third theme. The participants noted their fulfillment from going beyond books or the standard way to find something new. In general, studies show that male and female student' attitudes about graduate school and the benefits of completing a degree are important (Crocker & Knight, 2005; Ingram, et. al., 2000; Punj & Staelin, 1978).

Students' attitudes about academic subjects influence their decision to pursue post-baccalaureate degrees. Overall, women recognize how math could equip them for graduate school, noting the higher-ranked programs are more quantitative (Gilbert, 2010). A number of studies attribute a fear of math to why students are not pursuing an MBA degree given the quantitative demands of core and elective courses including but not limited to statistics, finance, and accounting (Balachandran & Scully, 2004; Marcal & Roberts, 2001; Scott, 2003; Sizoo, Malhotra, & Bearson, 2002; Tobias, 1995). Some researchers have claimed that a fear of math is a deterrent to women getting an MBA (Gilbert, 2010; Alsop, 2005). Exposure and comfort with math can be promoted with strong quantitative preparation in elementary, high school, and college (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2005; Blickenstaff, 2005; Speilhagen, 2006; Business Higher Education Forum, 2010).

Although MBA schools attract individuals who are interested in general management courses, some schools are beginning to focus on other ways to structure their curriculum, which

may appeal to non-traditional MBA students including women. For example, Johns Hopkins Carey School of Business offers an MBA program where the focus is on social welfare and other socially responsible topics (Byrne, 2010). In addition to the analytical courses required in MBA programs, corporate social responsibility can be a curricular offering of interest to students. Navarro (2008) conducted a web-based survey of 50 top-ranking business school programs, looking at the course titles, course descriptions, and course reviews from MBA program websites. The course analysis demonstrates that socially relevant subjects receive less emphasis in the overall curricula. Of the categories and courses analyzed, socially responsible offerings were reflected in some MBA curricula. The three classes that fell in this category included Corporate Ethics/Social Responsibility (40%), Business and Government (24%), and Business Law (4%).

In addition to the courses offered by top business programs, prospective students also look at models to help compare top business programs. Kiang and Fisher (2008) created a self-organizing map (SOM) network to categorize and to classify 79 MBA schools. Four segments emerged in the study including the following: elite (highest ranked and most expensive), prestige (lower ranked and most expensive), high value (higher rank and less expensive), and budget (lowest ranked and least expensive). The studies used ANOVA analysis, classifying the elite schools as the most expensive, highest GPA and GMAT scores, and lowest acceptance rates. High value schools are ranked next followed by the prestige and budget schools. The researchers believe that the visual, graphical map allows prospects to see inputs (GPA, GMAT, acceptance rate, starting salary, employment statistics, length to complete program) and to determine the right program that meets their individual needs. Other resources consulted by prospective students include the rankings publications such as *U.S. News & World Report, Businessweek,*

and the *Financial Times.*

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The efforts by MBA programs to increase the number of women are well documented (Catalyst, 2000; Catalyst, 2010; GMAC, 2009; GMAC, 2010). Recent studies have delved into the challenges faced by women who are already enrolled in MBA programs. However, the focus of these studies is on the reasons for women's perseverance in MBA programs and success factors leading to the completion of their degrees. Other studies look at MBA program alumni and their success after graduation. Despite the increasing number of studies about female MBA students and alumni, there is only limited research addressing the efforts undertaken by women during the MBA application process. This study will look at two full-time MBA programs ranked in the top 25 business schools by major publications including *Business Week, U.S. News and World Report, The Economist, Financial Times, and The Princeton Review.* The research and findings from this study are relevant to business schools for a variety of reasons. First, the research will provide insights about the decision-making process experienced by female MBA students during the MBA pre-application and application processes. In looking at how they market their programs, the study will bridge the gap in the research by providing some understanding about the impact of influencers and networks in promoting MBA programs.

Research Questions

With the goal of understanding how to increase the number of women applicants to MBA programs, the study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What processes do women engage in when making their decision to apply to a full-time MBA program?

- Gathering information about MBA programs

- Exploring alternatives to MBA programs

- Selecting to apply to MBA programs over/in addition to alternatives

2. What are the perceived costs and benefits of an MBA program?

3. If there are perceived barriers in applying to MBA programs, how do women overcome those barriers?

4. What can business schools do to help women during their decision-making process and in the transition to the program?

See Appendix A for research questions with the proposed methods for data collection and analysis. For the purpose of this study, top ranked means full-time MBA programs that rank in the top 25 of two or more rankings in major publications including *U.S. News and World Report, Wall Street Journal, The Economist*, and the *Financial Times.*

Research Sites

The sites selected for this research are Elite School and High Value School. Kiang & Fisher (2008) classify elite schools as highest ranked and most expensive while high value schools are defined as highly-ranked and less expensive. These campuses represented a cross section of highly-ranked public and private universities. The selection of these schools was based on various criteria. First, two business schools were ranked in the top 25 of two or more rankings. This grouping of schools was relevant because they admit students with high GPAs and GMAT scores. Second, the selected schools all have a proportionately low number of female MBA students but with different proportions. Full-time MBA programs were the focus of this study since female students in their first year had the most recent experience with the MBA applications experiences. According to the 2011 mba.com Prospective Students Survey, prospective students' are age 24 to 30 and are more likely to consider full-time, two-year MBA

programs. This study looked at when these female students between the ages of 24-30 entered full-time MBA programs.

Scope of Study and Research Design

Qualitative methods were used for this study. The participants included female first-year MBA students from these two business schools. First-year students were selected since these students most recently experienced the MBA admissions process. Students were asked to complete an online survey that includes demographic questions, questions regarding interest and information gathering in MBA programs, and perceptions about MBA programs. From the pool of students who answer the survey, individual interviews using the critical incident technique (CIT) were conducted between their first semester after midterms and their second term to learn more about the application and enrollment processes. This timing allowed for new students to reflect on their recent MBA experience. The critical incident technique, a way to use storytelling to identify key events, was used because it can identify key decision points and milestones that female MBA students describe through the admissions process. The questions addressed the influencers and resources considered when applying to MBA programs, what type of messaging key influencers provided, and how the messaging from influencers aligned with information gathered from their program research through their decision making process. The survey information and interview data were reviewed, coded, and analyzed to identify overarching themes emerging from the data.

A content analysis of the business school websites was done prior to the creation of the online survey and interview protocols. To review the messaging provided by business schools, the content analysis findings were compared to the data that emerges from the online survey and student interviews. In addition, MBA program marketing materials were also reviewed to study

content assumptions in their messaging to prospective students. The findings for this study emerged from triangulation of data from these sources. Observations of admissions and recruitment events took place, providing additional insights about business schools' messaging.

Implications of the Study

To date, studies have shown that women articulated concerns about tuition, academic preparation (including a fear of math), personal/family responsibilities (including childcare, caring for aging parent, etc.), and other factors when considering business school (Catalyst, 2000). This study identified the decision-making processes and influencers considered by students who recently engaged in the MBA application process and revealed whether these factors were addressed by influencers and research resources. Insights from the study revealed student concerns and needs when applying to MBA programs, providing business schools and other business-outreach organizations with information that allows them to develop student programming that address these items. Findings from the study also included recommendations for business schools regarding their marketing, communications, and outreach efforts to increase the number of women and other diversity groups who apply to their MBA programs. I hope to present my findings to business schools, The Forte Foundation (an organization providing resources and events to encourage women in business), the Graduate Management Admissions Council, and the Association to Advance Collegiate Business Schools to highlight successful strategies for attracting women into MBA programs. I also hope to encourage business schools to continuously engage in dialogues with their students about their admissions experiences to promote a culture of continuous improvement and to meet the needs of prospective students.

Summary

There is a clear mandate by business schools to increase the number of women in their MBA programs. However, women still represent approximately 30% of their MBA student population, and there are very few studies that address how key influencers can impact women's decisions about the MBA degree. A qualitative research design enabled me to delve further into the decision-making processes, influencers, and other considerations given the lack of research existing surrounding the social role of key influencers and social networks in the MBA decision-making process.

The review of the literature in Chapter Two provides a background relating to the general MBA applications process and the various touch points prospective students engage in. The chapter also examines the applicability of some theoretical frameworks to understand how to promote gender diversity in graduate business programs.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Introduction

More women attend higher education institutions, outnumbering men in undergraduate majors. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2003 Baccalaureate and Beyond Longitudinal Study, 57% of college graduates were women (Bradburn, 2003). Across various fields of study, women earned 59% of the masters degrees and 45% of the doctoral degrees in 2001 (Freeman, 2004). The NCES reports that women earned 49.4% of bachelors degrees in business and administrative services, yet the same report stated that only 40.6% of the masters degrees in business management-applied and administrative services were awarded to women (Freeman, 2004). Data from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) support an increase of women applying and enrolling to graduate programs in medicine and in law, and women represent approximately 50% of classes in both professional programs (LSAC, 2010; Magrane, 2006). In comparison to medical and law schools, the research indicates that fewer women earn graduate degrees in business and represent approximately 30% of MBA classes (Bradburn, 2003; Freeman, 2004).

This study looks at how women pursuing MBA degrees make key decisions about how they investigate business programs and how they decide to apply to MBA programs. To frame the study, this chapter summarizes the research and background information relating to why more women do not pursue MBAs. This chapter provides an overview to understand MBA programs, beginning with a brief history of early MBA education and women's participation in these programs. A discussion about MBA admissions criteria follows, and the section includes information about academic preparation, standardized testing, applications, work experience and

interviews. This section also presents research on college choice and how students gather information about graduate programs. To address current outreach and diversity efforts, the next topic covers graduate programs' strategies and initiatives to target women. Finally, the chapter ends with a theoretical framework section and a summary to introduce the goals and objectives for the next chapter.

Purpose And Impact Of Business Schools

Business schools serve various constituencies, and they face opportunities and threats as higher education institutions strive for student diversity. Trieschmann, Dennis, Northcraft, & Jur (2000) note that business schools have research and instructional goals, yet reaching these goals requires resources including more faculty and larger budgets. The faculty plays a major role in establishing the business schools' reputation based on the creativity and quality of the research (prestigious journals and research recognition). Business schools rely on relationships with universities and corporations, so business school citizenship involves activities that promote sound business solutions with social responsibility (Boyle, 2004). Faculty members establish relationships with the business community to use research and academic knowledge to problem solve issues collaboratively with corporations (Dossabhoy & Berger, 2002). Research shows that business school innovation can benefit students and companies that employ faculty (Mitra & Golder, 2008). As with some other disciplines, management innovation evolves from previous academic work (Golden-Biddle, Locke, & Reay, 2006). However, critics note that the business faculty's specializations may not be applicable to the business world (Engwall & Zamagni, 1998). Business schools compete with one another to foster corporate relationships. As companies become learning organizations, this leads to business schools' attempts to identify projects and corporate collaborations that can be revenue generating (Lorange, 1996). Students,

like corporations, may benefit from this innovation. Business programs not only offer instruction in specific functional specialties such as marketing or accounting, but management courses provides content that can be generalized across current and prospective managers (Freedman & Stumpf, 1982).   Business schools are expected to provide training not just in the business and management areas but also to foster skill building in soft skills, cultural skills, and social responsibility (Reeves-Ellington, 2004).   In addition, MBA programs provide students with a global perspective given market competition (Datar, Garvin, & Cullen, 2010).

Historical Background of MBA Programs

Business schools emerged and evolved in the United States between 1880 and the present. Pierson (1956) outlines three periods relating to the establishment of business schools including the origins and early growth (1880-1914), expansion and diversification (1914-1940), and reassessment and reorganization (1940-present). During the origins and early growth period, business schools including Wharton School of Finance and Commerce (1881), University of Chicago (1898), and New York University's Commerce, Accounts, and Finance School (1900) were established to focus on government service, business and real life applications, and preparation for professional certification and secretarial/office management-related studies. During the second period, state universities (North Carolina, Virginia, Michigan) and private universities (Columbia and Stanford) opened business schools focused on functional areas including marketing and finance as well as managerial subjects like business decision-making and operations. Business schools experienced an evolution in the reassessment and reorganization period, seeing enrollments boom following World War II. These business programs served as the source to professionalize management similar to the professionalization sought by law schools and medical schools (Locke, 1989).

As part of the desire to professionalize management and to promote competitive advantage, some business schools targeted audiences with specific academic backgrounds. The application of mathematics in business schools evolved, and business programs saw the opportunity to attract non-traditional business students including engineers and other technical individuals. Since several business departments emerged as spinoffs from economics departments, quantitative requirements carried over to MBA programs in those institutions with economics-heavy curriculums. Technical-focused universities established business programs to specialize in science and in management. Institutions including Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T) and the Carnegie Institute of Technology began the trend for quantitative, technical programs, requiring a minimum requirement of calculus. Initially, the innovations from these schools were applied to engineering and production problems. However, other business schools understood that management concepts could be applied using similar quantitative methods. Hence, the mathematics requirements were raised across American business schools, including the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration. Given the increased use of mathematical analysis and the emphasis on research, universities including Stanford and Carnegie-Mellon merged the use of quantitative analysis with the use of case methods to apply academic principles to business problems (Engwall & Zamagni, 1998; Locke, 1989).

With the increasing interest in business programs, the American Association of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) was established in 1916 to promote business education. The organization published standards in 1919 outlining coursework requirements, and the requirements implemented in the United States expanded to international business programs. The AACSB provided accreditation standards and peer review for schools in 1991.

Participation in AACSB of domestic and international schools increased over time as follows: 53 schools in 1940, 85 schools in 1958, and 607 schools in 2010 (AACSB, 2010; Freedman, Cooper, & Stumpf, 1982; Jantzen, 2000; McKenna, 1989; Reeves-Ellington, 2004). A study shows that the AACSB has been more selective with institutions over time, but they have also allowed more schools with women and minorities to join (Jantzen, 2000). With the accreditation of international programs overseas, prospective MBA students have more options to attend schools in Asia and Europe (Lorange, 1996).

History of Women in MBA Schools

Although MBA programs emerged throughout the country, few women were students in these programs at the early stages of their development. Compared to medical, dental, and law schools that had awarded women degrees in the mid to late 1800s, business schools did not award MBA degrees to women until the 1900s. Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman to receive a medical degree in 1849 (Catalyst, 2009). Ada H. Kepley earned her law degree in 1861 from the Union College of Law in Chicago, making her the first woman to graduate from an American Law School (Infoplease, 2007). The first woman to get an MBA Alma Katherine Ledig, earned her MBA from Wharton in 1931 (Wharton, 2011).

Female MBA students lacked role models, as few female held faculty appointments in the business programs. Business schools saw the emergence of female staff and faculty at a slow rate over time. Stanford's Graduate School of Business (GSB) is an example. During the first two decades of its history, the school's Executive Secretary Lillian Owen served as "an admissions officer, registrar, purchasing officer, information officer, and counselor to students and faculty." Two assistant professors, Myra Strober and Francine Gordon, were the female faculty members at Stanford in 1972. Being the first woman in the dean's office, Carol Marchick Dressler became

the assistant dean for placement in 1974. Joanne Martin, starting as an assistant professor in 1977, became the first female, tenured professor at Stanford. As of 1992, 82% of staff administrative positions at Stanford's GSB were held by women. According to a data set provided by the Association to Advance Collegiate School of Business (AACSB), female women represented 15% of tenured faculty in 2009-2010 at Stanford.

The low proportion of female faculty members at business schools still persists. Bettinger & Long (2005) found that having more female faculty may lead to having more female students in certain subject areas. The study shows that women who had female faculty in mathematics and statistics were more likely to take additional courses in those subjects (Bettinger & Long, 2005). As recently as April 2010, the *Harvard Crimson* reported that the female faculty's satisfaction ratings in the Business School fell well below the average for all the other graduate schools (Merrigan & White, 2010). In 2007, nine of the 28 female junior faculty members left Harvard's Business School after having described experiences of bias against female faculty. Female faculty at business schools believe that tenure is key to promote financial security and academic freedom, yet female faculty continue to face barriers in academia (Premeaux, 2010; VanAnders, 2004). MBA programs strive to attract and to retain key faculty for their programs and offerings. Yet, compared to other professional schools, business departments have fewer female faculty members. According to a 2006 American Association of Medical College (AAMC) publication, women represented 32% of the medical school faculty, 38% of assistant professors, 28% of associate professors, and 16% of full professors. The report also noted that women had leadership positions in medical schools, and women represented 19% of division/section chiefs, 10% of department chairs, 43% of assistant deans, 31% of associate and senior associate deans, and 11% of medical school deans (Colleges, 2006). Abdullina

(2008) reports that although only 20% of law school deans are women, women hold various roles including instructors (65%) and lecturers (61%) (Abdullina, 2008; Fernandes, 2009). Female faculty and academic leaders in business schools reflect a slower growth in comparison to medical and law schools, and female faculty represent 29.4% of business school faculty (Fernandes, 2009). With female faculty members making up 27.6% of the faculty at business schools, female business school deans and associate deans head top MBA programs at institutions including but not limited to UCLA Anderson (Dean Judy Olian), Yale (Sharon Oster), University of Notre Dame (Carolyn Woo) (Damast, 2009).

Graduate Program Admissions Criteria

Many business schools target high potential students. Typically, students are asked to provide a completed application with transcripts, written statements, test scores, and letters of recommendation. To ensure that they get the most qualified candidates, business schools look at qualitative and quantitative factors (Saaty, France, & Valentine, 1991). This section will cover the admissions criteria considered by MBA programs in the assessment of prospective MBA students. The topics include academic preparation (including undergraduate degrees and prerequisite coursework), standardized tests (GMAT and GRE), work experience, essays, and other criteria including applications and interviews (J. S. Moore, 1998).

Undergraduate Academic Coursework To Prepare For The MBA

MBA admissions officers consider academic preparation, including GPA and courses taken by prospective students. Research shows that undergraduate grade point average (UGPA) serves as a reliable indicator for graduate school success (Bacon & Bean, 2006; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Brookshire & Palocsay, 2005; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Sulaiman & Mohezar, 2006) However, some researchers point to the inflation of grades on American college campuses (Clark

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& Palatella, 1997).   Other researchers refer to the lack of standardized grading between various undergraduate fields (Bowers, 1967; Goldman & Slaughter, 1976). Some studies show that certain majors may not be attractive to women. Despite the various options available, women select undergraduate degrees based on their assessment of their interest and aptitude (Kim, Markham, & Cangelosi, 2002; Malgwi, Howe, & Burnaby, 2005). Mathematics and economics tend to have fewer women in undergraduate majors, yet these subjects are usually part of the core classes in MBA programs. Women describe their experiences in math and economics classes with feelings of anxiety and lack of confidence (Colander & Holmes, 2007; Dynan & Rouse, 1997; Wigfield & Meece, 1988). In addition, studies show that female business undergraduate students are more likely than male business undergraduate students to experience computer anxiety (Beckers & Schmidt, 2001; Havelka, Beasley, & Broome, 2004; Todman, 2000; Todman & Monaghan, 1994). Other researchers have found that the differences in computer anxiety between men and women are insignificant (Havelka et al., 2004; Todman, 2000). There is research to support that business majors may find their coursework helpful in preparation for the MBA (Heales, 2005; Kaighobadi & Allen, 2008; Sulaiman & Mohezar, 2006). Researchers have found that foundational business courses taken by undergraduate business majors best predict academic success for the major (Kaighobadi & Allen, 2008). However, some studies show that individuals without undergraduate business majors can still do well in MBA programs (Braunstein, 2006; Eddey, 2009).

Lambertus, Berensen, and Bracken (2009) noted the importance of math as viewed by undergraduate women, and the quantitative nature of the MBA program emerged in this study. Conducting 12 semi-structured interviews in person that lasted 60 to 90 minutes, the researchers found that the women in the study noted the importance of mathematics in the following: 1) tool

for thinking and problem solving, 2) educational tool, 3) tool for career pursuit, 4) building confidence in abilities, joy, and satisfaction, 5) connecting to realistic contexts, and 6) tool for teacher influence. Like the previous two studies, the participants viewed math with confidence. One participant stated "a lot of business has to do with financing and stuff like that. So, a lot of statistics and math goes into that, and accounting, if I want to do anything like that. And later on, if I want to pursue getting an MBA, a lot of math is tied into that" (Lambertus, Berensen, & Bracken, 2009).

The Standardized Test as an Admissions Criterion for the MBA

In addition to academic backgrounds, MBA programs look at standardized tests as admissions criteria. Some studies claim that the Graduate Management Assessment Test (GMAT) is a valid predictor of academic success (Oh, Schmidt, Shaffer, & Le, 2008). Research shows that women with higher GPAs tend to have higher GMAT scores similar to their male counterparts (Oh et al., 2008). However, other studies claim that the GMAT alone is an invalid predictor and serves to screen out female candidates who could be higher potential prospective students (Hancock, 1999). Data shows that some women view the GMAT as a deterrent from applying to MBA programs. Research shows that a combination of UGPA and GMAT or GRE best predicts student graduate success (Ahmadi, Raiszadeh, & Helms, 1997; Attiyeh & Attiyeh, 1997; Borde, 2007; Braunstein, 2002, 2006; Graham, 1991; Mark Montgomery & Anderson, 2007; Truitt, 2002). Borde (2007) found that the GPA is a better predictor of overall graduate business study while GMAT scores are better predictors of finance course performance. Some studies show that the GMAT Verbal and Math are valid while the GMAT writing utility is not as valid (Sireci & Talento-Miller, 2006). The GMAT writing test requires that undergraduate students prepare for a specific type of business writing task since their research showed that the

format differs from other standardized tests (Krapels & Brown, 1999). Although the writing test shows critical thinking skills, the style and type of writing assessed is specifically geared toward management applications (Rogers & Rymer, 1995).

Similar concerns about the GMAT apply to the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). Some business schools accept the GRE scores to expand their target to include prospective students from other fields including the sciences and liberal arts majors. Various factors affect the test-takers performance including environment, setting, and other factors, but otherwise men and women were well matched on the GRE (Gallagher, Levin, & Cahalan, 2002). The research shows that the GRE used in conjunction with other admissions criteria provides valid assessments of selecting applicants (Holland, Hoffman & Thompson, 2002). However, some researchers state that the GRE is not a valid measure for similar reasons as the GMAT including test preparation and bias(Holden, 1993).

In addition to gender considerations, age is another factor impacting applicants who take standardized tests. The 2010 GMAT statistics reveal that a large number of younger women take the exam. The GMAT taken by women 25 years and younger represented 45.5% of tests taken by women. Women between ages 25-30 account for 40.1% of exams taken by women while women over age 31 represented 14.4% of exams taken by women (GMAC, 2011). Truitt (2002) mentions that older GMAT test-takers perform better if they had an undergraduate degree in business. Studies reveal that there is no significant relationship between age and GRE score performance (Holland, Hoffman, & Thompson, 2002).

Work Experience as an MBA Admissions Criterion

Full-time MBA programs typically require students to have prior work experience. Some studies show that there is a positive relationship between work experience and academic success

based on lessons learned and added perspectives obtained from the workplace (Adams & Hancock, 2000). However, some research reveals that work experience requirements do not have positive relationships with academic performance (Dreher & Ryan, 2002). Studies show that individuals without business majors can do well in MBA programs if they have relevant work experience (Braunstein, 2002, 2006). Based on the studies, some schools are admitting students with no years or fewer years of work experience (Mangan, 2008). In addition, the research shows that the lack of work experience does not affect potential for earnings post-MBA (Yeaple, Johnston, & Whittingham, 2010).

Alternative MBA Admissions Criteria

Professional schools have varying criteria to understand the personality of applicants. In addition to using the grade point averages and Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) scores, medical schools use interviews, personal statements, and letters of recommendation (Albanese, Snow, Skochelak, Huggett, & Farrell, 2003). Some medical schools have formally implemented non-cognitive assessments to understand applicants' personality-related skills including listening and altruism (Bardes, Best, Kremer, & Dienstag, 2009; Lumsden, Bore, Millar, Jack, & Powis, 2005). Law schools also look at personal statements and recommendation letters in addition to the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), offering optional interviews. In contrast, MBA schools allow prospects to opt into additional admissions criteria including interviews and portfolio submissions. Some studies show that interviews and writing samples can be used to assess a candidate as a whole (Ahmadi et al., 1997; Yang & Lu, 2001). Some researchers also state the importance of obtaining career statements and references when assessing an applicant (Yang & Lu, 2001). Several studies look at other ways such as knowledge and skills-based assessment to measure potential, showing fewer differences between men and

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women and resulting in positive predictability of academic success (Hedlund, Wiltb, Nebelb, Ashfordb, & Sternberg, 2006). Business schools utilize credential verification processes to not only verify transcripts but to generate appreciation letters to references and prospective student recommenders, and they are able to filter out dishonest applicants (GMAC, 2008). MBA programs use these criteria to form their new classes, and prospective students strive for more creative ways to impress admissions officers.

College Choice and Enrollment Management

Understanding college choice models provides counselors with a better understanding of the process, better equipping them to help students make decisions about future educational goals (Hossler and Palmer, 2008). Research on higher education choice reflects a multi-step, decision-making process. Kotler and Fox (1985) outline a process that includes the following: forming the choice set, information gathering, establishing selection criteria, evaluating alternatives, considering influences on decision process, moving from decision to action, and post-enrollment assessment. Buyer types and learner types can be considered to identify marketing efforts by institutions while institutions determine their brand, know their competition, understand their market's needs, and develop a marketing plan (Hoyt & Brown, 2003, Lewison & Hawes, 1997). Overall, student choice is influenced by both students' individual factors and institutional factors (Hossler & Gallagher, 1984; Jackson, 1982). Hossler and Gallagher (1987) describe a three-phased model of college choice including the following phases: predisposition, search, and choice. Predisposition occurs when students decide whether to further their education past high school. Factors influencing post-high school education included socioeconomic status, background characteristics, parents' influence, peer influence, and organizational factors. The search phase occurs when students seek information about higher education options, and students

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identify a choice set of institutions. Finally, students enter the choice phase when they decide which school to attend from their choice set of institutions. I will consider Hossler and Gallager's model of college choice including phases such as deciding to continue beyond secondary education, gathering information about college choices, and selecting the school of choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Prospective students consider factors when considering to pursue post-secondary education. Factors impacting undergraduate college choice include good academic reputation, prospective positioning for careers and/or graduate school, and other factors including race, ethnicity, and social class (McDonough, 2004). McDonough describes a theoretical framework where the following occurs in undergraduate college choice: cultural capital affects choice in the level and quality of education, choice occurs in context of friends, family, and outlook (habitus), and student limits alternatives considered (1997). In understanding students' decisions to attend graduate school, Kallio (1995) identifies the factors that influence choice decisions including residency, quality and environment, work-related concerns, spouse, financial aid, and social environment.

In response to the competition for students, colleges and universities have implemented enrollment strategies. Similar to the marketing funnel, higher education institutions look at the flow of individuals as they moved throughout college choice. This model shows a point of sale at one point, shown at the end of the process (Maguire and Butler, 2008).

Figure 2.1 Traditional Enrollment Funnel

After years of applying the traditional enrollment funnel, a multi-funnel was developed to look at

the entry points and decision-making by the individual versus the institution. The revised model

shows the institutions' involvement during recruitment and admission, and the individual

remains the key decision-maker in the various phases of the funnel (Maguire and Butler, 2008).

Figure 2.2 Maguire and Butler Multiple Funnel Model
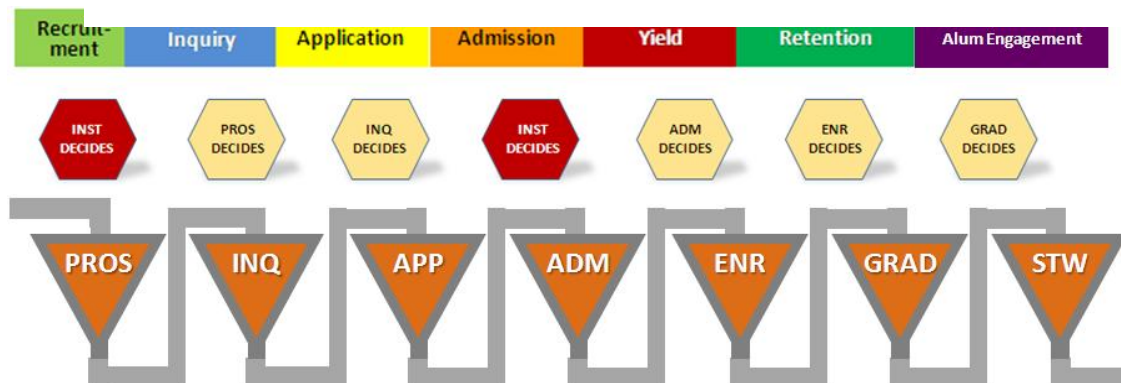
Enrollment management was first defined in 1973 by Jack Maguire, Boston College Dean of Admissions and mathematics physics professor, to grapple with the recruitment and retention issues at the college (Maguire and Butler, 2008). Maguire introduced the concept of enrollment management in 1976 with the following definition: "Enrollment Management is a process that brings together often disparate functions having to do with recruiting, funding, tracking, retaining, and replacing students as they move toward, within and away from the University" (Maguire, 1976). Maguire and Butler (2008) introduce a formula for enrollment management as $E = MC^2$. Enrollment (E) describes a community member's individual perspective. Management (M) describes the institution's perspective in engaging various communities. Community of Communities (C^2) exist when institutional community exist over time. Communities play a role from recruitment through post-graduation in the model. Table 2.3 provides the enrollment management matrix outlined by Maguire and Butler.

Figure 2.3 Maguire & Associates Model: $E = MC^2$

	MANAGEMENT			
C^2	**UNDERSTAND**	**INSPIRE**	**ENGAGE**	**LEVERAGE**
JOIN	Understand why and how individuals select and join (or do not) this community.	Inspire individuals to select and join this community.	Engage with individuals as they select and join this community.	Leverage the efforts of individuals as they select and join this community.
FULFILL	Understand why and how members fulfill (or do not) their needs in this community.	Inspire members of this community to more meaningfully fulfill their needs.	Engage members of this community to more effectively fulfill their needs.	Leverage the experience of members of this community as they fulfill their needs.
REPRESENT	Understand why and how members of this community choose to (or not to) represent the school.	Inspire members of this community to represent the school.	Engage members of this community as they represent the school.	Leverage the efforts of members of this community as they represent the school.
STEWARD	Understand why and how members choose to (or not to) steward the school.	Inspire members of this community to steward the school.	Engage members of this community as they steward the school.	Leverage the efforts of members of this community as they steward the school.

M-Axis / E-Axis / ENROLLMENT

How Prospective Students Gather Information About Graduate Programs

Students considering graduate programs make various decisions when investigating programs, selecting schools to apply to, and deciding which school to enroll in. Some studies show that students target prestigious programs while others prefer low cost (sometimes this means closer to home) and high quality graduate school options (Ivy & Naudé, 2004; Punj, 1978). Punj (1978) notes that graduate students consider programs at or below their ability level as well as other factors including class selection, attractiveness of campus location, and post-grad employment opportunities. Other factors considered when applying to graduate school include residency status, quality and other academic environment factors, work-related concerns, spousal considerations, and campus social environment (Kallio, 1995). Institutional ranking, starting salary, current employment status, work experience, expected employer financial assistance, children, and GMAT scores play important roles in attendance decisions (M. Montgomery, 2002).

Kotler (1997) describes the phases of consumer behavior in relation to prospective buyers including problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. Some researchers apply Kotler's model when evaluating the decision process of prospective graduate students, especially during the information search and evaluation of alternatives phases (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Moogan, Baron, & Harris, 1999). (Rapert, 2004) mentions that prospective MBA students seek quality academics and extracurricular experiences when considering business programs.

In addition to the quality of education, cost remains a major factor considered by women applying to graduate programs. (Arbaugh, Bento, & Hwang, 2010) mention that cost is a major deterrent for women interested in MBA programs. The 2003 GMAC Global MBA Survey

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results show that women consider financial aspects (costs and aid), location, and curriculum

more than men (Halpern & Lebovich, 2003). A combination of cost and family responsibilities

emerged as factors deterring women from applying to MBA programs, and research conducted

shows than women receive less financial aid than men (Joy, 2000).

Given these considerations about the economic resources required, the following section

will describe how different individuals, groups, and resources may impact the decision of

prospective students during the application and enrollment process. These individuals include

faculty, family/friends, graduate school alumni, school staff, and others. In addition, this section

will also provide other informational resources consulted by prospective students when

considering programs, including rankings publications.

Faculty and Staff

Given the growth of business schools, MBA programs attract faculty to not only recruit

and to educate high caliber students but to come up with creative ways to approach business

issues from an academic perspective (Lorange, 1996). Prospective students not only look at

business school faculty's reputation, but they also consult their undergraduate faculty when

seeking advice about potential schools to apply to and to enroll in during the evaluation period.

Undergraduate students who have mentoring relationships with faculty members are more likely

to perform well academically and to seek advice outside of class (Busch, 1985; Campbell &

Campbell, 1997). Some research shows that students in private schools are more likely to have

relationships with undergraduate faculty outside of class, and students who consider their

experience to be focused on more academic, intellectual and research-based efforts have more

interactions with undergraduate faculty (Kuh & Hu, 2001). Students who continue to seek

faculty interaction may evaluate MBA programs in terms of faculty access and collaborative

opportunities (Ferris, 2002). Rask & Bailey (2002) found that faculty role models have a major impact on minority and women undergraduate students' decision to pursue a major. Prospective MBA students may be attracted to both senior faculty members that are established in their fields and junior faculty who are considered to be innovators in their areas of expertise (B. K. Boyd et al., 2010).

Faculty members are not the only influencers undergraduate students consult with. Pre-professional advisors counsel undergraduates, and the recognition of their profession reveals their roles as academic counselors for undergraduate students and professional advisors who provide information about graduate school (Brott & Myers, 1999). Advisors may be faculty or student affairs staff, and they may share information relating to other issues such as financial aid and other college resources. Advisors not only inform undergraduates about academic courses and major requirements but may also function as friends, teachers or mentors that impact career and graduate school decisions (Kadar, 2001; Yarbrough, 2002). Kuh (2009) calls for college student affairs professionals to actively engage with students to help them through their undergraduate years, assisting undergraduates to bridge the gap between previous, lacking academic resources and the academic rigors of college.

Not only do undergraduates value their experiences with staff in their undergraduate years, but they also consider interactions with potential MBA program staff. Interactions with MBA program staff impact the decisions made by prospective students. Ivy & Naudé (2004) report that prospective MBAs value the interaction not only with lecturers but also with business school marketing staff. At the 2008 GMAC Industry Conference, Babson College shared their MBA admissions interview process, noting the following touch points by staff and prospective students: admissions events and informational interview at the request of applicant, face-to-face

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or phone interview after application screen at the request of applicant, phone or face-to-face discussion with career services staff (aimed at career switchers and job seekers), and third interview (for merit or scholarships) or waitlist interview with senior administrators, faculty, or staff as necessary (GMAC, 2008). This process shows that prospective students may have the opportunity to interface with school faculty and staff, and this may impact their decisions to enroll in MBA programs.

Family and Friends As Influencers In Graduate Program Selection

Like faculty and staff, parents may influence their children's decisions to attend graduate school. Moogan et al. (1999) found that undergraduate students rely on parental advice when they evaluate potential schools to apply to and to enroll in. Other studies show that parental influence does not impact decisions to attend MBA programs but may impact the decision to pursue a doctoral degree (Mullen, Goyette, & Soares, 2003). Differences arise due to varying definitions of parental influence. However, other research argues that parental influence and socioeconomic status do directly impact decisions (Stolzenberg, 1994). In looking at business and general management undergraduates, research shows that accounting majors valued parental and friends' influence while finance majors valued quality of education more than parental and friends' influence (Kim et al., 2002). Students also seek the advice of friends and family when they are considering higher education options (Friedman & Smith, 1993; Kellaris & Jr., 1988; Roberts & Allen, 1997; Stewart & Felicetti, 1991).

Alumni As Champions and Influencers For Graduate School

Students consider their interactions with graduate program faculty and staff, but they also consider their experiences with alumni. Research shows that students listen to alumni when considering which school to enroll in. Prospective students consider alumni advice, feedback,

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and career paths when evaluating graduate programs (Delaney, 2008). Some schools collect information from their graduating students via an exit survey, and this information helps both admissions officers and administrators modify their program marketing accordingly (Nelson & Johnson, 1997; Williford & Moden, 1989). Ainsworth & Morley (1995) found that alumni valued the following during the MBA program: knowledge gained, behavior changes and outcomes, and potential for career change and development. These items match some of the qualities prospective students consider when evaluating graduate programs. Prospective students consider alumni networks when considering MBA programs, thinking of opportunities to connect during and after the program. (Forret & Dougherty, 2004) conducted a study and found that networking helps promote career success for MBA alumni. Alumni feedback and testimonies can help MBA programs market their offerings, and alumni can be instrumental in facilitating change to promote schools' competitive advantages (Glynn & Wood, 2008). Alumni are also instrumental in the admissions process as mentioned in the 2008 GMAC Annual Industry Conference, serving as interviewers for on-campus and regional admissions interviews at institutions like Stanford Graduate School of Business (GMAC, 2008).

Professional Groups

In addition to identifying key individual influencers who can impact students' graduate program decisions, MBA Programs can also form relationships with professional and networking groups. MBA programs can align themselves with organizations that have goals and mission objectives to promote MBA education. The Forte Foundation, an organization providing resources and events to encourage women in business, includes the following among others in their mission: motivating young women to prepare for a business career, increasing women's access to education and business networks, educating women on the value of an MBA,

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supporting women financially in their business education, and raising awareness of the impact

women can make on business and on society/culture/environment/economy (Forte, 2011). In

addition, MBA programs can form alliances with diversity groups that include a female

constituency including the National Black MBA Association and the National Society of

Hispanic MBAs. One of the National Black MBA Association's mission goals is to "increase

awareness and facilitate access to graduate management education programs" (National Black

MBA Association, 2011). Similarly, the National Society of Hispanic MBAs outlines the

following in their mission statement: Increase the number of Hispanics graduating from MBA

schools through scholarships, awareness programs and mentorship (National Society of Hispanic

MBAs, 2011). By fostering relationships with these groups, MBA programs can participate in

events and forums where they can interact with prospective MBA students.

Rankings As Data Points For Considering Graduate Programs

Individuals and groups are not the only resources consulted by prospective MBA

students. According to the 2001 GMAC Global MBA Survey, 95% of 5000 recent MBA

graduates noted that rankings were the most influential media source in forming their

impressions. Vidaver-Cohen (2007) describes the various models including the RepTrak

Framework, used to assess Forbes most reputable companies, to assess the reputation of

academic programs outside of just rankings. Even though business schools may be positively

viewed by stakeholders, MBA programs will not build their reputations if they are obscure and

not visible in various media (Boyd et al., 2010). Older students found an MBA program's

reputation to be less important (Arbaugh et al., 2010). Business schools use rankings to set

themselves apart from other schools, referring to the tier of rankings they fall into such as the top

10 or top 25. Some studies reveal that rankings attempt to show differentiation among MBA

programs, but the information may not be very different (Policano, 2007). Research shows that rankings are considered by prospective students, and students look at the following rankings noted in the order of most attention: *Businessweek, U.S. News, The Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, and The Economist* (Sauder & Espeland). Other studies state that rankings do not accurately reflect the strengths and weaknesses of business schools. Researchers suggest that prospective students look at a variety of rankings in addition to other sources of information to obtain a well-rounded perspective about options (Corley & Gioia, 2000; Sauder & Espeland).

Marketing Materials and Admissions Events For Graduate Program Promotion

Students evaluate the marketing materials provided by MBA programs to assess their alternatives. Prospective MBA students look at printed brochures and mailers when considering programs (Ivy & Naudé, 2004). Marketing and advertising of MBA programs remains a key aspect in building the school's brand. Marketing also includes the other media promotions and events implemented by MBA programs (Hawawini, 2005). In addition to school-specific admissions events, MBA admissions staff can attend various conferences targeting current and prospective MBA programs, providing another level of visibility for business schools (National Black MBA Association and National Hispanic MBA Association). Viewbooks play a key role in marketing schools to prospective students (Hartley and Morphew, 2008).

Outreach Efforts To Specific Target Groups Including Women

Admissions officers work to increase the diversity on their campuses by targeting minority groups and providing them information about MBA programs (Onzono & Carmona, 2007; Swann, 1998). (Friga, Bettis, & Sullivan, 2003) identify women as a key target group by business programs since more women are entering the business world. Researchers found that although men benefit more from career and compensation benefits following an MBA, women

undergo a transformational change being immersed in the masculine nature of business programs. Women benefit by obtaining new understanding of the world and managing relationships (Kelan & Jones, 2010; Simpson, 2006). MBA programs that do not target women may be missing out on enrollment opportunities, so researchers call for adjustments to MBA marketing strategies and curriculum to attract more women (Arbaugh et al., 2010). (Millett, 2003) calls for schools to provide services targeted for women including career services to meet the needs of female students. To attract more women, strategies may include a women's leadership center, flexible programs, financial offerings (including fellowships, scholarships, and bursaries) (Ibeh, Carter, Poff, & Hamill, 2008).

If MBA programs aim to reach out to a more diverse population, providing opportunities for non-business majors to apply will be important (Eddey, 2009). Zumeta & Raveling (2003) note that high potential students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) undergraduate majors choose to pursue MBA degrees instead of other professional degrees. To attract a large base of prospective students, engineering graduate programs are reaching out to women by targeting students interested in social or education-related applications, broadening the criteria to include motivation and leadership, bridging programs to provide gaps in prerequisites and core courses, providing graduate peer mentoring and fostering relationships with departments and faculty that have courses taken by women (Bhatia & Amati, 2010; Cuny & Aspray, 2000). Math and science majors are more likely to enroll in graduate programs followed by social and behavioral science majors while business undergraduates were least likely to enroll in graduate programs (Heller, 2001). Research shows that women consider economic returns less than men by selecting undergraduate majors that may not pay high salaries, so women may

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have diverse backgrounds that may not be typical majors for entering the MBA pipeline (Eide & Waehrer, 1998).

Theoretical Framework

Motivation Theory

With women's access to higher education, motivation theory applies to the applications process for undergraduate and graduate school. Motivation is applied to performance in education. Alderman (2004) describes "optimum motivation" as showing motivation to excel in a classroom setting. Optimum motivation occurs when students not only strive for their own achievement but also strive for the achievement of others. The existence of intrinsic motivation ultimately results in the search for intrinsic worth gained from the educational experience (Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2005; Carr, 2003).

Motivation impacts the achievement of both individual and group goals. Maslow (2000) describes individuals' desire and motivations to achieve physiological goals, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. He describes how self-actualized people's work becomes part of the self, promoting personal development and improving the world. The motivation theories above were noted in research and literature focusing on women's achievement in higher education (Maslow, 2000). Motivators may be traced to performance goals, implications of feedback on self-perceived ability, role of self-awareness and beliefs, role of volition, and profitability from learning (O'Neill & Drillings, 1994).

Motivation theory can apply to students who consider and attend graduate school. Using Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior to predict graduate school intention and application behavior(Ajzen, 1991). Ingram, Cope, Harju, & Wuensch (2000) found that students' attitudes about graduate school and the prospect of their future careers matter to prospective students.

DeMartino & Barbato (2003) report that female MBA alumni have a higher preference than male counterparts for family-related motivators, and Fels (2004) notes that women attribute success to luck or serendipity and shift credit elsewhere. Studies show that women's confidence and self-concept of math are more likely to improve during college for those who study the following: engineering, business, physical sciences, and other technical majors while women who major in the arts or humanities reduce their confidence (Sax, 1994). Hyde & Kling (2001) note that some women face stereotype threat, peer sexual harassment, and gender bias, and they describe the importance of motivation on educational achievement.

Some studies show that women are motivated by an ethic of care, where a caring self can be practical and responsible (Skeggs, 1997). Skeggs (1997) notes that women have self-identities that capitalize on previous female roles and that lead potentially to feelings of anxiety and doubt. Gilligan (1982) links an ethic of care to women's moral development, yet Tronto (1993) mentions the risk in differentiating between male and female experiences to promote inferiority among women. Studies show that women are more likely to follow career paths that follow traditional female occupations (Nevill & Schlecker, 1988). A study on women's risk aversion shows weak, positive relationships between high adventure women and nontraditional careers, showing data of women delaying marriage and children with self-perception of androgyny (Douce & Hansen, 1990).

Some research shows that women pursue studies and careers that have social or helping characteristics, and career goals may influence the decision to pursue an MBA. Female undergraduates who participate in community service express improvement in their academics (including graduate school attendance), life skills, and social responsibility (Astin, L. J. Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Astin & Sax, 1998). Both men and women express increased self-confidence

through faculty support and interactions, but women who felt that faculty did not take them seriously experienced declines in math ability, health, and degree aspirations (Sax, Bryant, & Harper, 2005).

Career Theory

Career theorists describe the role of the individual's choice in career movement. Holland (1997) states that career choice reflects an individual's personality, resulting in similar personalities and histories among individuals in a particular occupation. According to Schein (1993), individuals follow major stages of career movement: 1) growth, fantasy, and exploration, 2) education and training, 3) entry into the world of work, 4) basic training and socialization, 5) gaining of membership, 6) gaining of tenure and permanent membership, 7) midcareer crisis and reassessment,8) maintaining momentum, 9) disengagement, and 10) retirement. For prospective MBA students, the education and training phase may involve planning and sub stages since financial preparation and academic planning to complete prerequisites impact the decision. Schein goes on to speak about career anchors that are self-concepts guiding career choice, showing how skills/talents, motives, and values become intertwined. Gysbers et. al (1998) suggests questions career counselors can use to account for the role of gender in career history including but not limited to: the messages received as a child to pursue interests that were traditional/untraditional that were traditional/untraditional as a woman and the occupational dreams that were discarded and why. Overall, Holland (1997) and Schein (1993) both describe how individuals have career goals that are influenced by various factors, and these goals drive the rationale behind their behavior.

Summary

The research shows the opportunity for MBA programs to target female, prospective MBA students. However, business schools must provide information and support that will help encourage female, prospective students to apply and enroll in MBA programs. Prospective MBAs need to understand the business school admissions criteria to ensure that they plan ahead to meet the application requirements. Business programs must understand the various individuals, groups, and media resources that can influence prospective students' decisions about their reputations and brands. In order to ensure prospective MBAs obtain program information, business schools must understand how to build relationships with other influential groups and resources that engage regularly with prospective female MBA students. To ensure that they meet the needs and expectations of prospective MBA students, business schools must not only understand the graduate school decision process, but MBA programs must also leverage admissions events and foster relationships with both prospects and influencers. Previous research reveals the factors and considerations by prospective MBA students in previous quantitative and qualitative studies, yet the studies do not provide detailed processes and experiences shared by women who successfully enroll in MBA programs.

The conceptual framework of this study takes into account motivational theory and career development theory. Motivational theory is key in understanding the drivers that women consider to pursue business graduate degrees. These theories in conjunction with previous works outlining the purpose of higher education institutions will be considered throughout the study.

My study aims to identify the processes current female MBA students experience in investigating programs, applying to MBA schools, and deciding on an MBA program. By using the critical incidents technique (CIT) via in-depth interviews, the study will map out the

experiences of female MBA students during the various decision points relating to graduate

application and enrollment. Although the previous studies provide insights into the factors and

issues faced by female MBA students, the findings from these studies do not address the gap

between fewer female MBA students and business schools' efforts to attract more women.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

Introduction

While there are studies that identify the factors women consider when applying to full-time MBA programs, few studies explore the processes and experiences of women who successfully applied to and enrolled in full-time MBA programs. Hence, this study looked at the processes that successful women engage in when they investigate, apply to, and enroll in MBA programs. Unlike most of the previous literature on this topic, this study incorporated the use of qualitative methods including interviews and content analysis to understand the decision-making process of women who applied to and were admitted to full-time MBA programs.

In this chapter, I will discuss the study's research design, data collection methods, and data analysis. Then, I will outline steps to ensure that the study is conducted carefully and ethically.

Research Questions

The research questions that will guide the study include the following:

1. What processes do women engage in when making their decision to apply to a full-time MBA program?

- Gathering information about MBA programs

- Exploring alternatives to MBA programs

- Selecting to apply to MBA programs over/in addition to alternatives

2. What are the perceived costs and benefits of an MBA program?

3. If there are perceived barriers in applying to MBA programs, how do women overcome those barriers?

4.   What can business schools do to help women during their decision-making process and in

the transition to the program?

For the purpose of this study, top ranked means full-time MBA programs that rank in the top 25

of two or more rankings in major publications including *U.S. News and World Report, Wall

Street Journal, The Economist,* and the *Financial Times*. (Please see Appendix A for the

"Research Questions, Methods and Analysis Matrix")

Research Design

This qualitative methods study looked at the processes and experiences that female MBA

students experienced as they investigated and decided to apply to MBA programs. The study

had a three-phase approach. Phase one focused on collecting and analyzing content from

marketing materials including the websites and brochures. Observations at recruiting events

provided data about how business school representatives market MBA programs to prospective

students. Using findings from phase one, phase two included the development of student surveys

and the student interview protocol to understand the processes and experiences of specific

students. Data collection was carried out during this phase. Finally, phase three included the

triangulation of multiple methods that will result in the development of findings and

recommendations.

Figure 3.1 Project Phases

PHASE ONE
Content Analysis
Data Analysis
Recruiting Events

PHASE TWO
Student Survey
Student Interviews

PHASE THREE
Findings
Triangulation
Recommendations
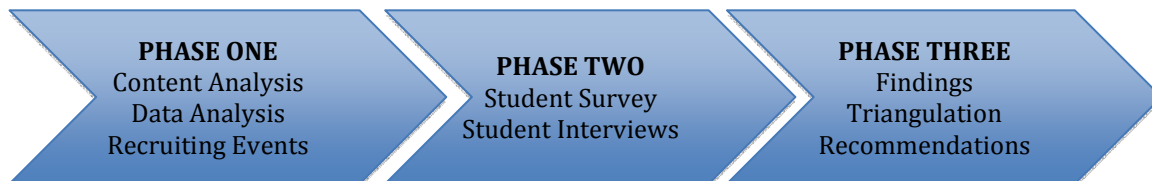
QUALITATIVE METHODS WITH SMALL QUANTITATIVE COMPONENT RESEARCH APPROACH

Rationale For Design

Creswell (2009) describes survey design as a way to provide quantitative description of trends by studying a sample of a population. Select pre-existing survey questions from the Forte Foundation questionnaire were incorporated into an online survey. The questions of the Forte Foundation survey provided demographic information, undergraduate major, previous employment, school selected, post-undergraduate work, and other cost and benefit information. Forte survey questions were used to develop the student interview protocols. In some cases, questions were reworded to inquire about topics calling for more concrete examples.

A web-based survey was developed and administered in order to collect additional information and to also identify prospective interview participants (Nesbary, 2000; Sue & Ritter, 2007). Questions similar to the ones in the Forte Foundation survey were used with first-year female students ages 22 – 30.

Creswell (2009) describes a sequential transformative strategy where a second phase builds on an earlier phase, typically to collect data from underrepresented groups and to call for action. This analysis allowed me to focus on the application processes and experiences of women in MBA programs. Using this strategy provided me with a way to collect student perspectives and voices in qualitative research while looking at trends in quantitative research. Using the two methods allowed me to understand more about female MBA students given the smaller percentages in the program, and using various methods were feasible given the availability of pre-existing data sets and accessibility to students. Conducting qualitative research provided me with the ability to look for patterns and themes, allowing me to collaborate with participants (Creswell, 2009). Interactions with materials and participants allowed me to

understand history, contexts, and backgrounds. Using various qualitative methods provided me with a holistic way of understanding how students make their decisions to apply to MBA programs.

These interviews elicited details relating to the decision-making processes for considering specific MBA programs. Member checks gave participants an opportunity to verify the accuracy and validity of the data, to add additional information, and to allow participants to remain engaged following the interview. Interviews captured the experiences of female MBA students using their own language and stories. Participants shared what they considered during the decision-making process to pursue MBA programs that may not be captured through the close-ended survey questions found in previous studies. This method can be accessible, free, descriptive, and unobtrusive, providing participants with the ability to openly share information without the fear of exposing a participant's deepest thoughts (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Previous studies of MBA programs have used surveys, interviews, and focus groups to provide data representative of various populations, but the studies lack the depth and detail to understand application processes and applicant experiences.

Content analysis of websites, recruitment materials along with observations of recruitment events were conducted, and the findings informed the development of the online survey for first-year female MBA students. Krippendorff (2004) defines content analysis as a research technique for making valid inferences from texts to the context of their use. I will triangulate the student interviews with both open-ended and closed-ended questions, the content analysis, and the online questionnaire.

Site Selection

Two business schools in the top 25 with two or more rankings publications (including *The Economist, Businessweek, Financial Times,* and *US News and World Report*) were studied: Elite School and High Value School. These schools are in the top 25 schools and have high GMAT, GPA, and quantitative admissions requirements. Using a value-added approach to selecting an MBA program, Kiang and Fisher (2008) included the two schools in their study where they classified schools into self-organizing map networks (SOM). By using ANOVA analysis, they generated cluster means using GPA, GMAT, acceptance rate, starting salary, employed at graduation, employed after three months, tuition and fees, length of program in months, and *US News and World Report* rankings. The Elite School has higher GPA, GMAT, starting salary, tuition and fees and rankings while being more selective. See SOM cluster means differentiating the Elite School category versus the High Value School category in Table 3.1 below. In looking at 2009 Employment Reports for both schools, the Elite School had a higher full-time annual salary maximum. The top consulting firms such as Bain & Company, McKinsey & Company, The Boston Consulting Group, Deloitte Consulting, and Monitor Group are highly-selective about where they do campus recruiting. In 2009, the Elite School reported that four out of five top consulting firms recruited their students, which the High Value School reported that one out of the five consulting firms recruited students that same year. The High Value School and the Elite School in this study were established around the same time, attracting students from undergraduate schools of similar quality, and are located in the same state. Although these schools have students from similar undergraduate institutions, the career track varies by school. These campuses represent a cross section of highly-ranked public and private universities but have large variation in the number of female admits. This variation is important

in evaluating accessibility to business programs and varying admissions criteria. Data from the study looked at the point of entry and incoming access. The schools also have similar admissions requirements as noted on the *Businessweek* rankings website.

Table 3.1

Matrix of Business School Admissions Requirements

	Undergrad Transcript	GMAT Score	Resume and Work Experience	Essays	Interviews	Letters of Rec	Kiang and Fisher (2008) Cluster Means
Elite School	Very Important	Very Important Mean 710 Median 710	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	GPA: 3.44 GMAT: 696 Acceptance Rate: 0.27 Starting Salary: $109,109 Employed At Graduation: 0.79 Employed After 3 Months: 0.92 Tuition and Fees: $38,475 Length (months): 18.94 USN&WR ranking: 9
High Value School	Very Important	Very Important Mean 690 Median 690	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	Very Important	GPA: 3.34 GMAT: 654 Acceptance Rate: 0.46 Starting Salary: $84,854 Employed At Graduation: 0.71 Employed After 3 Months: 0.91 Tuition and Fees: $28,792 Length (months): 21.91 USN&WR ranking: 34

Source: http://www.Businessweek.com/bschools/rankings/full_time_mba_profiles/ and Kiang and Fisher (2008).

Table 3.2 suggests that the percentage of male and female applicants accepted to the two schools ranges from 31% (Elite School) to 27% (High Value School). The "Female Full-time

students in newest entering class of 2010-2011" column represents the percentage of women

enrolled in the full-time MBA cohort from 2010-2011. The "Male and Female Applicants

accepted into class of 2010-2011" column represents the percentage of men and women who

were offered a space in the 2010-2011 cohort.

Table 3.2

Business School Summary (2010)

	GMAT Required	Percentage of Female Full-time students in newest entering class of 2010-2011	Percentage of Total (Male and Female) Applicants accepted into class of 2010-2011	Percentage of Total (Male and Female) Admitted Applicants enrolled in class of 2010-2011
Elite School (Total apps = 2458)	Yes	31%	29%	52%
High Value School (Total apps = 1983)	Yes	27%	22%	50%

Source: http://www.Businessweek.com/bschools/rankings/full_time_mba_profiles/

(Businessweek, 2011). Each year, business schools provide survey information to be included in

full-time MBA rankings calculated by *Businessweek*.

The Elite School was established in the 1930s as part of a state system that is in the first-

tier public university system. Regents authorized the MBA degree in the late 1930s, and the

Elite School focused on graduate education by offering masters and doctoral degrees in business

beginning in 1970. The Elite School offers varied MBA offerings including the full-time MBA,

several dual degree MBA programs, the fully employed MBA, and the executive MBA. According to the Elite School's class profile for the class of 2012, women represented 33% of the full-time class. The class of 2013 has a target class size of 360. The Elite School's MBA program ranked in the top 25 business schools by *Businessweek, The Economist, and U.S. News and World Report.*

The High Value School began in 1920s. It offers one undergraduate degree, and various masters programs include the full-time MBA, the part-time MBA, the executive MBA, and other programs. According to the High Value School's class profile, women represented 27% of the MBA class of 2012. The High Value School's 2012 cohort has a class size of 216 (High Value School, 2011). The High Value School's full-time MBA program ranked in the top 25 business schools in *The Economist and U.S. News and World Report.*

Selecting these institutions allowed me to compare how study participants' responses are the same or different across the two MBA programs. The rankings reveal big differences. Various rankings take into consideration factors including but not limited to faculty:student ratio, faculty prestige, donations, GMAT, undergraduate GPA, career placement, and others. Rankings are considered since the study looks at the point of entry of incoming access and not how schools propel students into varying career paths. This is not a study of first and second tier rankings since various factors are considered. Although schools have students from similar undergraduate institutions and similar GMAT scores, they may differ in other factors including faculty prestige, development donations and entry-level MBA career offerings.

The rankings have different criteria. *Businessweek* is based on a web survey sent to MBA graduates, looking at information including teaching quality, career services, MBA recruiter ratings, and faculty research ("How we come up with the rankings," 2006). *The*

Economist administers two surveys for students/alumni and for schools, and criteria include career services, diversity of recruiters, faculty quality (ration, full-time faculty, etc.), student assessment, student quality (GMAT, work experience), student diversity, educational experience, salary increase, and potential to network (Clarke, 2011). The Princeton Review is based on school reported data and student survey data including career services, recruiting, professor teaching abilities, faculty prestige, faculty accessibility, graduation percent, GMAT, UGPA, curricula, salary, and environment ("User's guide to our business school rankings," 2011). *US News and World Report* collects data from peer assessments conducted by deans and admissions directors, and criteria includes placement, overall ranking, acceptance rates, student selection including GMAT and UGPA, and salary (Morse & Flanigan, 2011). The full-time MBA business programs hold the following rankings as of April 17, 2011:

Table 3.3

MBA Full-Time Program Rankings

	Businessweek – 2010	*Economist – 2010*	*Financial Times (Global) – 2011*	*U.S. News And World Report*
Elite School	Top 25	Top 25	Rank 26-30	Top 25
High Value School	Rank 26 - 50	Top 25	Rank 50 - 75	Top 25

(Businessweek, 2011; Economist, 2011; Financial Times, 2011; Princeton Review, 2011; US News & World Report, 2011). The rankings data is extracted from the various publications as of 5/19/11.

Access to Population and Recruitment of Study Participants

During the months of March and April 2012, content analysis of marketing brochures and websites were done for two top 25 business schools. The Elite School is a public institution, and the High Value School is a private institution. Online surveys were emailed by business school offices to all 170 first-year, full-time female MBA students enrolled at the Elite School and the High Value School. Fifty-nine out of the 170 (35%) female students at both schools completed the survey. Of the 59 students (out of 170 students) who completed the survey, the researcher conducted 33 (56%) student interviews with all interested students. Interviewed students were provided an outline of the study, the benefits and risks, and the requirements and compensation for involvement. Volunteers were asked to sign an informed consent form before the interviews took place. Students selected for the interviews were compensated with a $25 gift card.

The interview sample was limited to first-year, currently enrolled, female students in the full-time MBA programs. First-year MBA students had been selected since they were closest to the application experience as they had gone through the process within the last year. Students were interviewed in the second term after they had experienced at least one set of midterms so this timing provided them some opportunity to settle into the program. In addition, most full-time MBA students tend to be more diversified in terms of career goals (career explorers, career switchers, and career enhancers) as opposed to part-time students who may mainly be career enhancers (Shiek and Siegert, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

Maslow and Azjen's motivation theories and Schein and Holland's career theories were used to analyze the data that emerged through the interviews and to understand the influencers that women considered in pursuing business graduate degrees (Ajzen, 1991; J. L. Holland, 1996;

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Maslow, 1970; T. E. Moore & Halfond, 1986; E. H. Schein, 1974). This information provided

background into why women selected business school over other options. Using goal-setting

theory, individuals set specific, clear, and realistic goals with appropriate feedback. Applying

the college choice model, Moore & Halford (1986) conducted a study rating factors considered

by prospective MBA students, and these factors aligned with Hossler & Gallager's model

(Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). My research looked at the intersection between motivation theory,

career theory, and college choice. I created a coding scheme based on these three theories to

analyze the interview transcripts. The following diagram (Figure 3.2) encompasses the various

frameworks to be applied.

Figure 3.2 Theoretical Framework For The Study
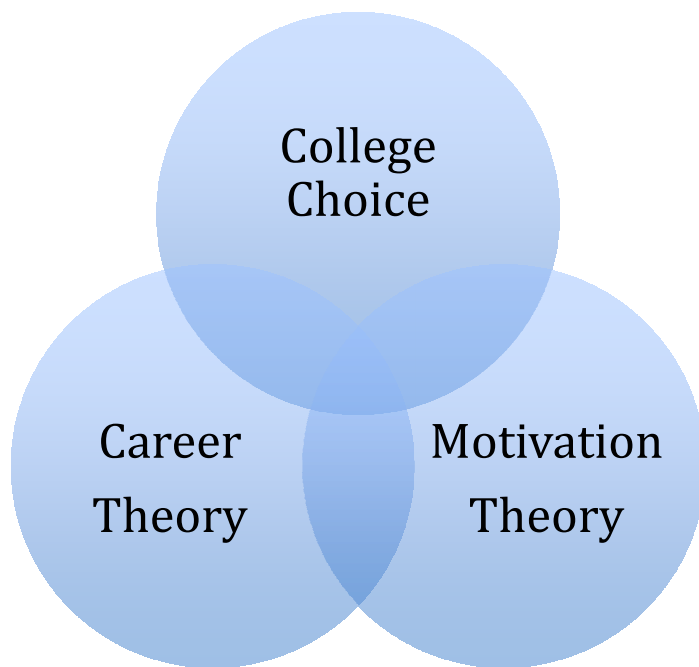
Table 3.4 demonstrates the various theoretical frameworks and how they aligned with the study. Hossler and Gallagher's choice factors were compared to other factors noted by Moore and Halford, motivation examples from Maslow and Azjen, and career items from Holland and Schein to form the theoretical framework of the study.

Table 3.4

Theoretical Framework Summary

Hossler & Gallagher's College Choice Factors	Moore & Halford's Factors Considered By Prospective MBA	Maslow (Motivation)	Azjen (Motivation)	Holland (Career)	Schein (Career)
Student Characteristics		Esteem needs, desire for achievements and competence, self-actualization, desire to know		Preferences for activities; vocational identify tied to goals, interest, and skills	Control associated with autonomy and independence; desire for pure challenge to overcome barriers
School Characteristics	General academic reputation, AACSB accreditation, location, social atmosphere				
Significant Others	Reputation in business community				
Educational Activities	Teaching reputation, fields of study offered, special programs, electives, teaching reputation, research reputation of faculty, program flexibility, number of courses required, campus activities				
Student Values		Desire for reputation and prestige	Behavior function of beliefs attributed to outcome	Values tied to occupation and rewards	Service dedication to cause
Student Search Activities			Feel more control if availability of resources and opportunities are perceived		Seeking security and stability, which may include general management competence and entrepreneurial creativity
Choice Sets	Placement record				
Courting activities	Financial aid and/or cost				

<center>**DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**</center>

PHASE ONE

  Phase one included the data collection and analysis of website and marketing materials

and recruiting event observations.

Figure 3.3 Phase One Methods

PHASE ONE
Content Analysis
Data Analysis
Recruiting Events
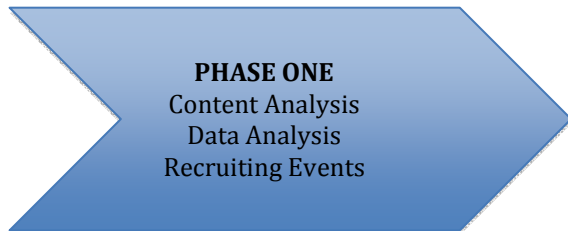
<center>**Website and Admissions Marketing Materials**</center>

Data Collection

  I did a content analysis of the websites and admissions marketing materials provided by

the two schools. To obtain marketing materials, I requested materials using online request forms

and by contacting admissions offices directly. I also collected materials at recruiting events,

when available. The marketing materials and website information collected were documented in

a listing of marketing materials and websites, outlining the source and the date accessed in

Appendix G. Web pages were printed.

Data Analysis

  The materials were xeroxed, printed, scanned, and annotated for the analysis, using tools

such as Visio, iAnnotate, and other annotation tools. Then, the materials were analyzed for

themes and categories. I examined websites and marketing materials to understand how these

materials addressed the themes and categories that emerged from the interviews. Krippendorff

(2004) suggests describing word/keyword frequencies to identify categories, which I did and the

<center>53</center>

key words were women, female, MBA, career, academic, alumni, cost, and benefit. I conducted

systematic coding based on the various factors as noted in Hossler and Gallagher's college

choice model (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). These were student characteristics, school

characteristics, significant others, educational activities, student values, student search activities,

college search for students, choice sets, and college courting activities. I looked specifically at

items relating to admissions processes and resources, costs, and benefits.

This information was used to inform both the student questionnaire and interview

protocol. In the student interviews, I determined if students directly referred to these materials as

key informational resources. In addition, I used both textual and graphical analysis of the

materials to see how they used content and photos to appeal to prospective female students based

on the number of women in the materials. These themes and categories were documented, and

the researcher reviewed the student interview transcripts to see if these materials were cited by

the interview participants (Merriam, 1998). I analyzed the websites of the two schools where I

conducted my interviews to determine whether items from the interviews were addressed by the

schools' websites and marketing materials. Documents referenced during the interviews and

analyzed during the content analysis were added to the process flow to show where in the

process these materials were consulted by students as reported in the interviews.

Recruiting Events

Data Collection

I registered online and/or by phone with the business school admissions offices to attend

recruiting events including information sessions and/or webinars. I also registered and attended

the Forte Foundation's MBA Forum. During these events, I took notes about topics covered and

observations during the event. If materials were provided at the events, I collected those items

and logged them into the marketing materials and website list as referenced in the content

analysis section above. When possible, I recorded portions of the events for later reference.

Following the events, I wrote reflections about the recruiting event.

Data Analysis

I compiled my notes and reflections after attending all the events. I coded recurring

content areas covered during the events which were admissions criteria including GMAT, GPA,

essays, and interviews. I created matrices that showed similar topics such as GMAT, GPA,

interviews, and essays. I then verified whether the content covered in the events were also

referenced on schools' websites and marketing materials, and I made a note of the alignment or

lack thereof.

PHASE TWO

Phase two involved the data collection and analysis of an online student survey and

student interviews.

Figure 3.4 Phase Two Methods

Student Survey

Data Collection

An online survey was created to collect information from female, first-year, full-time

MBA students. Information and a link to the online survey were included in an invitation packet

for prospective student participants that were sent out by the admissions and/or student affairs

offices. Students willing to participate in the study were asked to complete the online survey that included demographic information, background, and educational history. On the survey, students were asked whether they would like to participate in an interview for the study.

I piloted the student survey and the interview protocol with a group of various female graduate students at a local school that is not one of the data collection sites. Their feedback helped me to refine my survey in the following ways: I reviewed questions from the Forte survey to identify questions that I could replicate in my questionnaire, allowing me to better triangulate the quantitative data with the qualitative data from the interviews.

Student Interviews

Data Collection

One of the challenges of this study was to identify and gather a sufficient number of students. This challenge was a result of the limited number of women in MBA programs. The goal was to interview at least 10 students from each school. In order to entice students to complete the survey, a $25 gift card was raffled with a target of at least 10 students per school to receive a gift card. All students who indicated an interest in being interviewed participants were interviewed and compensated with a $25 gift card.

I worked with key contacts in admissions, career services, and student affairs at the various business schools to identify potential interview participants. Due to the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), I did not have access to student contact information directly. I drafted an email that the business school contacts sent to their first-year female students about the study along with a link to the online survey described above. If the students were interested in participating in the interview, then they indicated their willingness to be interviewed on the student survey. I created and sent an invitation packet including study

information, consent form, and other documents to respondents via email. The Elite School and the High Value School sent the study announcement to the school's women's business associations to identify potential participants. I contacted all the students who expressed an interest in being an interview participant. The schools arranged a room onsite where I conducted the interviews for students during the school day. The women's club leaders at both schools also distributed an email with a link to the student survey URL.

Once the surveys were completed, I reviewed questions from the Forte Foundation online survey to identify questions that I worded similarly in my online survey and interview protocol. I conducted interviews using the critical incident technique with current, full-time, first-year MBA female students (ages 22 – 30) at the business schools. Flanagan (1954) introduced the critical incident technique (CIT) as a procedure aimed at identifying key decision points and milestones by taking reports from qualified observers focusing on: general aims, plans and specifications, collection of data analysis, and interpretation and reporting. A critical incident is an activity or occurrence that has made a contribution, either positively or negatively to influence their thoughts on an experience. Participants typically described their experiences by telling a story. I analyzed the interview data to identify factors, resources, and influences that women identify as being involved in selecting, applying to, and enrolling in an MBA program. Those factors include costs, benefits, and considerations when applying to MBA programs.

To describe and map the admissions processes for the student participants, this study included an open-ended, semi-structured interview lasting up to 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted in person with an interview protocol approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The interviews were audio recorded, and the researcher also recorded notes during each session. The interviews were conducted at an approved space at each campus. Seidman (1991)

describes the strength of an interview in its ability to elicit stories. Storytelling is "a meaning-making process." Thus, students were asked to share academic and career stories during the interview.

Questions about students' MBA program investigation process and program decision-making were asked. I encouraged a dialogue with the students during the interview. As part of the interviews, I asked full-time MBA students about photos in the materials in terms of male/female ratios as well as any content that refers to female students' involvement in the aspects of the business program or business school environment.

I gave students the interview transcripts for their review (member check). The participants were asked to review the transcripts and to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions. They were allowed to clarify or to modify areas that they felt required clarification or changes. Students also were encouraged to contact the researcher via email or phone if they had additional comments. Participants received $25 gift card for participating in the interview.

All the audio recordings were transferred from my digital recorder to my laptop and to external drives. The interviews were transcribed, and then coded to identify themes and categories. Notes before, during, and after the interview sessions were transcribed and examined. Electronic files were stored on my home PC, external drives and virtual storage space, and physical files were stored in a project binder in my home.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was done by comparing themes that were identified in the transcribed interviews across participant responses. I conducted systematic coding based on the various factors as noted in Hossler and Gallagher's college choice model (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). I analyzed the information for patterns across school sites. The analysis of the data from

the interviews revealed recurring themes and categories, and this information was verified during

the content analysis. The units of analysis were recorded on a matrix where I captured common

themes and categories. The chart (Table 3.5) that follows shows how I operationalized the

theoretical framework in my methods as I conduct my research.

Table 3.5

Theoretical Framework Operationalized

Hossler & Gallagher's College Choice Factors	Description	Example	Protocol
Student Characteristics	Required or valued attributes in successful students	Quantitative courses; GMAT scores; UGPA; undergraduate major	Academic background
School Characteristics	Required or valued attribute in desired schools	Environment, Safety, Facilities, Proximity to Centers	School Offerings And Services
Significant Others	Influencers involved in decision-making process	Influence from family, friends, acquaintances, others	Information Sources
Educational Activities	Required or valued activities for prospective students	Courses, clubs/organizations, international study	School Offerings And Services
Student Values	Values or beliefs that students hold in school/program choice	Leadership, team orientation, individual achievement	Personal Characteristics/Attributes
Student Search Activities	Activities involved in school/program choice	Website, marketing materials, events, talking to others	Information Sources and School Marketing & Recruitment
College Search For Students	Activities colleges/universities engage in for outreach and recruitment	Website, marketing materials, events, social media	School Marketing & Recruitment
Choice Sets	Which schools prospective students apply to and accept	Rankings, program specializations, career placement	School Offerings And Services
College and university courting activities	Activities schools engage in for attracting admitted students	Recruitment packages, outreach by university (faculty, staff, etc.), financial package	School Offerings And Services

I used process flow diagrams, and I marked common parts of the process flows that

emerged during the interviews. Process maps were used to show transparency and opportunities

for quality improvement (Deming, 1982; Hall and Johnson, 2009).   Specific flow charts

including swimlane diagrams, or diagrams showing movement of process from one stakeholder

to another, were used to show the interaction of different individuals and groups during

processes. For similar milestones or points that emerge from multiple interview participants, I

used computer-diagramming tools such as Visio to create process flow diagrams. See Appendix

I for process flow diagrams.

PHASE THREE

     Phase three involved the triangulation of data from all the data collection methods.

Findings and recommendations were compiled following the analysis.

Figure 3.5 Phase Three Methods

PHASE ONE	PHASE TWO	PHASE THREE
Content Analysis	Student Survey	Findings
Data Analysis	Student Interviews	Triangulation
Recruiting Events		Recommendations
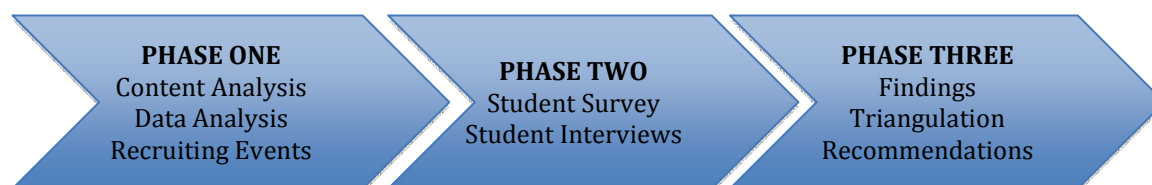
Triangulation

     This analysis allowed me to identify trends and statistical information to identify key

attributes and characteristics of successful women in MBA programs, and I compared this data to

the student survey results. The analysis provided background information that informed the

qualitative research design elements. I then compared the themes found in the content analysis

including academic, extracurricular, and career benefits, recruiting events, and the interviews to

look for recurring themes and influencers in the quantitative analysis. Using the qualitative

methods to understand trends and to map out detailed processes, I identified what women

consider as they decide to and enroll in specific MBA programs.

Credibility

The credibility of the study relates to the objectivity of the researcher, which is important throughout the research. The researcher puts in place a check to maintain the accuracy of the data by asking each participant to review and to verify the transcription of her interview. The credibility of the research depended partially on the assumptions of the researcher. Bias was minimized through the use of clearly defined processes and rationales for data collection methods, analysis, and presentation. My knowledge about MBA programs given my past position at an MBA school helped me in understanding the full-time MBA student population, but I may have had biases resulting from my experiences having worked with part-time students. To counter my researcher bias, I grounded my research in motivation and career theory while incorporating data sources collected by others and use of member checks.

Patton (1999) states that triangulation contributes to the credibility of the study. Therefore, I made every effort to use objectivity in the study using the triangulation of interview information, online survey results, and content analysis of websites and marketing materials. I checked for my assumptions by piloting the interview protocols and the demographic survey.

Generalizability

The data can be generalizable only in so far as the sample is representative of a wide enough set of participants. Although there were students from one tier of ranked business schools, female students from varied ethnic groups from each school were targeted, providing a multiplicity of perspectives. Business schools were asked to send the questionnaire to all women in the full-time MBA program. Lewis & Ritchie (2003) describe generalizability as a way to connect findings to populations outside the study while building theory for universal application. Generalizability may be challenged given the small sample size of students interviewed. The in-

depth information from the qualitative analysis was reviewed in conjunction with the quantitative components of the study.

Internal Validity

The study used multiple methods of data collection: interviews, online questionnaires, and content analysis. Although I used triangulation by looking at the content analysis with the interview results and survey, I created other strategies to promote validity and reduce bias (Maxwell, 2005). Triangulation with the different methods reduced the chances that students are providing answers that were politically correct or expected. Interviews provide context for participants' comments while connecting their experience with others to make meaning from experience (Seidman, 1991).

Participants were actively involved in the data collection and analysis process. They had the option to review the interview transcriptions and were encouraged to provide feedback to ensure validity. I also maintained the confidentiality of the participants to ensure the validity of the study by replacing names with codes.

Reliability

To document the process for replicability and for audit purposes, I created a project schedule that documented the tasks conducted during the research study. By describing the processes used throughout the study, other researchers could also follow a similar series of steps. Replication confirms a study while ruling out competitive theories or models (Lamal, 1990). Not only did I create interview protocols and survey questions, but I also provided documentation about the development, administration, and analysis of the data collected. The documentation included the procedure and notes during the research processes. See Appendix H.

Lewis & Ritchie (2003) describe the internal checks on the quality and interpretation of the data while ensuring that the reader receives information about the research process. These steps can provide detailed documentation for future researchers who would like to conduct similar research.

Ethical Issues

To make sure that the participants' information and identities remained confidential, I implemented security checks during the data collection and analysis processes. The information was scanned and reviewed to ensure that names were not included on the information. The information provided during the interviews could have brought both positive and negative experiences, so I reiterated the confidentiality that was involved. I developed, provided, and explained an informed consent form to the participants so participants understood the purpose of the study and implications of their participation in the research. It was important that I maintained the anonymity of the participants during the transcription and analysis of the documentation. Each participant was given a code, and students were referred to anonymously in the findings documentation. Interviews can be emotional, so context and consequences associated with storytelling were considered during internal review board approvals (McIntosh & Morse, 2009).

The digital recordings for this study were maintained in a secure manner, ensuring that the information during the data collection and analysis was kept confidential and untraceable. Confidentiality was an issue as interview participants may not have wanted to be identified.

Given the nature of the study, the business schools could not ethically share student information with me. Universities remained in compliance with FERPA regulations by initially sending study information to students. By students then opting in to completing the online

survey and agreeing to participate in the interviews, the researcher then obtained personal

information only after the students provided permission.

Summary

By conducting qualitative analysis of recruiting events, interviews, and marketing and

website content, I found information that could inform business schools about the women who

attend top 25 programs. The data collection methods and analysis were used to gather and to

interpret the data. The next section covers the findings from the research conducted at the

various sites.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings

Introduction

During the months of March and April 2012, content analyses of marketing brochures and websites were done for two top 25 business schools. Through data collection, the goal was to answer the following research questions:

1. What processes do women engage in when making their decision to apply to a full-time MBA program?

- Gathering information about MBA programs

- Exploring alternatives to MBA programs

- Selecting to apply to MBA programs over/in addition to alternatives

2. What are the perceived costs and benefits of an MBA program?

3. If there are perceived barriers in applying to MBA programs, how do women overcome those barriers?

4. What can business schools do to help women during their decision-making process and in the transition to the program?

Findings were identified by looking for general categories of information and recurring words and themes such as admissions, criteria, costs, and benefits. In the brochures, websites, surveys, and interviews, the researcher looked for general categories and keywords using predetermined categories from the review of college choice literature. The second round of coding marketing materials included categories of responses that came from survey and interview transcripts. For the interviews, the researcher transcribed the recordings, looked for general categories of information relating to admissions and recurring keywords. Then, categories were created based on the literature. Recurring items were coded accordingly. In

interviews, the researcher looked for patterns and themes that emerged in the areas of processes, resources, cost/benefit analysis, overcoming barriers, and other areas relating to admissions. Major findings emerged when data represented greater than or equal to 50% of the participants during the analysis of both interview and/or survey data.

In this chapter, I first describe the sample and the demographics in the study. The findings and conclusions will be presented in the following manner in response to the four research questions:

1. Sample and Demographic Background

2. Processes and Resources for Recruitment and Admissions

3. Costs and Benefits In Pursuing MBA

4. Rationale For Overcoming Barriers To Doing An MBA

5. Action Business Schools Can Take To Increase Female Applicants

Sample and Demographics Background

The focus of this study was to examine the decision making process of how females students in the first-year of the full-time MBA program decided to apply to business programs. The full-time MBA admissions offices at two business schools sent an email to first-year female MBA students and invited them to participate in an online survey and to be interviewed by me. Of the potential 170 female, first-year students, a total of 35% (59 students) responded to the online survey, and 56% (33 of the 59 survey respondents) agreed to participate in face-to-face interviews. The Elite School had 24% of the total female students who completed the survey. However, the High Value School had a higher response rate as 52% of the females in the class completed the survey.

Both schools initially sent out communications about the survey via email from admissions offices. However, students in the High Value School promoted the study to one another on their Facebook page dedicated to the women in their class, which may have increased the participation rates in the survey and interviews. In addition, discussions and emails among the High Value School students also generated an awareness of the study. As a result, survey respondents in the High Value School were doubled. In addition, interview participants from the High Value School represented 27% of women in the class as opposed to the 14% of women in the Elite School class.

Table 4.1

Numbers of Female Students Who Participated In The Study

	Elite School		High Value School		Total
Total 2013 Students	360 (Male and Female)		223 (Male and Female)		
Female 2013 Students	104	29% of entire class	66	30% of entire class	170
Survey Respondents	25	24% of females in class	34	52% of females in class	59
Interview Participants	15	60% of survey respondents	18	53% of survey respondents	33

Students in the study ranged from age 24 through 30. The majority of the students who participated in the survey were age 27 (25.42%) and age 28 (27.12%). The average age of students in both full-time MBA programs at both schools was 28. See Table 4.2 to see the age distribution of survey participants.

Table 4.2

Age Distribution of Female Survey Respondents

AGE	Number of Female Survey Respondents in Elite School	Number of Female Survey Respondents in High Value School	Total Number of Female Survey Respondents At Both Schools	Percent of Female Survey Respondents At Both Schools
Average Age Of 2013 Class	28	28		
Survey Sample				
24	0	1	1	1.69%
25	2	3	5	8.47%
26	3	4	7	11.86%
27	7	8	15	25.42%
28	9	7	16	27.12%
29	2	7	9	15.25%
30	0	2	2	3.39%
Prefer Not To Say	2	2	4	6.78%
TOTAL	25	34	59	

The students surveyed came from a variety of backgrounds and majored in diverse subjects in their undergraduate degree programs. Seventy-five percent (45 out of the 59) of women surveyed noted that they did not apply to any other masters or doctoral programs previously. The majority of the students surveyed had business/management (23.73%) or social science undergraduate majors (22.03%). A higher percentage of surveyed students from the Elite School had undergraduate business/management majors (17%) while a higher percentage of students from the High Value School had social science majors (17%). However, the Elite School and the High Value School have similar percentages of business/management, engineering, and computer science students in their class as a whole.   Although the survey participants' percentages are lower compared to the schools' class statistics, there is representation across all the undergraduate degree categories.

Table 4.3

Undergraduate Degrees of Female Survey Respondents

Undergraduate Degree	Number of Female Survey Respondents at Elite School	Percentage of Total Elite School Percent in Class of 2013 School Profiles (Male and Female)	Number of Female Survey Respondents at High Value School	Percentage of Total High Value School Percent in Class of 2013 School Profiles (Male and Female)	Total Count of Female Survey Respondents	Percentage of Female Survey Respondents
Business or Management	10	31%	4	30%	14	23.73%
Social Sciences	3	10%	10	0%	13	22.03%
Humanities	3	7%	4	32%	7	11.86%
Not Provided	4	0%	2	0%	6	10.17%
Engineering	2	16%	3	19%	5	8.47%
Economics	3	21%	1	12%	4	6.78%
Fine Arts	1	?	2	0%	3	5.08%
Science or Mathematics	0	4%	3	0%	3	5.08%
Computer Science	0	4%	2	7%	2	3.39%
Other	1	7%	1	0%	2	3.39%
TOTAL	25	100%	34		59	

The students in the full-time MBA programs had varying levels of work experience and supervisory experience. The majority of the students surveyed have one to four years of experience (45.76%) and five to nine years of experience (45.76%). The average years of work experience at both the Elite School and the High Value School was five years as noted in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Post-Baccalaureate and Supervisory Work Experience Years of Female Survey Respondents

Post-Baccalaureate Years of Work	Elite School Number of Survey Respondents	High Value School Number of Survey Respondents	Number of Female Survey Respondents	Percent of Female Survey Respondents
Average Years of Class of 2013	5 years	5 years		
Survey Respondents				
1 to 4 years	12	15	27	45.76%
5 to 9 years	12	15	27	45.76%
Not Provided	1	4	5	8.47%
TOTAL	25	34	59	

Supervisory Years Of Work	Elite School Number of Survey Respondents	High Value School Number of Survey Respondents	Number of Female Survey Respondents	Percent of Female Survey Respondents
Less Than 1 year	13	16	29	49.15%
1 to 4 years	8	12	20	33.90%
5 to 9 years	3	2	5	8.47%
Not Provided	5	0	5	8.47%
More Than 9 Years	0	0	0	0.00%
TOTAL			59	

The students represented varying backgrounds in industry and function. The majority of the women surveyed want to stay on the same schools' coast post-graduation, including 60% (15/25) students in the Elite School and 70.4% (19/34) in the High Value School. This indicates that location may be tied to the decision in selecting a school. Of the functions self-reported, the top three functions of surveyed students include marketing (11.86%), consulting (8.47%), and finance (8.47%). The 2013 class also had similar numbers of students in Marketing, Consulting, and Real Estate. The majority of survey respondents came from these areas, yet the Elite School showed additional representation in investment banking as noted in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Pre-MBA Job Function of Female Survey Respondents

Pre-MBA Job Function	Number of Elite School Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents in Elite School Class	Number of High Value School Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents in High Value School Class	Number of Survey Respondents	Percent of Survey Respondents
Other – Marketing	3/104	2.88%	4/66	6.06%	7/170	4.12%
Consulting	3/104	2.88%	2/66	3.03%	5/170	2.94%
Not Provided	3/104	2.88%	2/66	3.03%	5/170	2.94%
Other – Finance	3/104	2.88%	2/66	3.03%	5/170	2.94%
Advertising	2/104	1.92%	2/66	3.03%	4/170	2.35%
Business Development	0/104	0%	4/66	6.06%	4/170	2.35%
General Management or Leadership Development	0/104	0%	4/66	6.06%	4/170	2.35%
Accounting or Controller	2/104	1.92%	1/66	1.52%	3/170	1.76%
Operations or Production	2/104	1.92%	1/66	1.52%	3/170	1.76%
Sales	1/104	0.96%	2/66	3.03%	3/170	1.76%
Administration	0/104	0%	2/66	3.03%	2/170	1.18%
Human Resources	0/104	0%	2/66	3.03%	2/170	1.18%
Investment Management or Research	1/104	0.96%	1/66	1.52%	2/170	1.18%
Market Research	2/104	1.92%	0/66	0%	2/170	1.18%
Product Management	0/104	0%	2/66	3.03%	2/170	1.18%
Engineering	0/104	0%	1/66	1.52%	1/170	0.59%
Investment Banking	1/104	0.96%	0/66	0%	1/170	0.59%
Lending	0/104	0.%	0/66	0%	1/170	0.59%
Merchandising or Retail	1/104	0.96%	0/66	0%	1/170	0.59%
Real Estate – Development	1/104	0.96%	0/66	0%	1/170	0.59%
Strategic Planning	0/104	0%	0/66	0%	1/170	0.59%
Other	0/104	0%	2/66	3.03%	0/170	0%
TOTAL	25/104	24%	34/66	51.53%	59	34.71%

Processes and Resources for Recruitment and Admissions

Research Question One: What processes do women engage in when making their decision to apply to a full-time MBA program?

Survey participants were asked to rate a Likert scale question from One (*Not* a Factor) to Four (*Definitely* a Factor) about 18 resources and activities during the application process including website research, rankings publications or websites, school's marketing materials, spoke to school representatives, school info session (on site), school info session (web), campus tour of schools, department visits, organization event attendance (e.g. Forte), graduate school fair attendance, speaking to professors about MBA programs, speaking to boss about MBA, speaking to work colleagues about MBA, speaking to counselor about MBA, speaking to family member(s) about MBA, speaking to friends about MBA, social media, and other.

At both schools, the following were the top five activities or resources consulted as a *definite* factor: rankings, website, spoke to family, spoke to friends, and attended information sessions. Fifty-two percent of survey respondents at the Elite School (13 out of 25) and 38% at the High Value School (13 out of 34) mentioned that the school's marketing materials are *somewhat* a factor while four students from the Elite School and eight students from the High Value School stated that marketing materials were *definitely* a factor. Sixty-four percent (21 out of 33 interview participants) noted that they received marketing materials, and 27% (nine of out 33 interviewed students) mentioned that brochures are a waste.   When the researcher looked for electronic versions of the full-time MBA brochures, the Elite School had a downloadable PDF of the brochure on their website while the High Value School prompted prospects to fill out an online form to request more

information. See Table 4.6 for information about students' consideration of marketing materials.

Table 4.6

Participants' Consideration of Marketing Materials In Application Process

	Number of Interviewees Who Mentioned Receiving Marketing Materials	Elite School		High Value School		Survey Total
		Somewhat a Factor – Survey	Definitely a Factor – Survey	Somewhat a Factor - Survey	Definitely a Factor – Survey	
Number of Survey Participants	21/33 (64%)	13/25 (52%)	4/25 (16%)	13/34 (38%)	8/34 (24%)	38/59 (64%)
Percent of Total		13/59 (22%)	4/59 (7%)	13/59 (22%)	8/59 (14%)	38/59 (64%)

One student mentioned:

> I am an environmental person so I think it [brochure] is a waste. I tried not to take one to reduce the environmental footprint. Sometimes I felt awkward at a fair not grabbing one so sometimes I did. I would have it and look at it but for the most part I tried to avoid it.

Across the board for the top five resources and activities, the students from both schools reported similar rankings across the different activities or resources in both the survey and interviews. In the interviews, 100% of the students mentioned the use of websites in their exploration process citing the importance of usability and information accessibility.   Published rankings consistently ranked highly among students in the Elite School and the High Value School in both the survey (61% total) and interviews (79%).

Although information session survey rankings are similar for both schools, a higher

percent of students in the Elite School (67%) attended information sessions compared to students

in the High Value School (44%). They mentioned that information sessions were helpful in

understanding the application process, hearing from students and alumni, and the Q&A. These

students commented that location and professional presentations were considered, and others

noted that they considered fit by looking at the other prospective students in the information

session. The researcher attended a Forte Foundation Forum MBA Tour event and observed that

students collected marketing materials and spoke to business school representatives. Following

the Forte event, a student said, "I went for a class visit and info session. Since I had already

applied, it was to confirm what I hear from other people." Another student noted the value of an

information session as a way to interact with the school:

> For the school I was waitlisted on, I attended an information session and I spoke
>
> to one of the people in charge of the department that I was interested in. It was
>
> more of just trying to show proof that I was really interested in the school. And to
>
> get an idea, I think I did actually ask during the info session if there is anything
>
> that I could be working on as I'm waitlisted . . . something I can do if I reapply to
>
> make me more competitive.

In addition to interactions with current MBA students, family members are key

influencers. Although Mullen, Goyette, and Soares (2003) report that parental education does not

influence a student's entry into an MBA program, the study showed that family opinions do

impact the decision-making process. Out of the 33 interview participants, 52% (nine students

from the Elite School and eight students from the High Value School) said that their family

members had MBAs and/or other advanced degrees.   One interviewee emphasized the

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importance of her mother's encouragement of graduate school: "No matter what, my mother will say a phrase...It would just stay with me… You have to go and get a graduate degree." Another student described her interaction with her father's MBA reunions as a trigger to consider MBA programs:

> He [father] would talk about his classmates and his interactions with them today. I had a chance to go with him to two of his reunions in Boston since I was living there for school. I just had seen the people he knew and the connection they still had 30+ years later. That was a big incentive to me knowing that he had been in a classroom with classmates that are now CEOs of top companies and had gone on to do incredible things professionally and personally. That was a trigger.

For students whose parents did not have an MBA, siblings served as influencers. One student described her brother as the gateway to thinking about MBA programs:

> It started with my brother. At that time, he was a first year student getting his MBA. My parents were in real estate and are from Taiwan and do not have a lot of experience with higher education. It was through my brother. From him, I talked to people in MBA schools, and I did my own research online actually.

Unlike the students noted above, three students experienced lack of support from family members. Two students describe their parents' lack of support given the family pressure to start a family. One student shared her interactions with her grandfather:

> I think the benefit to coming to an MBA program and being exposed to people with different backgrounds helps you figure out what you want to do. And then the third piece was from a financial perspective being able to. This is funny because when I told my grandfather why I wanted to get an MBA, he was like,

Why? You have a good job. Why would you want to do that?" He still does not

really understand.

Friends were consulted by 61% of interviewees (10 from the Elite School and 10 from

the High Value School out 33 students), and the most valued information included application

tips and business school information. A student described the value of getting honest insights

about MBA programs, "I wanted to get my information from students that were not going to be

quoted on a website so that is why I talked to friends of friends." Social media, discussion

forums, and blogs were used by 30% of interviewees (four from the Elite School and six from

the High Value School) to solicit information from friends. One student describes her

experience:

> I think I also put it [feedback about business school] also on my Facebook and
>
> Gmail chat status, and the emails just poured in just through my network of
>
> friends. I already have a lot of friends in business school and they have friends in
>
> business school. I probably talked to five or six people about that.

Work colleagues serve as influencers in terms of role models, but 70% of interviewees (10 in the

Elite School and 13 in the High Value School) mentioned that they would not speak about their

interest in MBA programs in the workplace. A student describes a colleague who she observed:

> I think maybe I was also influenced by a colleague of mine. We were at a small
>
> boutique agency together ...We were really good friends but he was pursuing his
>
> MBA and working full-time which was I knew was unheard of but then watching
>
> him go through it also how he was applying that in the context of work, he was
>
> dynamic and was such a dynamo. That was like "Oh my gosh I need to do that as
>
> that could only amplify the caliber of work I'm doing."

In the previous case, the student described the value of speaking with a colleague who is currently experiencing the program. Seeing her colleague benefit in the program and being able to interact with the student/colleague regarding the experience provided the female student insights to the MBA experience. See results for the top five activities and resources in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7

Top Five Activities and Resources Consulted During the Applications Process

| | Elite School | | High Value School | | Total | Total |
	Survey	Interview	Survey	Interview	Survey	Interviews
Rankings	16/25 (64%)	14/15 (93%)	20/34 (59%)	12/18 (67%)	36/59 (61%)	26/33 (79%)
Spoke To Family	11/25 (42%)	9/15 (60%)	16/34 (47%)	8/18 (44%)	27/49 (55%)	17/33 (52%)
Website	10/25 (40%)	15/15 (100%)	19/34 (59%)	18/18 (100%)	29/49 (59%)	33/33 (100%)
Spoke To Friends	8/25 (32%)	10/15 (67%)	14/34 (41%)	10/18 (56%)	22/49 (45%)	20/33 (61%)
Information Session	7/25 (28%)	10/15 (67%)	11/34 (32%)	8/18 (44%)	18/49 (37%)	18/33 (55%)

Business schools must brand and market their MBA programs given the competitive marketplace to attract prospective students (Argenti, 2000). When interview participants were asked to identify rankings publications, the most consulted rankings sources were *US News, Financial Times, Forbes, Businessweek*, and *The Economist*. Students consistently mentioned their review of rankings as a way to compare MBA programs. One student said, " When I was applying, there were a couple things I looked at. No matter what, I looked at rankings. That was my top choice." Another student clarified that rankings were important since they were an indicator of post-program career enhancement: "Since the rankings of school relies heavily on

the post-graduation performance of the graduates, I would say if the students can be marketed easily, then it is beneficial to the school."

One hundred percent (15 out of 15) of interviewees from the Elite School said that they consulted the school websites, citing that that they were searching for the following information: program, curriculum, culture, statistics (women, job, class profile data), clubs, international opportunities, and career-related information. Thirty-nine percent of interview participants (13 out of 33 students) mentioned student profiles and videos while fifty-eight percent of interview participants (19 out of 33 students) mentioned connecting with current students via student ambassador contact pages. Sixty-seven percent of the Elite School interviewees and 50% of the High Value School interviewees mention student ambassadors. Student ambassadors are defined as current MBA students who prospective students can interact with, typically by phone, email, or in person during business-school related admissions events. Prospective students value interactions and connections with student ambassadors. These experiences provide prospects with a context to imagine themselves in a student's position. Although some women according to the interviews do not want to be specifically recruited via female-targeted outreach programs and events, being able to have an interpersonal exchange with an ambassador provides a level of personalization.   Rather than focusing on women's special needs, prospective female students value speaking with student ambassadors male or female about aligning contexts and interests in areas such as industry, functions, life balance, or other personal situations.

Both the Elite School and the High Value School deliver similar content regarding MBA admissions information, class profile, curriculum, and student life. Both schools describe the advantages of living in the city. In addition, they both have webpages that combine photos, videos and textual content. Both full-time MBA landing pages have rotating photos, yet they

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portray different images. The High Value School shows the following rotating photos on the page: seven men and two women in suits, a room of primarily men in suits networking, a mix of men and women on a trip abroad in non-business attire, and a male faculty member speaking with a female and a male student. The overall photos on the site showed students in business attire. Comparatively, the Elite School also had rotating photos including the following: female in class wearing business casual, a mix of male and female students playing sports, a photo of men and women on campus in casual and business casual attire, and male and female students in class wearing business casual attire.

In addition, the High Value School shows individuals in business-like environments primarily while the Elite School portrays both business and casual experiences. Unlike the High Value School, the Elite School has a photo of a woman in business attire adjacent to their call for the prospective student to contact them. The High Value School has a photo of a male in a business suit on their contact page. Moreover, the Elite School urges students to get to know the school by introducing their staff members. They show the accessibility of their admissions and career services staff by showing both male and female staff members with a short biography and their contact information. In contrast, the High Value School has a contact page that directs students to a general address and phone number for the admissions and career services offices. The Elite School contains more photos and personalized characteristics that appeal to women. For example, the Elite School also includes a section about student life including significant other quotes. Both schools show images of men only in the class profile and financing pages of their website. Student videos and profiles were shown by both schools, yet the Elite School profiled female students more compared to the High Value School. However, the Elite School showed only men on their dual degree, student life and student clubs pages while the High Value

School showed the first year experience page with a male student and the second year experience page with a female student. The majority of the photos used by both schools reflected more images of men throughout the websites.

To analyze the accessibility and content of student ambassador pages, the study involved a review of the schools' web pages. The Elite School had a link to a student ambassador's blog from the section where prospects can get to know the school. The blog page includes a header showing two men and three women all with backpacks. For the blog entry, a female student has a profile photo next to her blog entry title. Within the body of her blog entry, she addresses her experience in the MBA program. She describes her personal life, the resources and support available at school, the career center resources, and involvement in student organizations. She also mentions that she is the first female president of the club for the upcoming year. Her call to action urges prospective students to come and visit the school.

In comparison, the High Value School has a visit page that contains information about student ambassadors. There is a general description of the ambassador program where prospective students are paired with a first-year student when they visit. On the upper right hand corner of the page, there is a video of male student in a suit. In order to see a female ambassador, a prospect must scroll down the page. The first female ambassador on the page is listed second. Information about her undergraduate institution, hometown, previous industry, future industry, and email is displayed. To obtain more information about the student ambassador, the prospective student must click on the "More" link. The detailed profile included information about why the student chose the school, favorite experiences, and what the student wished they knew about business school before attending.

Both study schools' student ambassador webpages had similar messaging about the student experience, and the prospective student can see the schools' call to action for a visit. However, the way the webpage content addressed the experiences differed in format and in content. The student from the Elite School used a narrative format by describing her experiences in the blog. She cited very specific, personal experiences to describe student life. On the other hand, each student from the High Value School presented his or her information in a Question and Answer (Q&A) format. Although the Q&A content was written in the first person using I, the answers were shorter and were separated by questions. Also, the student photos in the Elite School showed students in business casual attire while the students in the High Value School were dressed in business attire. When female interviewees were asked about the student ambassador content, they valued the ability to contact students easily as well as students' stories. However, they mentioned that they would like to see more photos of women in prime areas of the webpages, which required less scrolling through the pages.

See Table 4.8 for information about student profile, video, and student ambassador interest.

Table 4.8

Interview Participants' Mention Student Profiles, Videos, and Student Ambassadors

	Elite School		High Value School	
	Number of Interviewed Students Who Mentioned Profiles and Videos	Number of Interviewed Students Who Mentioned Ambassador	Number of Interviewed Students Who Mentioned Student Profiles and Videos	Number of Interviewed Students Who Mentioned Student Ambassador
Number of Interview Participants	6/15 (40%)	10/15 (67%)	7/18 (39%)	9/18 (50%)
Percent of Total Interviewees (33)	6/33 (18%)	10/33 (30%)	7/33 (21%)	9/33 (27%)

To understand the importance of business school interaction with applicants, the survey included a Likert scale question from one (*Not* A Factor) to three (*Definitely* A Factor) on about 10 campus activities during the application process including the admissions department, financial aid department, career services department, student clubs/organizations, research centers at business schools, student services/affairs office, alumni association, speaking to professors in MBA program, and speaking to other staff at business school. Interviewed students listed interactions with specific business school departments as *somewhat* a factor. The top five groups that students interacted with in terms of frequency are: admissions, student clubs/organizations, career services, alumni association, and financial aid. See Table 4.9 for a summary of business school department interaction.

Table 4.9

Top Business School Departments Consulted During the Applications Process

	Interviewees mentioned	Elite School Survey		High Value School Survey		Total Survey	
		Somewhat A Factor - Survey	Definitely A Factor - Survey	Somewhat A Factor – Survey	Definitely A Factor - Survey	Somewhat A Factor – Survey	Definitely A Factor – Survey
Admissions Reps	Elite School: 15/15 (100%) High Value School: 18/18 (100%)	12/25 (48%)	4/25 (16%)	11/34 (32%)	8/34 (23%)	23/59 (38%)	12/59 (20%)
Career Services	Elite School: 15/15 (100%) High Value School: 18/18 (100%)	4/25 (16%)	2/25 (8%)	6/34 (18%)	1/34 (3%)	10/59 (17%)	3/59 (5%)
Alumni Association	Elite School: 15/15 (100%) High Value School: 18/18 (100%)	3/25 (12%)	2/25 (8%)	6/34 (18%)	2/34 (6%)	9/59 (15%)	4/59 (7%)
Student Clubs or Organizations	Elite School: 8/15 (53%) High Value School: 8/18 (44%)	8/25 (32%)	4/25 (16%)	9/34 (26%)	3/34 (9%)	17/59 (29%)	7/59 (12%)
Financial Aid	Elite School: 2/15 (13%) High Value School: 0/15 (0%)	5/25 (20%)	2/25 (8%)	1/34 (3%)	0/34 (0%)	6/59 (10%)	2/59 (3%)

Interviewed students mentioned key business school groups, yet the survey results showed that smaller percentages of that wider group of students actually felt interactions with these groups were less influential. All the interviewees mentioned the importance of admissions representatives, yet surveyed students from the Elite School and the High Value School reported the following: 39% of students reported admissions as *somewhat* a factor (12 from the Elite

School and 11 from the High Value School) and 20% of students reported admissions as *definitely* a factor (four from the Elite School and eight from the High Value School). When admissions departments were consulted, students noted that application tips and requirement information were most helpful. A student said that it would be of real value to speak with admissions officers "or someone in the program who could give me insights into classroom life." Another student described how admissions officers helped her in the application process: "By the second time around, I spent some time with the admissions representatives that were there asking some questions I had to help prepare for the essay writing I was going to be doing." Two students mentioned that they found it helpful to speak with admissions officers when they were waitlisted, and they obtained feedback about providing a more competitive application. A negative experience with admissions impacted a student's view of a school: "I understand that I was admitted in the last round and there were so many steps to go through, but I would say that the service I obtained after admissions … [left] room for improvement."

Although 100% of interviewees mentioned career services, the survey shows that students reported varying levels of career services as a factor. Regarding career service ratings, survey respondents from the Elite School and the High Value School provided results where only a third of students showed those services to be *somewhat* of a factor (four from the Elite School and six from the High Value School), and only two students from the Elite School and one from the High Value School noted career services as *definitely* a factor. When asked what they wish they knew about MBA programs before applying, interviewees shared said that they would have done more research relating to career service offerings and placement information. Fifty-eight percent of students (seven from the Elite School and 12 from the High Value School) mentioned that looking for career service offerings and employment statistics were important. More

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students from the High Value School described how they would have looked at the companies that hire at the school, noting that information may have impacted their final decisions. During one interview, a student shared, "I was also looking at full-time placement rates and increase in salary, internships, that kind of thing." Another student stated the importance of the career center as a resource from the perspective of a current student:

> I really talked to them about the culture at the school, how they felt their classmates supported them, their career services, and how they helped them. I was considering changing careers so that was really important to me.

Bledsoe and Oatsvall (2009) describe that alumni career success may be seen as an indicator of a school's value. Although the alumni network seemed to be important to students in the interview and was mentioned by all the interviewees, only nine of the 59 survey respondents said the alumni network is *somewhat* a factor (three from the Elite School and six from the High Value School), and two from the Elite School and two from the High Value School mentioned alumni are *definitely* a factor. A student cites key factors in choosing a school including alumni and mentions it twice:

> I would say that obviously the reputation of the school, the alumni, the strength of the alumni base, and the areas of strength within the MBA program...was important to me in addition to having the well rounded experience and going to one of the top 15 schools.

One interviewee from the Elite School and three from the High Value School acknowledged the value of an alumni network, but they note the limitations of speaking with older alumni given the changes in programs, application process, and the job market over time. Therefore, students

preferred speaking to younger alumni about recent application, program, and job market outcomes.

Almost half of interviewees (eight from the Elite School and eight from the High Value School) mentioned that they were drawn to club offerings and student organizations to expand networking opportunities and to explore career options. However, 28% of students (17 out of 59) shared that clubs and student organizations were *somewhat* a factor (eight from the Elite School and nine from the High Value School) while 12% (seven out of 59) students reported clubs as *definitely* a factor (four from the Elite School and three from the High Value School). A higher percentage of students at the Elite School mentioned the impact of clubs as a factor compared to the High Value School. One student mentioned how a club's activity drew her to a school:

> Also, just the fact that it's in [city] and their business of [industry] club seems like it was legit and really active. So it seemed like a real industry that people actually pursued here and not just a few people were interested [in that] type of deal.

Another student talked about how that clubs allowed students to learn about different industries, "What I didn't think I would be interested in is the healthcare industry. [Now] I want to join a healthcare club because socially you can connect on a personal level."

Although all 33 interviewees identified financial costs as an area of concern, survey respondents did not report financial aid offices as playing a high influence role in their consideration of MBA programs. Only five students from the Elite School and one from the High Value School reported financial costs as *somewhat* a factor, and only two students from the Elite School and none from the High Value School surveyed reported financial aid as *definitely* a factor, meaning that most students did not reach out to financial aid offices during the application process despite their concerns about cost.

During the interviews, the researcher asked students what they thought business schools considered when evaluating prospective MBA candidates for admissions. Overall, students mentioned similar criteria including Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), Grade Point Average (GPA), essay, work experience, interviews and letters of recommendation. Table 4.8 below demonstrates that GMAT, GPA, work experience, and essays were mentioned by the interviewees. Ninety-three percent of the Elite School students mentioned the essays while only 50% of the High Value School students mentioned essays. The students interviewed from the Elite School show higher percentages of mentioned admissions criteria (except GPA, higher rates than the High Value School). The Elite School website has five pages on admissions criteria while the High Value School has two pages. Interviews and letters of recommendation were not emphasized by Elite School and High Value interviewees, showing an underestimation of the role of this criteria compared to information provided on the website. Although the students articulated an understanding of the admissions criteria through their application strategy, the way they weighted of the criteria seemed to be different from what admissions personnel described on websites and information sessions. See Table 4.10 for admissions criteria mentioned by interviewees.

Table 4.10

Admissions Criteria Considered By Interviewees During the Applications Process

	Number of Elite School Interviewees Mentioned Criteria	Number of High Value School Mentioned Criteria	Total Interviewees Mentioned Criteria
GMAT	14/15 (93%)	16/18 (89%)	30/33 (91%)
Essay	14/15 (93%)	9/18 (50%)	23/33 (70%)
Work Experience	12/15 (80%)	13/18 (72%)	25/33 (76%)
GPA	9/15 (60%)	11/18 (61%)	20/33 (61%)
Interviews	4/15 (27%)	1/18 (6%)	5/33 (15%)
Letters of Recommendation	3/15 (20%)	0/18 (0%)	3/33 (9%)

The researcher went online and consulted marketing brochures to create an outline of admissions

criteria. See Table 4.11 for admissions criteria noted on marketing materials and websites.

Table 4.11

Business School Website and Marketing Brochure Admissions Criteria

	Elite School Admissions Criteria	High Value School Admissions Criteria
Online Application	Yes	Yes
Undergraduate Degree (4-year)	Yes	Yes
GMAT	Yes	Yes
Work Experience	(no?)	(no?)
Letters of Recommendation	Yes – 2	Yes – 2
Essays	Yes – 2 required and 1 optional	Yes – 3 required and 1 optional
Interview	By Invitation	Conducted At Discretion of Admissions
International English Language Proficiency Exam	Conditional – TOEFL Test or International English Language Testing System (IELTS)	TOEFL Test or Pearson Test of English Academics (PTE)
Official Transcripts	Only if admitted; Upload unofficial	Only if admitted; Upload unofficial
Resume	Yes	Yes
Reapplication Available	Yes	Yes
Additional Materials	Yes	Yes
Math Requirement	Recommendation to have differential calculus and statistics	Not indicated on website
Number of Application Rounds	3	3
Schedule	Quarter	Semester

Hoefer and Gould (2000) concluded that undergraduate GPA and GMAT were predictors of program success. In general, the interviewed students provided similar answers when asked what business schools looked for when evaluating prospective students. However, students shared additional criteria besides GPA and GMAT scores. The major criteria noted by interviewees include the following: 91% mentioned the GMAT (30 out 33 interviewees), 70% mentioned essays (23 out of 33 interviewees), 76% mentioned work experience (25 out of 33 interviewees), and 61% cited GPA (20 out of 33 interviewees). One interview student suggested the GMAT as a way to prequalify students: "Certain GMAT scores are minimum thresholds. If you meet the mark, you would be considered. To be selected from that pool of applicants, there

had to be something else." Another student described the admissions criteria reviewed by business schools:

> Everyone looked at the GMAT. Everyone required a resume. Everyone required letters of recommendation. Everyone required at least two essays. I think all of them one of the essays was a personal statement and like your goals and stuff. Other than that, let's see, general background information.

Seventy percent of interviewees (n=23) mentioned essays when speaking about the application criteria, and only three interviewees mentioned letters of recommendations. The student interviewees said that the most difficult parts of the application process were the essays and recommendations due to the differing formats and the time required to complete those items. Given the requirements noted on the business school marketing materials and websites, the information provided by interviewees demonstrated that students were able to obtain and understand key admissions criteria.

In general, the main findings from the influence of the application process steps showed that rankings and websites are the most consulted resources, and family and friends play a role in the program discovery process. Prospective students consider interactions with admissions departments, career services, and alumni networks when researching school. Students' understanding of admissions criteria aligns with the information provided on the business schools' marketing materials and websites. After conducting their research, students then assessed the costs and benefits of pursuing an MBA.

Costs and Benefits In Pursuing An MBA

Research Question Two: What are the perceived costs and benefits of an MBA program? If there are perceived barriers in applying to MBA programs, how do women overcome those barriers?

Data about perceived costs and benefits were gathered from the survey and interviews. When asked about the following costs, survey respondents gave their answers in a Likert scale question ranging from *not* concerned (one) to *very* concerned (three). In looking at the *very* concerned column, there were differences between the Elite School and the High Value School. Students from the High Value School reflected higher percentages in the *Very* Concerned column compared to the Elite School. Students concerns included large financial costs, severe limitations related to people important to them, competition, the need to postpone marriage, have a child or other plans, and stress associated with the program. The High Value students had the biggest difference in the Very Concerned column relating to stress (8 students versus 2 students) and competition (8 students versus 1 student). Based on the demographic information in Tables 4.3 and 4.5, students from the High Value School came from less quantitative undergraduate programs and industries that are predominantly female which may have impacted their ratings of stress and competition. In addition, the students from the High Value School were more interested in career switching while the Elite School students were open to either career switching or career enhancing. The major costs addressed in the survey are described in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12

Costs Considered During the Applications Process

	Interviewees mentioned	**Elite School**		**High Value School**		**Total**	
		Somewhat Concerned - Survey	Very Concerned - Survey	Somewhat Concerned - Survey	Very Concerned – Survey	Somewhat Concerned – Survey	Very Concerned – Survey
Large Financial Cost	Elite School: 15/15 (100%) High Value School: 18/18 (100%)	9/25 (36%)	5/25 (20%)	9/34 (26%)	11/34 (32%)	18/59 (31%)	16/59 (27%)
Severely Limits Time I Have With People Important To Me	Elite School: 6/15 (40%) High Value School: 7/18 (39%)	11/25 (44%)	2/25 (8%)	14/34 (41%)	6/34 (18%)	25/59 (42%)	8/59 (14%)
Is Competitive	Elite School: 15/15 (100%) High Value School: 18/18 (100%)	11/25 (44%)	1/25 (4%)	11/34 (32%)	8/34 (24%)	22/59 (37%)	9/59 (15%)
Requires me to postpone marriage, having a child, or other plans	Elite School: 15/15 (100%) High Value School: 18/18 (100%)	8/25 (32%)	2/25 (8%)	13/34 (38%)	5/34 (15%)	21/59 (36%)	7/59 (12%)
Is Stressful	Elite School: 3/15 (20%) High Value School: 6/18 (33%)	12/25 (48%)	2/25 (8%)	9/34 (26%)	8/34 (24%)	21/59 (42%)	10/59 (17%)

Consistent with existing literature, costs associated with financial and non-financial impacts serve as barriers to entry to MBA programs for women (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002). Although *all* interviewees (33 students) mentioned that financial debt is a cost, a little more than half of the survey respondents showed this degree of concern with 18 students being *somewhat* concerned and 16 students being *very* concerned.   Five interviewees shared that they had received fellowships to offset the costs, while four interviewees mentioned that their families supported them financially. Students who self-identified as taking out loans mentioned their risk averse nature, and the expected return on investment in the form of higher future salaries which helped offset the concern. When asked about the cost of limited time with loved ones and pets, survey respondents noted this as a cost with 25 interviewees noting *some* concern and eight survey respondents showing some *definite* concern. One hundred percent of interviewees described the competitive nature of getting into MBA programs, yet 22 survey respondents noted this as *somewhat* of a concern while nine survey respondents characterized it as a *definite* concern. Although women said that business school is competitive, they said that they were ready for the challenge and looked forward to the collaboration with other students in the program. All interviewees mentioned marriage, childbearing, and personal plans, yet younger students did not feel directly pressured given that the costs are lower for them in comparison to the return on investment as it relates to their careers. Arbaugh, Bento, and Hwang (2010) report that individuals in more established careers may be less concerned with the ranking of the MBA program.

Costs relating to stress include psychological costs, health costs, and relocation costs as it relates to change, and 21 survey respondents reported stress as *somewhat* of a concern and ten

survey respondents reported stress as a *definite* concern. One student provides insights into financial and non-financial costs of pursuing an MBA:

> Obviously first of all is the financial cost. That is huge. I was worried about that on the way here actually. I was thinking I need a student loan to come in sooner than next week… the loss of not having a job for two years hurts as well. Not having an income. Honestly, it is kind of been an emotional beating just moving away from my family and my friends and coming here. It's been so intense…I knew that my job was easier for me and this is a challenge. My confidence levels diminished somewhat, so that is another emotional and psychological cost.

Students who were interviewed aligned with the survey respondents' results in speaking about the considerations to apply to MBA programs. All the interviewees spoke about career placement and opportunities, and 33 out of 59 survey respondents said this was definitely a factor in choosing to apply to an MBA program. Dahlin-Brown (2005) noted that rankings impact the way business schools are perceived. Thirty-five out of 59 survey respondents mentioned rankings as a *definite* factor, and 26 out of the 33 interviewees also mentioned the importance of rankings. Fit and culture was also a big issue, and 16 of the 33 interviewees mentioned the topic while 35 out of 59 survey respondents rated this item as a *definite* factor. School culture and fit were identified by 60% of the interviewees at the Elite School compared to 38% at High Value School. Elite School students mentioned the importance of interacting with student ambassadors and campus visits in determining the culture and fit of the school. Although 66% (39 of 59) of survey respondents mentioned local reputation as a *definite* factor, only 30% (10 out of the 33 interviewees) of interviewees mentioned the item. A successful alumni network is a recurring theme, with 81% (27 out of 33) of interviewees mentioning this topic and

53% (31 out of 59) of survey respondents noting alumni as a *definite* concern. See Table 4.13

for the top benefits of an MBA program considered by students.

Table 4.13

Top Benefits Considered During the Applications Process

	Mentioned By Interviewees	Elite School		High Value School		Total	
		Somewhat A Factor - Survey	Definitely A Factor – Survey	Somewhat A Factor - Survey	Definitely A Factor - Survey	Somewhat A Factor - Survey	Definitely A Factor – Survey
Job placement reputation of school	Elite School: 15/15 (100%) High Value School: 18/18 (100%)	8/25 (32%)	13/25 (52%)	5/34 (15%)	20/34 (59%)	13/59 (22%)	33/59 (56%)
Published ranking of its MBA program	Elite School: 14/15 (93%) High Value School: 12/18 (67%)	8/25 (32%)	15/25 (60%)	5/34 (15%)	20/34 (59%)	13/59 (22%)	35/59 (59%)
School culture/fit	Elite School: 9/15 (60%) High Value School: 7/18 (38%)	5/25 (20%)	16/25 (64%)	8/34 (23%)	19/34 (56%)	13/59 (22%)	35/59 (59%)
Local respect/ reputation	Elite School: 4/15 (27%) High Value School: 6/18 (33%)	6/25 (24%)	16/25 (64%)	4/34 (12%)	23/34 (68%)	10/59 (17%)	39/59 (66%)
Successful alumni/ alumni network	Elite School: 11/15 (73%) High Value School: 16/18 (89%)	8/25 (32%)	14/25 (56%)	10/34 (29%)	17/34 (50%)	19/59 (30%)	31/59 (53%)

A student shared her experience in evaluating business schools, "Technically you can learn everything here in a book, but it is more about the environment and being with like-minded people in the job search." Another student provided a listing of her considerations and factors, "Factors: rankings, unfortunately, location, and just student body just kind of putting feelers out

there and seeing what kind of culture that school had since that is important to me." Forty-eight percent of the interviewees mentioned location (seven from the Elite School and nine from the High Value School) as a key benefit, and 21% (seven interviewees) wanted to be closer to their families (four from the Elite School and three from the High Value School). Given students' reasons to stay on the West Coast either for personal or professional reasons, students who are geographically constrained may experience limitations in terms of school choice and options.

A student cited the importance of the alumni network as a differentiator:

> The alumni network was really big. They really emphasized that, and I think that is very important. Now that I am in school, I realize how strong the network really is and how much easier that has made the recruiting process. What I really took away from all the schools that I applied to were that the school was very collaborative.

This section described the costs and benefits of pursuing an MBA. The students described both financial and non-financial costs, yet the benefits described outweighed their concerns. The potential of career advancement and increased salaries offset the costs. Although the students experienced costs, their motivation for attending MBA programs helped them to overcome barriers to apply.

Rationale For Overcoming Barriers To Doing An MBA

Research Question Three: If there are perceived barriers in applying to MBA programs, how do women overcome those barriers?

As noted in the previous section, students talked about the monetary and non-pecuniary opportunity costs. Surveyed students were asked to weigh the importance of valuable results from pursuing an MBA degree. Students had a Likert scale question with 12 items noting

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whether the item was *not* a factor (one), *somewhat* a factor (two), and *definitely* a factor (three)

in considering MBA programs. The 12 items included the following: AACSB accreditation, job

placement reputation of school, local respect/reputation, published ranking of its MBA program,

quality of current standards, diversity of student body, school culture, quality of the faculty, rigor

of academic program, selectivity of admissions, successful alumni/alumni network, and others.

In Table 4.14 below, more women from the Elite School reported higher percentages of

definitely a factor compared to the High Value School. A higher percentage of women in the

Elite School noted an interest in entrepreneurship compared to the women at the High Value

School. International employment was not a major factor for students at both schools. However,

switching industries, earning credentials, being more marketable, improving financial stability,

providing a sense of personal satisfaction, and developing knowledge and technical skills were

highly-considered by women at both schools. Women at both schools also aspired to move into

management roles, reflecting high percentages in developing management knowledge and

technical skills.

Table 4.14

Considerations Associated With The Value of Obtaining An MBA

		Elite School			High Value School		
	Mentioned By Interviewee	Not A Factor - Survey	Somewhat A Factor - Survey	Definitely A Factor - Survey	Not A Factor - Survey	Somewhat A Factor – Survey	Definitely A Factor – Survey
Prepare me to seek international employment	Elite School: 3/15 (20%) High Value School: 5/18 (28%)	14/25 (56%)	6/25 (24%)	5/25 (20%)	20/34 (59%)	9/34 (26%)	5/34 (15%)
Prepares me to start or manage my own business	Elite School: 4/15 (27%) High Value School: 4/18 (22%)	9/25 (36%)	9/25 (36%)	7/25 (28%)	16/34 (47%)	9/34 (26%)	9/34 (26%)
Allows me to switch industries	Elite School: 5/15 (33%) High Value School: 9/18 (50%)	5/25 (20%)	5/25 (20%)	15/25 (60%)	9/34 (26%)	5/34 (15%)	20/34 (59%)
Provides the professional credentials I need for advancement	Elite School: 10/15 (67%) High Value School: 11/18 (61%)	4/25 (16%)	1/25 (4%)	20/25 (80%)	7/34 (21%)	5/34 (15%)	22/34 (65%)
Allows me to remain marketable (competitive)	Elite School: 8/15 (53%) High Value School: 4/18 (22%)	2/25 (8%)	1/25 (4%)	22/25 (88%)	7/34 (21%)	3/34 (9%)	24/34 (71%)
Improves long-term income and financial stability	Elite School: 7/15 (47%) High Value School: 4/18 (22%)	2/25 (8%)	5/25 (20%)	18/25 (72%)	11/34 (32%)	2/34 (6%)	21/34 (62%)
Provides me with a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement	Elite School: 3/15 (20%) High Value School: 5/18 (27%)	2/25 (8%)	5/25 (20%)	18/25 (72%)	8/34 (24%)	6/34 (18%)	20/34 (59%)
Is looked upon favorably by people who are important to me	Elite School: 1/15 (6%) High Value School: 2/18 (11%)	6/25 (24%)	7/25 (28%)	12/25 (48%)	13/34 (38%)	11/34 (32%)	10/34 (29%)
Develops management knowledge and technical skills	Elite School: 2/15 (13%) High Value School: 7/18 (39%)	1/25 (4%)	2/25 (8%)	21/25 (84%)	7/34 (21%)	2/34 (6%)	25/34 (74%)

Montgomery (2000) noted that students are attracted to schools that offer more benefits despite the costs associated. In addition, Randolph (2011) described how exposure to international experiences in MBA programs provides opportunities to learn about collaboration. Valued elements cited in the survey also emerged during the student interviews. Three interviewees from the Elite School and six from the High Value School mentioned their desire for international experience during the MBA program. However, 58% (14 from the Elite School and 20 from the High Value School) of surveyed students noted that the preparation for international employment was not a factor. International students at both schools mentioned the importance of earning an MBA in United States as a way to move up in management whether they would secure a job in America or in their home country. However, two interviewees from the Elite School and three interviewees from the High Value School mentioned their parents' expectations for them to have a family. One international student stated the following: "I would say for females to leave a family is harder for a female than a male especially in my community. They need more support like financially and mentally before they leave their home to come here." International students mentioned that they looked at the international male and female student statistics in the class profiles, where international students represented 21% in the High Value School and 36% in the Elite School. Full-time MBA programs were more attractive to international students given the opportunities to come to the United States on student visas. Students mentioned the challenges associated with obtaining work visas and company sponsorship by U.S.-owned companies.

Another major finding was that that the ability to switch industries was valued by 14 interviewees, with 50% of students in the High Value School mentioning this item as opposed to the 33% from the Elite School. Fifty-nine percent of survey participants (35 out of 59) noted that

switching industries was *definitely* a factor in pursuing an MBA. Sixty-three percent (21out of 33) of interviewees and 71% of survey respondents (20 from the Elite School and 22 from the High Value School) mentioned that earning credentials is a *definite* factor in considering an MBA program. Remaining marketable and competitive is another reason to pursue an MBA, and 36% of interviewees (eight from the Elite School and four from the High Value School out of 33 students) mentioned this value while 78% of survey participants (22 from the Elite School and 24 from the High Value School out of 59) listed this item as a definite factor. Fifty-three percent of interviewees from the Elite School mentioned marketability and competition while 22% from the High Value School noted this consideration. Thirty-three percent of interviewees (seven from the Elite School and four from the High Value School out of 33) mentioned financial stability and income while 66% of survey participants (18 from the Elite School and 21 from the High Value School) mentioned this value as a *definite* factor. Although only 24% of interviewees (three from the Elite School and five from the High Value School) mentioned personal satisfaction as a goal from pursuing an MBA, 64% of survey respondents (18 from the Elite School and 20 from the High Value School) noted that personal achievement is a *definite* consideration. Twenty-seven percent of students interviewed (two from the Elite School and seven from the High Value School) cited developing knowledge and technical skills, yet 78% of survey participants (21 from the Elite School and 25 from the High Value School) mentioned that this value is a *definite* factor. Rapert, Smith, Veliquette, and Garretson (2004) describe that skills acquired is related to students' willingness to recommend an MBA program.

The interviewees provided some additional support for the data provided. Increased financial earnings were mentioned by a student: "…the earning potential. If I have to continue to work for other people, I know now that there is a certain amount I can command just because of

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what I went through to get here." Another student talked about the entrepreneurial preparation, knowledge, and international exposure provided by MBA programs:

> Instead, I made this matrix that had the criteria that I was looking for. Of course I made this matrix after a deep self-assessment and reflection to see what I really wanted to get out of this…I am looking for a school that is highly entrepreneurial. These were things on my personal list…I wanted to see myself as a global leader and do business abroad.

In the interviews, the students who spoke about switching industries shared the importance of understanding career services activity for summer internships and full time employment post graduation. International and domestic students expressed a concern for landing employment. The reputation of the MBA program and rankings were mentioned by interviewees as a way to measure opportunities to switch industries. Overall, students said that business schools provided a value proposition to prospective students, and these elements should be made clear.

Action Business Schools Can Take To Increase Female Applicants

Research Question Four: What can business schools do to help women during their decision-making process and in the transition to the program?

During the interview, students were asked two questions relating to what business schools can do to help prospective students as well as what students wished they would have known about the application process. Seventy percent of interviewees (11 in the Elite School and 12 from the High Value School out of 33 interviewees) mentioned the importance of connecting prospective female students with current female students and female professors. Interviewees had opposing views as to whether business schools should have female-focused events. Thirty-

nine percent of interviewees (seven from the Elite School and six from the High Value School) felt that female-focused events would be helpful. One student stated "I think it would be really helpful to do maybe a women's-specific recruiting event to show this is what we have for women and how programs are trying to work on the imbalance." Another student expanded on the idea of events for women:

> I do think it is really helpful to have female specific admissions types of events whether it is big info sessions or brunches…Aside from that, it would be engaging [to have] women in business clubs to keep them [prospective students] engaged in the admissions process.

Fifteen percent of interviewees (three from the Elite School and two from the High Value School) expressed a concern about female-specific events. One student said:

> I am opposed to the women-oriented forums because there can be a negative connotation towards it… I know marketing tends to be a female-oriented field, and a lot of advertising creative women come here to go into the strategy and brand management to get into the business side. Some may be focused on those types of career paths.

Fifty-four percent of interviewees (eight from the Elite School and 10 from the High Value School) mentioned the importance of cultivating and communicating support systems and networks for women, including bridge courses in the summer, mentorship opportunities and student services including psychological services. A student shared that, "One is to emphasize that there is a strong network for females at the school. A lot of times just from reading statistics maybe not as inclined to apply because they are a little intimidated." Openly communicating about the fewer number of women in an MBA program and how to encourage the existing

support system can make this more appealing as one student shared: "Just promoting and our class made a Facebook page called the 28% and the women try to bond that way and we have text chat groups just for the girls so we do girls dinners and girls whatever and we do girls only events. That helps you to bond with a smaller percentage of girls and making that known."

Only two interviewees from the Elite School and one interviewee from the High Value School acknowledged that the male-female decision-making process to apply to an MBA program may be similar, but the female connections still matter:

> I feel like the decision making process for men and women is similar. We are all taking into account the same things: where we want to be, ranking of school, the different opportunities they provide, strengths of whatever industry you are looking into. I don't know exactly what to do to make it easier for more women to choose your school. The only think I can hypothesize is that just providing those sort of female connections so if someone wants to speak with a female student or get connected with the women's club on campus, I think that would be the only additional thing.

Forty-eight percent of interviewees (16 out of 33) also noted the importance of being able to sell the value of an MBA to prospective women, including those who are not interested in the traditional consulting or finance tracks. One student talked about the business school's value proposition:

> Conveying the value and just better explaining what the experience is like would be helpful particularly for women…I think women face a lot of obstacles in the workplace and particularly around demonstrating competency for roles that they aspire to…. I think that the MBA's a decent way to demonstrate that…I think that

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it is a fairly sensitive topic since no one wants to say women aren't qualified for

particular roles. That is ridiculous.

Another student also described the importance of selling the MBA to those who may not see the

value of the degree: "I think conveying the value of an MBA is really important especially the

climate around media. The climate around MBAs are very muddled. There are some people who

just think it is not important."

Five interviewees from the Elite School and four interviewees from the High Value

School suggested having events for significant others and family members so they understand

the expectations. The students described the importance of connecting not only students in

similar situations, but introducing significant others to one another. A student conveyed her

experience:

> I think the Elite School does invite sig-o to help bring them into the process…I
>
> think bringing them in the process helps them to understand what it will be like
>
> when you are in school… My boyfriend was back in NY and had no clue what
>
> was going on at the Elite School. He had a hard time adjusting to that, and we
>
> ended up not staying together… The husbands and boyfriends had a hard time
>
> understanding how busy we really are. Helping them to explain what it will be
>
> like for us and how they can make it easier on themselves, having other sig-os
>
> who are second years come in to talk to them and give them advice. I think that is
>
> big thing. I think a lot of girls [think about] their personal relationships, and that
>
> is a big component of what they consider when applying to business school.

Two interviewees from the Elite School and four interviewees from the High Value School

talked about selling the advantage of being a woman applying to graduate programs. A student

stated, "When I was applying, I never really thought that being a female was a disadvantage. In fact, I thought it was an advantage since there are not very many females applying especially being a female from India and a different country. I thought it was more to my benefit than to my disadvantage."

Forty-eight percent of interviewees (eight from the Elite School and eight from the High Value School) mentioned the importance for schools to address women's concerns surrounding school, family, and life concerns. At High Value School, four interviewees mentioned a course addressing women in the workplace to help deal with a male-dominated environment. Despite women's suggestions to talk about the support system available, a student talks about her hesitation to share her concerns with colleagues about having a family:

> I found it to be a struggle to reconcile being a mother and a professional. There is a women's business connection group I am a part of here. They have addressed that a little bit, but I don't know if I am weird in my strong interests to have a family. That is something that I am very interested in having in my future, and to me, there is a little bit of give and take that is going to happen with my career. I don't think business schools like the fact that I want to be a stay at home mom… I would never tell my employer. I would never tell my school that. I would never tell recruiters that. *I don't even tell fellow students that sometimes because I get approached in a negative way.* It is kind of funny. I don't know if this is a broad enough, but I would say how an MBA can help you beyond a business career. So, if you want to run the PTA or work in a nonprofit part-time, find a way to show how an MBA is beneficial even if you will not be a CEO of a company.

Regardless of their quantitative background, interviewees said they wanted more math either in the form of math refreshers or summer boot camps prior to the beginning of year one. Seventy percent of interviewees (nine from the Elite School and 14 from the High Value School) suggested taking math and/or business-related classes prior to beginning the MBA program. When asked what classes were most helpful for the MBA, a student described the importance of math courses: "Yes, stats. Surprisingly, I thought that was the most useless class I took in high school and in college... Calculus, too." Another student reinforces the importance of statistics in addition to economics: "Definitely my stats class. I took stats in high school. I took it again in college. And then a lot of the concepts were applied to many of my econ classes." Based on the survey responses, most students took the following science and math courses in high school: 85% took chemistry (50/59), 80% took algebra I (47/59), 78% took geometry (46/59), 81% took algebra II (48/59), and 71% took trigonometry (42/59). Survey respondents also stated that the majority took the following courses: 54% took statistics (32/59) and 53% took economics (31/59) in their undergraduate programs. Low numbers of survey respondents noted that their favorite classes including the following: 22% mentioned business (13/59), 15% mentioned statistics (9/59), and 14% mentioned biology (8/59). The least favorite classes mentioned by survey respondents were the following: 20% mentioned integral calculus (12/59), 17% mentioned physics (10/59), 17% mentioned chemistry (10/59), and 17% mentioned differential calculus (10/59). Based on the sample, students preferred the life sciences to the physical sciences. Clark, Callister and Wallace (2005) describe how undergraduate management classes improved emotional intelligence.

Simpson (2006) talks about the merging of hard and soft skills in the MBA. Five interviewees from Elite School and eight interviewees from High Value School talked about

their mixed feelings about math, showing that MBA programs allow students to bridge the quantitative and qualitative:

> I think I have a love-hate relationship with math, which is awful because I love math. As a kid, I always loved math and they have all these women and girls supported and they don't go to math/science, which is true in my own experience, for how invested my life in that through 9th grade it just didn't happen anymore. I also would say that for me I am more naturally gifted in the liberal arts, and the qualitative component of the GMAT is very easy for me. I didn't have to study for it since it was very easy for me to do. From the quantitative side, I think that I am very good at math if I apply myself... I am good at finance if I sit and do it.

Previous studies show that business schools are a reflection of the workplace, representing fewer women in management (Kelan & Jones, 2010; Schein, 2001). Interviewees from the High Value School suggested the importance of offering courses or workshops covering the women's adjustment to male-dominated experiences. Two students from the Elite School and five students from the High Value School who come from traditionally female industries such as the nonprofit or marketing industries shared experiences about trying to assert themselves in predominantly male classrooms. A student talked about the perception of an assertive student and how gender can influence how the student is perceived:

> So I think that there is a perception that sometimes business school can be very cutthroat. An example would be in a very tough competition, if a male student is very on top of it and very determined, knows what he wants and is very forceful, [he] says it. I think when a female does something similar, we probably still think the person is still competent but we don't like her because we think she's bitchy.

Business schools can provide classes and workshops to help women from female dominated industries or functions to adjust to the communication and work styles within an MBA environment. An interviewee found that her voice was not heard, and she sometimes is urged to take on female roles including note taker and scheduler.

> This is the first time I felt like a minority being the only woman in a five-person team. It was a difficult group dynamic because it was a fantastic learning experience learning to deal with four men. These four men come from traditional backgrounds and pushed into the more feminine role like note taking, follow up emails, and scheduling. They didn't even realize they were doing it. It created a frustrating situation for me and detracted from my experience by being the only woman. Most teams are made up of six with two women, so I was very jealous of those teams. The few of us who were sole women, it was a very difficult situation. All of us pretty much agree that we had very similar situations. We're tougher because of that and I think we know how to deal with that from now on. In terms of a productive first semester, it is really frustrating with everything you are dealing with to convince your group members that you shouldn't be the scheduler every time. I remember making my handwriting purposely messy so some one could step up and do it for a while. Things like that could be really frustrating.

One of the four students from the High Value School mentioned that the women in the workplace course may help women deal with gender issues in the classroom:

> I am taking a gender in the workplace course right now, and it is extraordinarily helpful in terms of having to examine what issues are in the workplace and what pitfalls there are… It gives you the tools to equip yourself to deal with it more

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effectively, and you know I think that those classes are hugely valuable for first

year MBA females. So I think advertising and offering more classes like that and

making it known to female students would be extraordinarily helpful. I know it is

touchy in business school but [it] equips candidates to be the most successful.

Setting up with mentors in terms of recruitment and getting in touch with other

women and having classes with women ambassadors or at least a time when they

can chat with them would be the biggest thing I think.

Three interviewees from the Elite School and five interviewees from the High Value School

encourage business schools to reach out to women in non-traditional backgrounds and industries.

One student shared that business schools attract financial-oriented people and should reach out to

non-traditional backgrounds, "I think schools have to show that if you come from non-profit

backgrounds, marketing, nursing, these atypical business school background, that there is not

only a place for you but we eagerly await you."

Interviewed students were asked to share advice for prospective students. When asked

this question, 81% of interviewees (12 from the Elite School and 15 from the High Value

School) encouraged prospective students to apply. A common answer to this question was, "Just

do it, and it can't really hurt." In addition, 42% of interviewees (six from the Elite School and

eight from the High Value School) suggested prospective students should have a better sense of

career goals prior to entering the programs to maximize the MBA experience. One student said,

"So I would definitely look at and try to figure out what you want to do beforehand and have a

list and make sure the list lines up with the program you are going to."

In addition, interviewees mentioned the need for business schools to present a realistic

view of what year one will look like and to communicate resources to help students during that

transition period. Forty-five percent of interviewees (seven from the Elite School and eight from the High Value School) acknowledged that they did not realize how intense the first term would be with academics, career recruitment, networking, and other extracurricular activities. One student provided the following description:

> I think first semester was really difficult. So you go into survival mode and after people take a setback, people say they are here to build relationships not just necessarily to get As in my classes. That is not really the goal of an MBA program, so maybe there was a reprioritization. Maybe but I think a lot of it happened intuitively through social media.

Another student reinforced the importance of setting expectations of the first term,

> I would say giving prospective students a rough image before they came that will manage their expectations and the rates of mismatch will be lower. Because of those mismatches, I understand some students have dropped out from the program actually. To avoid that, maybe they can do better in terms of managing expectations.

The survey and interview findings revealed insights about the importance of communicating and providing support systems to prospective and current female MBA students. In addition, MBA programs must be able to provide prospective students with a clear articulation of the value an MBA provides. The information presented in this chapter translates into recommendations that will be expanded upon in the following chapter.

Summary

The findings chapter included information on the admissions resources and processes, costs and benefits, overcoming barriers to pursuing an MBA, and actions business schools can

take to increase the number of female applicants. Overall, the findings indicate that applicants

need to access information in order to make informed decisions. Business schools can take steps

to ensure applicants have the information and resources to learn more about the process, and the

next chapter will outline recommendations based on the findings noted.

CHAPTER FIVE: Recommendations

The purpose of my study was to examine the decision-making process of first-year, full-time MBA female students when they decided to apply to business school. Through retrospective surveys, interviews, and content analysis of marketing materials and websites, I was able to gather data that led to several key knowledge areas from which I have identified recommendations for business schools. The study adds to the body of knowledge by looking at the decision-making process of women who apply to MBA programs by looking at these issues using qualitative methods such as interviews and content analysis. In addition, the study looks at the perspective of a specific group of women who both applied and were admitted to the program.

The information shared by students from the Elite School and the High Value School regarding the factors, costs, and benefits considered by MBA students are consistent with studies by the Catalyst Organization (Catalyst, 2000). Students in the interviews mentioned the financial, emotional, and psychological costs of being an MBA student. Their perspectives through their stories provide more detail that goes beyond the survey results.

This chapter will include two types of findings and their related recommendations. The first section will cover the recommendations related to the research questions. The next section will include findings that emerged outside of the research questions. The chapter will also include limitations of the study and a final summary.

Research Question One: What processes do women engage in when making their decision to apply to a full-time MBA program?

The findings presented in chapter four elicited recommendations for business school

recruitment of women by understanding the research and decision-making process of full-time MBA females who apply and are admitted to MBA programs. The interviews in addition to the survey revealed that websites needed to be easily accessible and informative. Students articulated their reliance on website information for educational, career, and extracurricular offerings, so schools must create user-friendly web experiences. Roughly half of all respondents rated fit and culture as a *definite* factor, but Elite School students were almost twice as likely to see it as a *definite* factor. School culture and fit was expressed by 60% of the interviewees at the Elite School compared to the 38% at High Value School. Given the high percentage of students' interest in fit, business schools should provide information on their websites and in their marketing materials to help students understand offerings and fit.

Students shared their interest in being able to read more about student life. Having easy access to student ambassador descriptions and contact information would also be helpful. In addition, students who serve as ambassadors must be prompt in responding to the prospective student given the fit and culture impression provided during that experience. Moreover, having more photos of women and content of interest to women would be strategic to have for female prospective students. Personalized content along with more photos reflecting diversity, including women, in both business and non-business related photos should be incorporated throughout the business school websites.

Extensive web pages that are very text heavy and show no images should be reassessed, and business schools should either create pages that do not require extensive webpage scrolling. If students are encouraged to connect with the school, there should be contact information that can be readily accessible on the webpages, and this may include a directory or listing of current student, staff, faculty members or alumni who are willing to connect with prospective students.

Opoku, Abratt and Pitt (2006) conducted a study where using websites as a way to create identifiable experiences adds to the concept of fit and culture. This study reinforces the importance of websites in informing prospective students about the culture and offerings of the schools.

Prospective students also conduct their research by looking at rankings to create a choice set of schools to consider for application. Given survey respondents' and interviewees' review of rankings as a major finding, business schools should make this information readily available on their websites. These items may be captured either on the admissions pages and/or the recent news section. Rankings may be circulated on social media venues, school websites, email communications, as well as during information session given that interviewees mentioned the importance of these communications channels. In addition, news about the business schools including rankings should be communicated to the ambassadors, alumni and other potential influencers. Given that prospective students speak to family and friends about MBA programs, schools should think about how they can communicate with influencers using varied communications mechanisms. Schools should consider using customer relationship management (CRM) tools to solicit potential prospective students so they can reach out to those students specifically. Quarterman (2008) describes the importance of personal contact between students and role models, which aligns with the importance of interactions during the decision-making process. Business schools can use customer relationship management (CRM) systems to track the enrollment management pipeline, documenting all the touch points that occur between the prospective students from the outreach phase up to potentially the student's intent to register if admitted.

Prospective students not only seek to obtain information about MBA programs, but they seek information on application deliverables. Saaty, France, and Valentine (1991) note that admissions officers consider letters of recommendation, while Hedlund et. al (2006) note that interviews are among the admissions criteria reviewed. Although interviewees in this study understood the admissions criteria as listed on the websites and marketing materials, interviewees underestimated the importance of letters of recommendation and interviews. Given their understanding of the criteria, applicants may experience a disadvantage in the admissions process if they do not focus on these criteria. In order to provide awareness about these key items, I propose to write tips for students about applying to MBA students. Content may also include tips for students on the waitlist or those who decide to apply a second time. The content may also be provided or delivered via webinars, and admissions officers may describe the importance of the letter of recommendations and interviews. Students should be encouraged to consult with their undergraduate career centers or pre-professional advising units for assistance with the application process and deliverables. MBA student panelists may also talk about the application process through other forums including discussion and chat boards, social media tools, and other events.

Like best practices and tips on letters of recommendations, tips for interviews may be available. In addition, current students can talk about the various campus resources that are used. Prospective students may have inquiries about the resources to support the success of graduate students, and speaking to current or recently finished students may be valuable. Interviewees described how the availability of student services' resources might be used for recruitment purposes. More than half of all interviewees mentioned the importance of cultivating and communicating support systems for women. However, previous studies describe

the lack of female role models and resources in MBA programs (Catalyst, 2000). Interviewees from both schools mentioned that they would not be able to know where to go for student service inquiries when researching schools. Prospective and current students may benefit from having a consolidated website, handbook, or marketing piece that highlights student service resources providing financial aid, counseling and psychological services, and academic counseling. The uses of social media technology as well as the customer relationship management system to send out resource information are additional options. Knowing the resources available help prospective students understand the support to help them succeed throughout the program. which may be considered early on in the decision-making process. Although the first research question covered the actual process and resource consulted, the next section outlines the perceived costs and benefits of an MBA.

Research Question Two: What are the perceived costs and benefits of an MBA program?

Olson and King (1985) described early adulthood considerations such as life partners and families during the graduate school decision process. During the interviews, students noted the lack of time to spend with loved ones as a cost. Interviewees noted the importance for significant others to have an understanding of the graduate school experience, describing how they involved their significant others in their decision-making process. Over a quarter of interviewees suggested having events for significant others and family members so they understand the expectations. In addition to the significant-other events, it may be helpful to offer a workshop or webinar to address expectations during the program. Not only will this help significant others understand the course and social time commitments, but they can also learn about the student resources available in case their student family member needs support. During the website analysis, the Elite School had a webpage on significant other testimonials that

attested to the support provided to their graduate student partners. Allowing significant others the opportunity to understand the experience will also address questions they may have about the program. Blogs and videos on the website highlighting significant others may provide additional content for prospective students.

Interviewees from the High Value School described their concern about competition and postponement of family and marriage. However, exposing prospects to either stories or videos of current students may help answer questions about school/life balance issues. In addition, having business schools talk about the workshops and support services to help with these issues may be used as a recruitment tool to sell the school's commitment to student success. By offering various methods of communication and options to discuss the school/life balance subject, the concerns about competition and postponement of family may not be as daunting.

In contrast to the costs, study respondents identified the following top benefits of an MBA: job placement, rankings, school culture, local prestige, and successful alumni networks. In order for students to understand the school's commitment and offerings, business schools should be willing to talk about these benefits during campus visits and on their websites. Schools should also publish these career and ranking accomplishments on other media venues such as press releases, school websites, and other public relations media. Highlighting significant and high achieving alumni on the webpages and other marketing materials may be of interest to prospective students. Showcasing a combination of younger and older alumni may allow students to see their student and alumni networks. Business schools can also promote student-driven events and offerings like panels and happy hour events where local students and alumni have the opportunity to network by learning new things, meeting new people, or focusing on individual skills.

Research Question Three: If there are perceived barriers in applying to MBA programs, how do women overcome those barriers?

Barriers may prevent women from applying to MBA schools, yet students may obtain information to understand the requirements and constraints well in advance of graduate school applications. Gicheva (2012) stated that mobile workers seek MBAs, and full-time MBAs seek job change in some cases. More than half of study students mentioned that looking for career service offerings and employment statistics were important, so prospective students should be provided with information about career options and potentially be provided with exposure to career centers prior to the beginning of year one. Other studies show that individuals believe that degrees are a predictor of job change (Dougherty, Dreher, and Whitely, 1993). Students may also benefit from having workshops or webinars on how an MBA may help career enhancers and/or career switchers. Having resources that address the barriers may help female students overcome their concern about the application process.

Since culture and fit is important to female students, recruitment departments should include more information on culture and fit in marketing materials and interpersonal recruitment exchanges. Prospective students consider whether they will fit into the culture of a school, and they wonder how students in similar situations deal with student challenges. Given that students look to the websites and the campus visits to discern cultural fit, schools can provide a better picture of the campus culture by integrating video, blogs, and content to address these items on the websites. Student ambassadors can also speak to the culture when interacting with prospective students during campus visits and tours (Jonas, 2009). Admissions officers can also provide a value by connecting prospective students with current students with similar interests or backgrounds. Business schools that have admissions officers available to students must provide

their contact information on webpages and marketing materials clearly and prominently. Admissions offices can also be a conduit between prospective students, career coaches, alums, and student club officers. Therefore, prospective students must be made aware of the opportunity to connect with various members of the business school community. This message may be communicated either on the webpages or via targeted emails to prospective students.

In addition to interactions with business school community members, undergraduate students may benefit from learning about an MBA from their undergraduate career coaches or academic counselors in addition to admissions officers. Interpersonal exchanges matter when considering college offerings (Simoes and Soares, 2010). If these influencers can articulate the value propositions of an MBA, students can weight the benefits against the costs earlier in their undergraduate programs. Knowing about key credentials and skills gained from an MBA program may serve as a tipping point when students consider moving into the management track. In addition, being aware of prerequisite courses and admissions tips may be helpful to undergraduate students considering an MBA. Business schools can send relevant information about MBA admissions to undergraduate counselors or career coaches via email, publish information on the websites, or attend counselors' professional conferences.

Research Question Four: What can business schools do to help women during their decision-making process and in the transition to the program?

Students relocating from far away would like to form networks prior to beginning the program to make the physical relocation and stress of making friends seem less daunting. From the interviews, a third of the students mentioned student profiles and videos were helpful in helping them identify students they would be interested in connecting with, while more than half

the students mentioned that connecting with current students via student ambassador contact pages would be informative.

Jonas (2009) described the increasing use of social media and webpages to foster ways of connecting. In order to build a sense of support and networking, schools may engage current students and recent graduates internationally to host both physical and virtual events for newly-admitted students. These events may also provide a way for students to meet peers outside of the social media groups typically set up on Facebook or LinkedIn prior to the beginning of the program. As noted, students in the High Value School used a Facebook page for women in the class as a resource. Survey respondents and interviewees mentioned that schools could engage recent alumni while providing new students an opportunity to network with both physical and virtual connections. From an alumni pipeline perspective, these events can foster relationships that may lead to potential mentorship or future career opportunities. Students can foster connections between prospects and student ambassadors as well as staff to show the collaborative and supportive nature of the school.

Students without business backgrounds academically or professionally felt that business schools can help provide a smoother transition to the MBA experience. Eddey and Baumann (2009) found that students who did not major in business but took preliminary background classes prior to beginning the program did as well as direct entry students with business backgrounds. Interviewed students described the importance of taking math and business-related courses prior to beginning the MBA program to at least understand basic terminology. Seventy percent of interviewees suggested taking math and/or business-related classes prior to beginning the MBA program. Although some schools offer online reviews of math concepts in the summer prior to the first year, offering an in-class boot camp prior to the beginning of the

program to cover the foundational concepts would be helpful. Not only can students have exposure to math and business concepts, but they can also meet peers and form study teams before the beginning of the first term. In addition, an introduction to working in small teams and in using the case study method may be useful when the program begins. This will also expose women from predominantly female backgrounds and industries to the business school environment.

Additional Findings

The study's research questions focused on the application process, yet students also shared insights concerning student retention, which is beyond the scope of the study. Interviewees felt overwhelmed and pressured during the first few terms of their MBA programs. Students expressed that they would look for student resources when they felt they needed the help, and although student service information is provided to students prior to or during their first term, it is important for business schools to remind students about these services via e-newsletters or flyers throughout their time in their graduate program. In addition, students who serve in student government or club leadership may be able to communicate this information to students periodically.

Since first-year students experience transition challenges, it would be supportive to provide programming to help these students acquire the tools they need to thrive. Forty-five percent of interviewees acknowledged that they did not realize how intense the first term would be with academics, career recruitment, networking, and other extracurricular activities. Simpson (1996) mentioned confidence issues among women in MBA programs, and several students mentioned concerns about confidence and retention. Having events, workshops and webinars on work-life balance, career, and networking would help students as they tackle their academic,

recruiting, and social responsibilities in their first year. Also, having content about these items

on the website would be helpful for students given various challenges in transitioning to business

school.

Given the adjustment period in the first term, students talked about the intensity of

multiple areas of focus including academics, networks and career. Students described peers who

dropped out of the program after the first term. Schools could benefit from having video content

or student profiles that speak about a day in the life of a student, but they can also have

information to highlight resources that help students deal with these challenges. Students

expressed their interest in seeing honest descriptions of year one, and providing a listing of

resources that support retention of students who may face challenges at the beginning of the

program. Panels and videos may also be helpful to have student accounts of challenges faced

and the resources consulted to overcome the challenge. Having such offerings should bring

visibility to the student resource centers which will not only promote more informed students,

but resource centers can also tailor offerings when they see consistent themes among students

seeking services.

Limitations of the Study

Although my study looks at a specific group of first-year, full-time MBA female

students, constraints and limitations emerged during my study. Given my small sample size

from two MBA schools, I was not able to identify more definitive trends among women selecting

different types of MBA programs. I only studied women in full-time MBA programs, and their

process may deviate from peers in the part-time MBA programs. Due to the limited percentage

of women in the MBA programs, the survey response rates and interview yields were not as

large as desired.   Also, my study only provided the perspectives of women who applied to MBA

programs and were admitted. I was unable to expand my study to additional schools to capture a

larger survey and interview sample, which would have allowed me to collect data from a more

diverse group of students with various academic and professional backgrounds.   In addition, rich

data may be found if other groups could be studied including women who chose not to apply,

women who applied and were not admitted, and women who were admitted but declined

admission.

However, my content analysis of websites and marketing materials supplemented the

survey and interview data of the specific group of women who applied and were admitted.

Despite the small sample size, the students who were interviewed reflected perspectives from a

variety of student backgrounds. Although the study focused on only two schools, the institutions

reflected both private and public institutions. The study was limited only to first-year MBA

students since assumedly the students were able to remember application processes more clearly

than second year students. However, adding second year students could have possibly added

additional perspectives regarding costs and benefits of an MBA program.

There were limitations to my methods given the short window I had to collect data after

the first term with students. I had to conduct interviews after the first term of courses but before

the students left for summer internship experiences. Limitations were due to having only one

researcher in data collection, transcriptions, data analysis and content analysis.

Opportunities for Future Study

Although this study informs business schools and other organizations promoting women

in MBA programs, additional studies may be conducted to understand the dynamics between

male and female MBA applicants. A study comparing female prospective students to male

prospective students may provide greater insights into admissions resources that are relevant to

both populations regardless of gender including parenting, dealing with aging parents, and other family-related topics. Such a study could determine whether the decision-making processes are similar or different by gender or situational contexts. Longitudinal studies on the previous two studies mentioned would allow for a focus on retention and perceptions of the value of an MBA. In addition, further studies that focus on prospective students' and current students' views of campus recruiting may be helpful research for career enhancers versus career switchers. A study looking at the engagement of significant others in the application and retention of female MBA students could possibly add to the research about recruiting women to MBA programs. Given that this dissertation only looked at women who applied and were admitted into an MBA program, a study on women interested in an MBA but who did not apply is another option. A study that compares MBA programs in single-sex institutions versus co-educational MBA programs may provide insights into the value propositions and marketing strategies that may appeal to female versus male prospective students.

Although the study looks specifically at full-time MBA programs, a similar study with the various study options outlined above may be used to study part-time MBA programs. Given the increasing number of men and women who are considering part-time programs, creating a study for the executive and part-time populations might be useful. A similar study may also be conducted for men and women who apply to non-degree executive education programs offered by MBA programs. Business schools can then compare the decision-making processes among their various programs to create a communications and marketing strategy that is tailored for each audience.

Implications for Reflection

Conducting the study has led me to understand that there are educational implications that emerge during the graduate program decision-making process. Students looked at social media and blogs to gather information about MBA programs, using tools like Facebook and Gmail chat. Business schools must engage current students through the use of various social media tools and blogs in addition to the school websites. Having student ambassadors write social media entries and blogs may further the interactions between prospective and current students. Admissions officers may also create blog entries to provide admissions tips and advice. Business schools need to understand the various communications outlets that their current and prospective students frequent given the increasing number of social media tools.

Like written blog entries or website content, recruitment events allowed students to meet and to evaluate programs based on interactions with admissions officers, students, and alumni. Business school events make an impression on prospective students, and interviewed students spoke about the impressions formed at these events. Students observed whether the events were held in professional locations and whether good speakers attended the events. Prospective students welcome the opportunity to interact with school representatives (staff, current students, and alumni) and to obtain different perspectives provided by admissions officers. Having multiple school representatives and current students at the events allow students to ask more questions on an individual level. This step could also promote more interaction between a school and a less verbal prospective student if there is an opportunity to interact beyond group settings.

Although not all prospective students who attend information sessions may be admitted to a specific school, some prospective students look at the other event attendees to determine potential fit in a school. To provide prospective students with a realistic concept of fit and

culture, which is highly valued by applicants, having current students accessible at the event would be helpful. These interactions with current students leave an impression on prospective students when they are making final decisions about schools they would like to apply to. Some students also perceived fewer number of school representatives at events as a lack of interest in engaging prospective students.

Although students mentioned the financial costs associated with an MBA, prospective students seemed less concerned with financial aid than their perceived return on investment post-graduation with career directions. Students also described the value of speaking with young alumni to get a sense of the job market. It is possible that these experiences are reflective of more challenging economic times since the early 2000s. Schools can work with corporate human resource departments to promote MBA programs that may be of interest to highly-talented employees.

Informing undergraduates about classes that will help equip them for MBA programs is important for educational pipeline purposes. The students interviewed described targeting women in undergraduate studies about the value of an MBA, providing them with information about the costs and benefits of pursuing a graduate business degree. In addition to understanding the benefits of an MBA, undergraduate students should understand the major course areas covered in the MBA so they may take appropriate prerequisite classes in preparation for the program. In my opinion, business schools can engage counselors at the pre-professional or undergraduate career centers in workshops and campus visits, so they may provide useful information to their students. Webinars and other uses of social media may also be used to engage undergraduate staff that works in pre-professional advising capacities.

The importance of science, math, and business-related courses completed prior to beginning an MBA program has emerged as important to the pathway to graduate business programs as seen in the interviews. To engage counselors, business schools may provide admissions and program information via social media, emails and regular communications to undergraduate pre-professional or career advisors. However, the preparation of prospective students in the MBA pipeline may begin earlier. I believe that having women with MBAs interact with students in junior high and high school is key in introducing role models and mentors, and their ability to articulate how math and science classes helped them can encourage young women to pursue coursework that may equip them should they decide to apply for an MBA. Providing case competitions to undergraduate students may also be a way to engage younger students earlier.

In addition to school staff, family and friends play a major role in the decision-making process of women who apply to business programs as noted in the interviews. Business schools can think about ways to expand the exposure to business programs by holding events where current students and alumni may bring family, friends, or coworkers. Networking events with current students and alumni will provide an opportunity for interactions, and further inviting admitted students might result in conversions of prospective students to registered students.

I also believe that admissions policies must be considered in promoting the diversity within MBA programs. Increasing the number of women in MBA programs may be tied to admissions policies for both domestic and international students. MBA programs must work in conjunction with other graduate diversity officers across various universities and programs as well as undergraduate student affairs officers to build a pipeline of women that may be interested

in business school. Research and articles highlighting the admissions process and what admissions officers value may help students understand the process more.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has provided strategies to address the concerns and barriers mentioned by students who participated in the study. Various individuals have the ability to inform prospective students about graduate degree options in business throughout the educational pipeline starting from high school through undergraduate programs. In order to ensure that women understand the value and requirements of applying to and succeeding in an MBA program, prospective students must have access to various resources made available by business schools. Therefore, a partnership among schools, organizations, and employers may encourage women to consider MBA programs. Students who have the information about MBA programs can make decisions to attend business graduate programs effectively, and this opportunity may promote a pipeline of women who consider and pursue an MBA.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A

The following chart will map out the research methods and analysis for each question:

Research Question, Method, and Analysis Matrix

Research Question	Data Collection Method	Data Analysis Method
What processes do women engage in when making their decision to apply to a full-time MBA program?	Online Survey Interviews	Transcription Coded Theme Analysis Process Mapping
What are the perceived costs and benefits of an MBA program?	Online Survey Interviews Content analysis of business school websites and admissions marketing materials	Transcription Coded Theme Analysis Process Mapping
If there are perceived barriers in applying to MBA programs, how do women overcome those barriers?	Online Survey Interviews	Transcription Coded Theme Analysis Process Mapping
What can business schools do to help women during their decision-making process and in the transition to the program?	Content Analysis Online Survey Interviews	Transcription Coded Theme Analysis Process Mapping

Appendix B
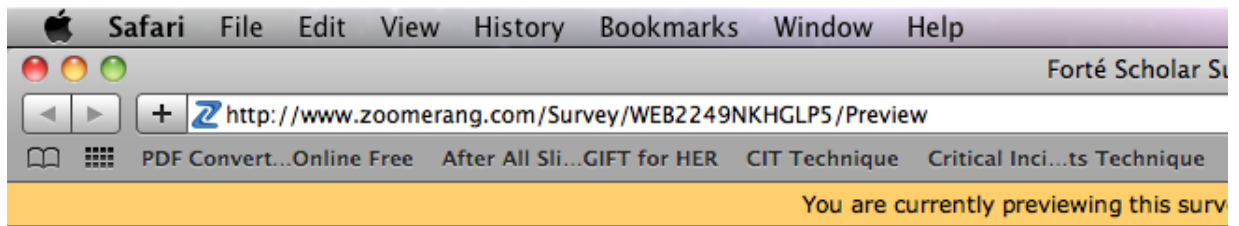
Forté Scholar Survey 2007

Thank you for participating in the Forté Scholar survey. The answers you provide to us will remain confidential. This information will be used to develop a comprehensive profile of the Forté scholars that we can share with our members.

START SURVEY!

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Forté Scholar Survey 2007

The following questions will be used to develop an aggregate profile of all Forté Scholars. Individual answers will be kept confidential.

1   Name

2   Business School

3   Business School Email (if known)

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http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB2249NKHGLP5/Preview

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4   Please provide us with your most recent employer prior to entering the MBA Program.

5   Please provide us with your most recent job title.

6   Which of the following industry sectors best describes your most recent full-time employer?

7   Which of the following job functions best describes your most recent full-time position?

8   How many years of post-baccalaureate full-time work experience will you have upon entering the MBA Program? (please enter number only, e.g. 1. 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

9   How many years of supervisory experience do you have? (please enter number only, e.g. 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

Display a menu

10   Please select your undergraduate major from the choices below.

[dropdown]

11   From which college/university did you receive your bachelor's degree?

[dropdown]

12   Other college or university: if your school does not appear in the list above, please provide it in the space below.

[text field]

13   Did you complete a Master's or PhD program prior to enrolling in the MBA Program? If so, please list degree and area of study in box provided below.

YES   NO

[text area]

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http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB2249NKHGLP5/Preview

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14   Please rank the following factors as they pertain to your decision to pursue an MBA?

1	2	3
Not a Factor	Somewhat a Factor	Definitely a Factor

Provides me with sense of personal satisfaction and achivement

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

Allows me to remain marketable (competitive)

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

Develops management knowledge and technical skills

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

Provides the professional credentials I need for advancement

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

Improves long-term income and financial stability

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

Prepares me to start or manage my own business

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

Allows me to switch industries

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

Is looked upon favorably by people who are important to me

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

Prepares me to seek international employment

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

15   Please rank the following concerns about taking time out for graduate
school as they apply to your situation.

1 Not Concerned	2 Somewhat Concerned	3 Very Concerned

Requires me to take on large financial debts

1	2	3

Severely limits the time I have for people who are important to me

1	2	3

Is stressful

1	2	3

Is competitive

1	2	3

Requires me to postpone marriage, having a child, or other personal
plans

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- [ ] School culture
- [ ] Quality of the Faculty
- [ ] Rigor of academic program
- [ ] Selectivity of admissions
- [ ] Successful alumni/alumni network
- [ ]

17   As you consider your future employment, do you have an industry preference? If so, please indicate below.

18   As you consider future employment, do you have a functional area preference? If so, please indicate below.

19   As you consider your future employment, are you interested in a specific geographic area? If so, please indicate below.

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http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB2249NKHGLP5/Preview

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20   What is your intended area of study/concentration during your MBA Program?

21   Please provide us with your undergraduate GPA in the space below.

22   Please share with us your score on the GMAT.

23   Please share with us your citizenship.

U.S. Citizen
U.S. Permanent Resident
Other Country, please specify

24   For U.S. citizens and permanent residents, please share with us your ethnicity.

25   Please share with us your age.

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Forté MBA Scholar Survey, Class of 2008

Thank you for participating in the Forté Scholar survey. The answers you provide to us will remain confidential. This information will be used to develop a comprehensive profile of the Forté scholars that we can share with our members.

START SURVEY!

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Forté MBA Scholar Survey, Class of 2008

The following questions will be used to develop an aggregate profile of all Forté Scholars. Individual answers will be kept confidential.

1   Name

2   Business School

3   Business School Email (if known)

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Display a menu

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8   How many years of post-baccalaureate full-time work experience will you have upon entering the MBA Program? (please enter number only, e.g. 1. 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

9   How many years of supervisory experience do you have? (please enter number only, e.g. 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

10   Please select your undergraduate major from the choices below.

Display a menu

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11   From which college/university did you receive your bachelor's degree?

12   Other college or university: if your school does not appear in the list above, please provide it in the space below.

13   Did you complete a Master's or PhD program prior to enrolling in the MBA Program? If so, please list degree and area of study in box provided below.

YES   NO

14   Please rank the following factors as they pertain to your decision to pursue an MBA?

1 Not a Factor	2 Somewhat a Factor	3 Definitely a Factor

Provides me with sense of personal satisfaction and achivement

1   2   3

Allows me to remain marketable (competitive)

1   2   3

Develops management knowledge and technical skills

1   2   3

Provides the professional credentials I need for advancement

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Forté MB

http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB225CK5USCDP/Preview

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1	2	3

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1	2	3

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1	2	3

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1	2	3

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1	2	3

Is looked upon favorably by people who are important to me

1	2	3

Prepares me to seek international employment

1	2	3

15   Please rank the following concerns about taking time out for graduate school as they apply to your situation.

1	2	3
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| **1** | **2** | **3** |

Severely limits the time I have for people who are important to me

| **1** | **2** | **3** |

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| **1** | **2** | **3** |

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| **1** | **2** | **3** |

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plans

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      schools?

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- [ ] Job placement reputation of the school
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- [ ] Published ranking of its MBA program
- [ ] Quality of current students
- [ ] Diversity of student body
- [ ] School culture
- [ ] Quality of the Faculty
- [ ] Rigor of academic program
- [ ] Selectivity of admissions

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- [ ] Selectivity of admissions
- [ ] Successful alumni/alumni network
- [ ]

17   As you consider your future employment, do you have an industry preference? If so, please indicate below.

18   As you consider future employment, do you have a functional area preference? If so, please indicate below.

19   As you consider your future employment, are you interested in a specific geographic area? If so, please indicate below.

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19   As you consider your future employment, are you interested in a specific geographic area? If so, please indicate below.

20   What is your intended area of study/concentration during your MBA Program?

21   Please provide us with your undergraduate GPA in the space below.

22   Please share with us your score on the GMAT.

23   Please share with us your citizenship.

U.S. Citizen
U.S. Permanent Resident
Other Country, please specify

24   For U.S. citizens and permanent residents, please share with us your ethnicity.

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Forté MB

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Forté MBA Fellow Survey, Class of 2009

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START SURVEY!

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Forté ME

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5   Please provide us with your most recent job title.

6   Which of the following industry sectors best describes your most recent full-time employer?

7   Which of the following job functions best describes your most recent full-time position?

8   How many years of post-baccalaureate full-time work experience will you have upon entering the MBA Program? (please enter number only, e.g. 1. 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

9   How many years of supervisory experience do you have? (please enter number only, e.g. 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

10   Please select your undergraduate major from the choices below.

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YES   NO

14   Please rank the following factors as they pertain to your decision to pursue an MBA?

1 Not a Factor	2 Somewhat a Factor	3 Definitely a Factor

Provides me with sense of personal satisfaction and achivement

1	2	3

Allows me to remain marketable (competitive)

1	2	3

Develops management knowledge and technical skills

1	2	3

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Forté M

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Provides the professional credentials I need for advancement

1	2	3

Improves long-term income and financial stability

1	2	3

Prepares me to start or manage my own business

1	2	3

Allows me to switch industries

1	2	3

Is looked upon favorably by people who are important to me

1	2	3

Prepares me to seek international employment

1	2	3

15   Please rank the following concerns about taking time out for graduate school as they apply to your situation.

1 Not Concerned	2 Somewhat Concerned	3 Very Concerned

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Forté M

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1 Not Concerned	2 Somewhat Concerned	3 Very Concerned

Requires me to take on large financial debts

[1]   [2]   [3]

Severely limits the time I have for people who are important to me

[1]   [2]   [3]

Is stressful

[1]   [2]   [3]

Is competitive

[1]   [2]   [3]

Requires me to postpone marriage, having a child, or other personal plans

[1]   [2]   [3]

16   Please select the top three criterion you used to select a business school?

☐   AACSB-accreditation

☐   Job placement reputation of the school

☐   Local respect/reputation

☐   Published ranking of its MBA program

☐   Quality of current students

☐   Diversity of student body

☐   School culture

☐   Quality of the Faculty

☐   Rigor of academic program

☐   Selectivity of admissions

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- [ ]

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Display a menu

19   As you consider your future employment, are you interested in a specific geographic area? If so, please indicate below.

20   What is your intended area of study/concentration during your MBA Program?

21   Please provide us with your undergraduate GPA in the space below.

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23   Please share with us your citizenship.

☐ U.S. Citizen
☐ U.S. Permanent Resident
☐ Other Country, please specify

24   For U.S. citizens and permanent residents, please share with us your ethnicity.

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SUBMIT

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START SURVEY!

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3   Business School Email (if known)

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Safari   File   Edit   View   History   Bookmarks   Window   Help

Forté M

http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB226GDFWN96Z/Preview

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9   How many years of supervisory experience do you have? (please enter number only, e.g. 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

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Display a menu

160

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1   2   3

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1   2   3

Develops management knowledge and technical skills
1   2   3

Provides the professional credentials I need for advancement

Display a menu

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Forté M

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| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Provides the professional credentials I need for advancement

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Improves long-term income and financial stability

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Prepares me to start or manage my own business

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Allows me to switch industries

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Is looked upon favorably by people who are important to me

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Prepares me to seek international employment

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

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1 Not Concerned	2 Somewhat Concerned	3 Very Concerned

Requires me to take on large financial debts

Display a menu

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Safari   File   Edit   View   History   Bookmarks   Window   Help

Forté M

http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB226GDFWN96Z/Preview

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Display a menu

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20 What is your intended area of study/concentration during your MBA Program?

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Display a menu

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SUBMIT

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Forté MBA Fellow Survey, Class of 2010

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Forté M

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PDF Convert...Online Free   After All Sli...GIFT for HER   CIT Technique   Critical Inci.

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6   Which of the following industry sectors best describes your most
recent full-time employer?

7   Which of the following job functions best describes your most recent
full-time position?

8   How many years of post-baccalaureate full-time work experience will
you have upon entering the MBA Program? (please enter number only,
e.g. 1. 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

9   How many years of supervisory experience do you have? (please enter
number only, e.g. 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

Display a menu

10   Please select your undergraduate major from the choices below.

11   From which college/university did you receive your bachelor's degree?

12   Other college or university: if your school does not appear in the list above, please provide t in the space below.

13   Did you complete a Master's or PhD program prior to enrolling in the MBA Program? If so, please list degree and area of study in box provided below.

   YES   NO

14   Please rank the following factors as they pertain to your decision to pursue an MBA:

1	2	3
Not a Factor	Somewhat a Factor	Definitely a Factor

Provides me with sense of personal satisfaction and achivement
   1   2   3

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14   Please rank the following factors as they pertain to your decision to pursue an MBA:

1	2	3
Not a Factor	Somewhat a Factor	Definitely a Factor

Provides me with sense of personal satisfaction and achivement

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Allows me to remain marketable (competitive)

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Develops management knowledge and technical skills

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Provides the professional credentials I need for advancement

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Improves long-term income and financial stability

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Prepares me to start or manage my own business

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Allows me to switch industries

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Is looked upon favorably by people who are important to me

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

Prepares me to seek international employment

| 1 | 2 | 3 |

15   Please rank the following concerns about taking time out for graduate school as they apply to your situation:

1	2	3
Not Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Very Concerned

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15   Please rank the following concerns about taking time out for graduate
school as they apply to your situation:

1 Not Concerned	2 Somewhat Concerned	3 Very Concerned

Requires me to take on large financial debts

1	2	3

Severely limits the time I have for people who are important to me

1	2	3

Is stressful

1	2	3

Is competitive

1	2	3

Requires me to postpone marriage, having a child, or other personal
plans

1	2	3

16   Please select the top three criterion you used to select a business
school:

- AACSB-accreditation
- Job placement reputation of the school
- Local respect/reputation
- Published ranking of its MBA program
- Quality of current students
- Diversity of student body
- School culture
- Quality of the Faculty
- Rigor of academic program

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16 Please select the top three criterion you used to select a business school:

- ☐ AACSB-accreditation
- ☐ Job placement reputation of the school
- ☐ Local respect/reputation
- ☐ Published ranking of its MBA program
- ☐ Quality of current students
- ☐ Diversity of student body
- ☐ School culture
- ☐ Quality of the Faculty
- ☐ Rigor of academic program
- ☐ Selectivity of admissions
- ☐ Successful alumni/alumni network
- ☐

[   ]

17 As you consider your future employment, do you have an industry preference? If so, please indicate below.

[▼]

18 As you consider future employment, do you have a functional area preference? If so, please indicate below.

[▼]

19 As you consider your future employment, are you interested in a specific geographic area? If so, please indicate below.

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preference? If so, please indicate below.

19   As you consider your future employment, are you interested in a
specific geographic area? If so, please indicate below.

20   What is your intended area of study/concentration during your MBA
Program?

21   Please provide us with your undergraduate GPA in the space below.

22   Please share with us your score on the GMAT.

23   Please share with us your citizenship.
        U.S. Citizen
        U.S. Permanent Resident
        Other Country, please specify

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21   Please provide us with your undergraduate GPA in the space below.

22   Please share with us your score on the GMAT.

23   Please share with us your citizenship.

☐ U.S. Citizen
☐ U.S. Permanent Resident
☐ Other Country, please specify

24   For U.S. citizens and permanent residents, please share with us your ethnicity.

25   Please share with us your age.

SUBMIT

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Forté MBA Fellow Survey, Class of 2011

Thank you for participating in the Forté Fellow Survey. The answers you provide to us will remain confidential. This information will be used to develop a comprehensive profile of the Forté Fellows that we can share with our sponsors.

START SURVEY!

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Forté MBA Fellow Survey, Class of 2011

The following questions will be used to develop an aggregate profile of all Forté Fellows. Individual answers will be kept confidential.

1   Name

2   Business School

3   Business School Email (if known)

4   Please provide us with your most recent employer prior to entering the

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4   Please provide us with your most recent employer prior to entering the MBA Program.

5   Which of the following industry sectors best describes your most recent full-time employer?

6   Which of the following job functions best describes your most recent full-time position?

7   How many years of post-baccalaureate full-time work experience will you have upon entering the MBA Program? (please enter number only, e.g. 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc.)

8   Please select your undergraduate major from the choices below.

9   From which college/university did you receive your bachelor's degree?

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10   Other college or university: if your school does not appear in the list above, please provide it in the space below.

11   As you consider your future employment, do you have an industry preference? If so, please indicate below.

12   As you consider future employment, do you have a functional area preference? If so, please indicate below.

13   As you consider your future employment, are you interested in a specific geographic area? If so, please indicate below.

14   What Forté companies are you interested in networking with?

☐   American Express
☐   Avon
☐   Bank of America
☐   Barclays Capital
☐   The Capital Group Companies
☐   Chevron
☐   Citi

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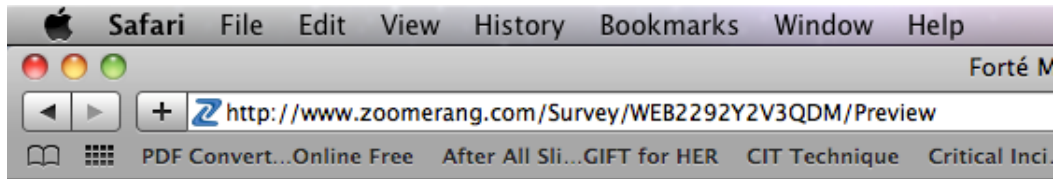
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14   What Forté companies are you interested in networking with?

- [ ] American Express
- [ ] Avon
- [ ] Bank of America
- [ ] Barclays Capital
- [ ] The Capital Group Companies
- [ ] Chevron
- [ ] Citi
- [ ] Deloitte
- [ ] Deutsche Bank
- [ ] Eli Lilly and Company
- [ ] Ernst & Young
- [ ] Fidelity Investments
- [ ] GE Commercial Finance
- [ ] General Mills
- [ ] Goldman, Sachs & Co.
- [ ] IBM
- [ ] Intel
- [ ] John Deere
- [ ] Johnson & Johnson
- [ ] McKinsey & Company
- [ ] Merrill Lynch
- [ ] MetLife
- [ ] Morgan Stanley
- [ ] UBS
- [ ] Williams

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15   What is your intended area of study/concentration during your MBA Program?

16   Please provide us with your undergraduate GPA in the space below.

17   Please share with us your score on the GMAT.

18   Please share with us your citizenship.

   ▢ U.S. Citizen
   ▢ U.S. Permanent Resident
   ▢ Other Country, please specify

19   For U.S. citizens and permanent residents, please share with us your ethnicity (optional).

20   Please share with us your age (optional).

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17 Please share with us your score on the GMAT.

18 Please share with us your citizenship.

U.S. Citizen
U.S. Permanent Resident
Other Country, please specify

19 For U.S. citizens and permanent residents, please share with us your
ethnicity (optional).

20 Please share with us your age (optional).

21 Would you be interested in generating user content on the Forté
website, blog, Facebook group, etc.?

YES   NO

SUBMIT

Display a menu

Appendix C

EXPLORING WOMEN'S DECISIONS TO EXPLORE AND APPLY TO FULL-TIME MBA PROGRAMS

Exit this survey

*3. Please provide us with your most recent employer prior to entering the MBA Program:

*4. Please provide us with your most recent job title:

*5. Which of the following industry sectors best describes your most recent full-time employer?

Other (please specify)

*6. Which of the following job functions best describes your most recent full-time position?

Other (please specify)

*7. How many years of post-baccalaureate full-time work experience did you have before entering the MBA Program?

*8. How many years of supervisory experience do you have?

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*9. Please select your undergraduate major from the choices below.

*10. From which college/university did you receive your bachelor's degree?

11. If you have another undergraduate major, please select your undergraduate major from the choices below.

12. From which college/university did you receive your bachelor's degree?

13. If you have a minor/specialization, please select one from the choices below.

14. From which college/university did you receive your minor/specialization from?

*15. Select the courses you took in high school (Select all that apply):

Accounting	Chemistry	Calculus (Differential)
Business	Engineering	Calculus (Integral)
Economics	Physics	Geometry
Econometrics	Algebra	Statistics
Finance	Algebra II	Not Applicable
Biology	Trigonometry	

*16. Select the courses you took during undergraduate program (Select all that apply):

Accounting	Chemistry	Calculus (Differential)
Business	Engineering	Calculus (Integral)
Economics	Physics	Geometry
Econometrics	Algebra	Statistics
Finance	Algebra II	Not Applicable
Biology	Trigonometry	

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*17. Which of these courses were your favorites (Select all that apply):

- [ ] Accounting
- [ ] Business
- [ ] Economics
- [ ] Econometrics
- [ ] Finance
- [ ] Biology
- [ ] Chemistry
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Physics
- [ ] Algebra
- [ ] Algebra II
- [ ] Trigonometry
- [ ] Calculus (Differential)
- [ ] Calculus (Integral)
- [ ] Geometry
- [ ] Statistics
- [ ] Not Applicable

*18. Which of these courses were your least favorite (Select all that apply):

- [ ] Accounting
- [ ] Business
- [ ] Economics
- [ ] Econometrics
- [ ] Finance
- [ ] Biology
- [ ] Chemistry
- [ ] Engineering
- [ ] Physics
- [ ] Algebra
- [ ] Algebra II
- [ ] Trigonometry
- [ ] Calculus (Differential)
- [ ] Calculus (Integral)
- [ ] Geometry
- [ ] Statistics
- [ ] Not Applicable

*19. Did you apply to other masters or doctoral programs? If yes, please indicate the degree.

- [ ] No - Did not apply to another post-baccalaureate program
- [ ] Yes, I applied for a M.A.
- [ ] Yes, I applied for a M.P.H.
- [ ] Yes, I applied for a M.P.P.
- [ ] Yes, I applied for a M.S.
- [ ] Yes, I applied for an Ed.D
- [ ] Yes, I applied for a J.D.
- [ ] Yes, I applied for a M.D.
- [ ] Yes, I applied for a Ph.D
- [ ] Yes, I applied for a PsyD

Yes, I applied for an other degree (please specify)

[   ]

20. If you applied to and completed another program as noted in the previous question, please describe degree program(s) and the department offering the degree (e.g. Educational Administration in School of Education, Accounting in School of Business/Management, etc.)

[   ]

*21. Did you complete a masters or doctoral program prior to enrolling in the MBA Program?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No - I did not apply to any other masters or doctoral programs previously.
- ( ) No - I applied to a dual-degree program including the M.B.A. as well as another program.
- ( ) No - I applied to other masters or doctoral programs at the same time I applied to M.B.A. programs (non-dual or joint degree.)

22. If you answered yes to the question above, please provide the degree you earned as well as the program completed (e.g. M.A. in Educational Leadership, M.A. in Accounting/Finance, etc.)

[   ]

[Prev] [Next]

EXPLORING WOMEN'S DECISIONS TO EXPLORE AND APPLY TO FULL-TIME MBA PROGRAMS   [Exit this survey]

*23. Please rank the following factors as they pertain to your decision to pursue and MBA?

	Not A Factor (1)	Somewhat A Factor (2)	Definitely A Factor (3)
Provides me with a sense of personal satisfaction and achievement	( )	( )	( )
Allows me to remain marketable (competitive)	( )	( )	( )
Develops management knowledge and technical skills	( )	( )	( )
Provides the professional credentials I need for advancement	( )	( )	( )
Improves long-term income and financial stability	( )	( )	( )
Prepares me to start or manage my own business	( )	( )	( )
Allows me to switch industries	( )	( )	( )
Is looked upon favorably by people who are important to me	( )	( )	( )
Prepare me to seek international employment	( )	( )	( )
Other	( )	( )	( )

Other (please specify)

[   ]

*24. Please rank the following concerns about taking time out for graduate school as they apply to your situation.

	Not Concerned (1)	Somewhat Concerned (2)	Very Concerned (3)
Requires me to take on large financial debt	( )	( )	( )
Severely limits the time I have for people who are important to me	( )	( )	( )
Is stressful	( )	( )	( )
Is competitive	( )	( )	( )
Requires me to postpone marriage, having a child, or other personal plans	( )	( )	( )
Other	( )	( )	( )

Other (please specify)

[   ]

✱25. Please check the following activities or resources that you participated in and/or consulted during you exploration of MBA programs and its impact on your decision to apply? (Check all that apply.)

	Not Applicable (0)	Not A Factor (1)	Somewhat A Factor (2)	Definitely A Factor (3)
Website research	○	○	○	○
Rankings publications or websites	○	○	○	○
School's marketing materials	○	○	○	○
Spoke to school representative	○	○	○	○
Attended school info session (on site)	○	○	○	○
Attended school info session (web)	○	○	○	○
Attended campus tour of schools	○	○	○	○
Visited the department	○	○	○	○
Attended organization event (e.g. Forte)	○	○	○	○
Attended graduate school fair	○	○	○	○
Spoke to professors about MBA program	○	○	○	○
Spoke to boss about MBA	○	○	○	○
Spoke to work colleagues about MBA	○	○	○	○
Spoke to counselor about MBA	○	○	○	○
Spoke to family member(s) about MBA	○	○	○	○
Spoke to friends about MBA	○	○	○	○
Social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Blogs)	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

✱26. Prior to applying to business school, did you interact with the following departments, individuals, and/or organizations at the business schools you were considering and what was the impact on your decision to apply? (Check all that apply.)

	Not Applicable (0)	Not A Factor (1)	Somewhat A Factor (2)	Definitely A Factor (3)
Admissions Department	○	○	○	○
Financial Aid Department	○	○	○	○
Career Services Department	○	○	○	○
Student Clubs/Organizations	○	○	○	○
Research Centers At Business School	○	○	○	○
Student Services/Affairs Office	○	○	○	○
Alumni Association	○	○	○	○
Spoke to professors in MBA program	○	○	○	○
Spoke to other staff at Business School	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

✱27. Please select the criterion that you used to decide to apply to MBA programs.

	Not Applicable (0)	Not A Factor (1)	Somewhat A Factor (2)	Definitely A Factor (3)
AACSB accreditation	○	○	○	○
Job placement reputation of school	○	○	○	○
Local respect/reputation	○	○	○	○
Published ranking of its MBA program	○	○	○	○
Quality of current standards	○	○	○	○
Diversity of student body	○	○	○	○
School culture	○	○	○	○
Quality of the Faculty	○	○	○	○
Rigor of academic program	○	○	○	○
Selectivity of admissions	○	○	○	○
Successful alumni/alumni network	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Other (please specify)

✱28. As you consider your future employment, do you have an industry preference? If so, please indicate below.

Other (please specify)

✱29. As you consider future employment, do you have a functional area preference? If so, please indicate below.

Other (please specify)

✱30. As you consider your future employment, are you interested in a specific geographic area? If so, please indicate below.

✱31. What is your intended area of study/concentration during your MBA Program?

✱32. Please provide us with your undergraduate GPA in the space below.

✱33. Please share with us your score on the GMAT.

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EXPLORING WOMEN'S DECISIONS TO EXPLORE AND APPLY TO FULL-TIME MBA PROGRAMS   Exit this survey

✱34. Would you be willing to participate in a 30-minute interview about your exploration and decision processes to apply to an MBA program?

○ Yes
○ No

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EXPLORING WOMEN'S DECISIONS TO EXPLORE AND APPLY TO FULL-TIME MBA PROGRAMS

Exit this survey

Thank you for your willingness to participate in a 30 minute follow up interview. Please complete the following information, and you will be contacted to schedule an interview with researcher Anne Dela Cruz.

By agreeing to participate in an interview, you will be compensated with a Starbucks gift card if you are scheduled and participate in an interview.

✱35. First Name

Anne

✱36. Last Name

Dela Cruz

✱37. Email Address:

test@test.com

✱38. Please re-enter your email address:

test@test.com

✱39. Phone number where you may be reached (Please format number as XXX-XXX-XXXX)

123-123-1234

✱40. Alternate phone number where you may be reached (Please format number as XXX-XXX-XXXX)

123-123-1234

✱41. I agree to being contacted to participate in a 30-minute interview as a follow up to the online survey.

☑ Yes
○ No

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Create your own free online survey now!

EXPLORING WOMEN'S DECISIONS TO EXPLORE AND APPLY TO FULL-TIME MBA PROGRAMS

Exit this survey

Thank you for completing the survey. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Anne Dela Cruz at annedelacruz@gmail.com or at 310-880-9006.

You have been entered into a raffle to win a gift card since you have completed the online survey. If you are selected, you will be contacted.

Since you have also agreed to participate in a survey, you will be contacted by the researcher Anne Dela Cruz to schedule an interview.

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Appendix D

Note: The following represents the student interview protocol questions used for first-year, female full-time MBA students who agree to participate in interviews.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in today's interviews. Please note that that the interview will be kept confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous. The interview will last about 30 minutes. With your permission, today's conversation will be recorded. If at any point in time you feel that you would like to turn off the recorder, you may do so by pressing the stop button. You may stop the interview at any time.

1. Please state your name and the business school you attend.

2. Describe the process you engaged in when investigating MBA programs. What, if any, did you find challenging or hard to access during this process?

3. Describe the process you engaged in when selecting MBA schools to apply to. What, if any, did you find challenging or hard to access during this process?

4. What were some of the materials and resources you relied upon during the processes you described? What information was helpful and why? Not helpful and why?

   a. If you looked at the MBA programs' websites and/or their marketing brochures, what information did you find helpful and why? Not helpful?

   b. Describe any events and/or opportunities to interact with business school representatives. Who or what did you find helpful and why? Not helpful?

5. Based on your exploration process, what were the admissions requirements that you found critical in being considered for a top-ranked MBA program? From your understanding, how important were the criteria?

6. Based on your understanding, what was the business schools' process for evaluating prospective candidates?

7. Describe any individuals or groups who influenced you to consider business school and the type of information they shared with you. What information relayed to you was helpful? Not helpful?

8. What factors, if any, did you consider when thinking about applying to MBA programs?

9. What were the benefits, if any, in pursuing an MBA? Costs?

10. What were some concerns, if any, that you had about applying to the MBA program, and what contributed to you overcoming those concerns?

11. Describe how your background in math and/or statistics influenced your decision to apply to an MBA program?

12. Why did you choose to attend a full-time MBA program versus a part-time program?

13. Tell me about other graduate programs you considered, if any, and why you chose to do an MBA instead?

   a. What academic or extracurricular aspects of the MBA program that you selected influenced your decision to choose your program?

14. What can business schools do to help prospective female students in the decision-making process?

15. If you could provide advice to prospective female students, what would you share?

16. Is there anything you wish you knew about the program prior to enrolling that you discovered after becoming a student?

17. Do you have anything you'd like to share?

Appendix E

University of California, Los Angeles

Consent Form for Student Interviews

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Exploring Women's Decisions To Explore And Apply To Full-Time MBA Programs
Anne Dela Cruz, Doctoral Candidate from the Educational Leadership Program (Ed.D) in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) is conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this UCLA research study because you are a female, first-year MBA student. Your participation in this research study is voluntary, and your identity will be kept confidential.

Why is this study being done?
The study will explore the decision-making process of women who apply to MBA programs. The findings from my study will inform business schools and other organizations that support women in MBA programs about women's decision-making processes to apply to MBA programs, promoting a more diverse student population. The study will also examine what business schools can do to help women in their decision-making process.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:
1. You will participate in an interview for half an hour about your experience while exploring and choosing to apply to an MBA program. The interview will be audiotaped.
2. The interviews will take place at your school site.
3. After the interview has been transcribed, you will receive a copy to review and to make any changes as needed.
4. Once all of the interviews have been conducted, I will give a final report to the participating sites so that they can see what they can change. Your identity will be kept confidential, and findings will be reported in aggregate.

How long will I be in the research study?
You will only be asked to participate in one 30-minute, audiotaped interview. However, if more information is needed after the first interview was conducted, you may be asked to participate in a follow up discussion to clarify some points from the initial interview.
Participation will take a total of about *30 minutes.* If follow up is needed an extra half hour will be asked by the end of April.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?
- *Some of the questions asked are personal in nature because they are about your experiences.* However, your name will not be used in the report given to your university at the end of study.
- You may benefit from the study because you will be giving the researcher information that will help business schools and organizations to support future students during the application process.

Will I be paid for participating?
• You will receive a $25.00 gift card if you participate in an interview. Gift cards will be distributed right after preliminary interviews will be conducted.

Protocol ID:IRB#12-000218 UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 2/10/2012 Through: 2/9/2013 Committee: North General IRB

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of secure coding procedure that uses pseudonym instead of your name to identify data. The list that links the pseudonyms to the participant names will be kept in a locked file cabinet or locked room with limited access by authorized personnel only. You have the right to review, edit or erase the research tapes of your participation in whole or in part.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time.
You can choose whether to be in the study or not. If you agree to participate you may withdraw your consent at any time. Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?
• **The research team:**
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers.

Please contact:
Anne Dela Cruz
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If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.
SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

_____
Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

Protocol ID:IRB#12-000218 UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 2/10/2012 Through: 2/9/2013 Committee: North General IRB
SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

_____   _____
Name of Person Obtaining Consent   Contact Number

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining   Consent Date

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES
STUDY INFORMATION SHEET**

Exploring Women's Decisions To Explore And Apply To Full-Time MBA Programs

Anne Dela Cruz, Doctoral Student in Education, and Dr. Linda Rose from the *Graduate School of Education & Information Studies* at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) are doing a study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because *you are a female, first-year, full-time MBA student.* Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?
The purpose of the study will be to explore the decision-making process of women who apply to MBA programs. The findings from my study will inform business schools and other organizations that support women in MBA programs about women's decision-making processes to apply to MBA programs, promoting a more diverse student population. The study will also examine what business schools can do to help women in their decision-making process.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?
If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:
- *Complete an online survey with multiple choice and short answer questions that should take no more than 15 minutes.*
- *Participate in a 30-minute, audiotaped interview at your school site, answering questions about your employment history, educational history, and career goals.*

How long will I be in the research study?
> Participation will take a total of about *15 minutes for the survey. Interviews will take 30 minutes. The study may involve a follow-up interview, taking no longer than 30 minutes.*

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?
• *There are no anticipated risks or discomforts.*

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?
You will not directly benefit from your participation in the research.
The results of the research may benefit future prospective female, full-time MBA applicants by providing business schools with information to better recruit and support them, promoting more diverse cohorts.

Will I be paid for participating?
- Survey respondents who provide their name, email, and phone number will be entered into a raffle to win a $25 gift card.
- Interview participants will receive a $25 gift card.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of coding. Only the research team will have access to the data, and the files will be secured in a locked cabinet in a secure location.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

• The research team:
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to the one of the researchers. Please contact:

Anne Dela Cruz
Doctoral Student – Educational Leadership Program (Ed.D) University of California, Los Angeles
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- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

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Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

Appendix G

Marketing Materials and Website Access Notes

The following items include an inventory of the items consulted for the content analysis:

Item	Source	Description	Access Date
Elite School Brochure	Elite School	Admissions Brochure	September 4, 2011
High Value School Brochure	Forte Foundation MBA Forum Event	Admissions Brochure	September 13, 2011
Elite School Admissions Website Pages	Elite School	Website	March 4, 2012
High Value School Admissions Website Pages	High Value School	Website	March 4, 2012

Appendix H

Procedures for Administering Research Methodology

Content Analysis
1. Request marketing materials from Admissions Offices
2. Print pages from the school websites
3. Compile observations from recruitment and admissions events
4. Review content in items 1-3 to find information including:
    - admissions process
    - admissions criteria
    - costs
    - benefits
5. Highlight items relating to items above with different highlighter colors
6. Look of similarities and differences across the various materials
7. Complete analysis
8. Report findings

Survey
1. Create survey using online tool such as SurveyMonkey
2. Pilot the survey with non-sample group
3. Make modifications to online survey
4. Test survey
5. Launch survey, creating a survey or each school
6. Send content with link to business school for emailing to students
7. Collect data
8. Analyze data
9. Compile findings
10. Report key findings

Interviews
1. View the results from the survey outlining the respondents who want to participate in interviews
2. Contact each site and negotiate days and times to hold each 30-minute interview
3. Create a survey (using SurveyMonkey or other tool) where respondents can identify available dates and times
4. Send an email to survey respondents interested in interviews with link to availability survey
5. Based on a first-come, first served order, start booking interviews
6. Call interviewees to confirm date and time
7. Follow up with confirmation email including date, time, location, and supplemental documents including study description and consent form
8. Send an email reminder and call interviewees the day before interviews
9. On the day of the interview, collect consent forms
10. Conduct interviews
11. Transcribe interviews
12. Send transcribed interviews to interviewees for member checks

13. Make any changes, if needed
14. Analyze data through coding
and identify themes
15. Document findings

Triangulate
1. Review the findings from above by comparing and contrasting findings
2. Document analysis

APPENDIX I

Swimlane Diagram of Stakeholders in Applications Decision-Making Process
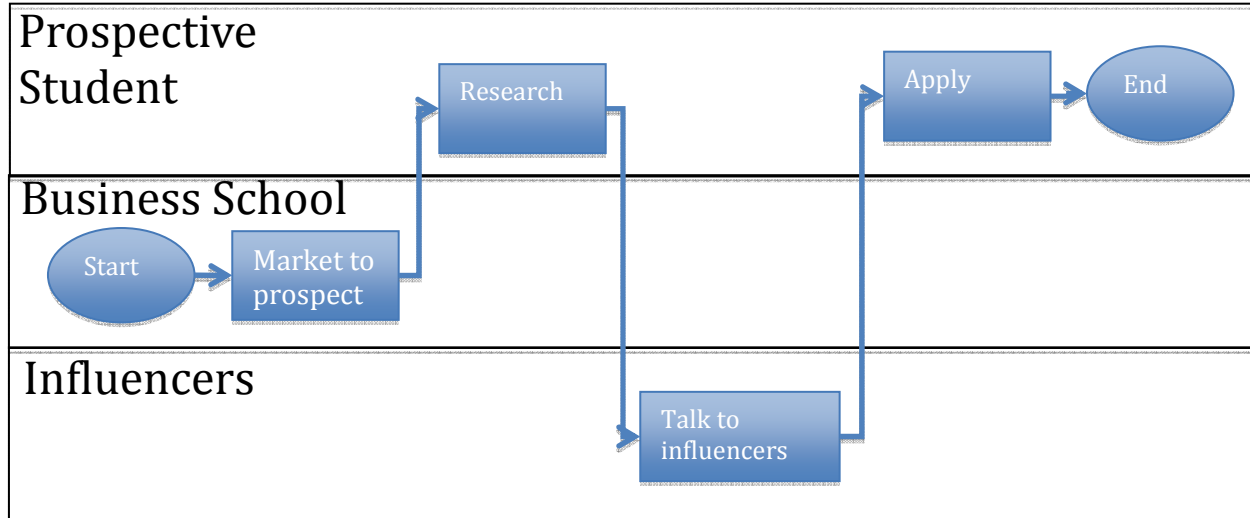
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