

THE SELECTION DECISION FOR AN INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT: A STUDY OF THE DECISION MAKER'S BEHAVIOR*

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How do managers make selection and staffing decisions when they are seeking to fill an overseas assignment? What qualifications of the candidate influence the decision-maker's choice the most? What risks are perceived by the manager making the staffing decision, and how does the manager cope with these risks? Given the current state of research into problems of selection these questions are difficult to answer. This is startling in view of the attention that has been directed toward the selection process. However, as Quinn, Tabor and Gordon conclude:

The interest of those personnel psychologists studying problems of selection has been almost exclusively upon which candidate should be selected, they seldom study the forces interpersonal and otherwise which determine who is selected. Their emphasis is less upon describing and explaining personnel decisions than upon suggesting how such decisions should be reached.¹

It is the objective of this paper to report on an aspect of this unexplored component of the selection decision problem: the personnel decision-maker's behavior in the decision process and the manner in which an international selection appointment is reached.

Areas of Research

Much of the research emphasis into the problem of selecting individuals for international assignments has been limited to the following facets of the selection decision process: (1) accuracy of prediction, (2) predictor development, and (3) personality attributes of successful overseas mana-

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1. Robert P. Quinn, Joyce M. Tabor, and Laura K. Gordon, *The Decision to Discriminate* (Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1968), p. 54, 162.

gerial personnel. One of the most thoroughly investigated areas of overseas selection research is that concerned with the simple validation model of selection. In the main, researchers have concerned themselves with linking various measures of individual differences with criteria of job success. Representative of literature stressing the significance of developing relevant and valid criteria of success measures is an article written by Peter and Henry.²

In that paper on overseas staffing procedures, the authors argue that the accuracy of selection decisions can be improved only by means of comprehensive and accurate statements of those criteria significantly related to successful performance.³ In other words, it is essential to develop relevant, valid, and comprehensive measures of job success. Only when that task has been accomplished can the personnel researcher begin to consider identifying measures of individual differences that are apt to be significantly related in a statistical sense to measures of job success.

A second group of authors and researchers has been active in identifying and describing techniques presumed to produce information predictive of job success or job failure. Hayden reports that a wide range of selection instruments are generally used by American firms as they proceed to staff international positions.⁴ Some of the instruments are standardized tests, depth interviews, specialized questionnaires and visits to the foreign location. From a study on international personnel procedures, Steinmetz concludes that far too many firms are not using personnel selection techniques effectively, and they don't know how to interpret the meaning of the information they have obtained.⁵ Furthermore, it is his opinion that the quality of the selection decision suffers, and that too many decisions are made on the basis of hunch or ignorance or by default. From a somewhat different view, Ivancevich reports that a source of information frequently overlooked is that of the candidate's wife.⁶ Serious consideration should be given to her opinions concerning the contemplated move because a husband's success abroad may be directly linked to his wife's happiness and ability to adjust to life within the foreign country.

2. Hollis W. Peter, and Edwin R. Henry, "Steps to Better Selection and Training for Overseas Jobs," *Personnel*, XXXIX (January-February, 1962), 22.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Spencer Hayden, "Overseas Operations: Their Personnel Implications," in *The Personnel Job in a Changing World*, ed. by J. W. Blood (New York: American Management Association, 1964), pp. 347-349.

5. Laurence Steinmetz, "Cutting Foreign Managers from the Domestic Herd," *Management of Personnel Quarterly*, IV (Fall, 1966), 16.

6. J. M. Ivancevich, "Selection of American Managers for Overseas Assignments," *Personnel Journal*, XXVIII (March, 1969), 193.

A third research thrust emphasizes the importance of personality attributes considered to be fundamental to job success. Researchers have reported that if an individual is to be successful in an international assignment, he should be technically qualified, culturally empathetic, politically astute, resourceful and willing to accept responsibility.⁷

The Role of the Personnel Decision-Maker

Few investigators have examined the dynamics of the selection decision and the role of the personnel decision-maker in the decision process. For Cronbach and Gleser, the selection decision is the end product of the decision process, and this process is designed to provide information to the decision-maker whereby he can and will arrive at the correct choice of whether to accept or reject a candidate for a job opening.⁸ Still the behavior of the personnel decision-maker who determines who is selected and the manner by which selection decision is determined remains unknown.

One of the few studies on managerial behavior in the selection decision process has been that of Bassett. Bassett has emphasized the central role of the manager or personnel decision-maker in the selection process.⁹ He argues that the manager attempts to identify, calculate, reduce, and bridge the personal risks which are inherent in making the decision, and of reaching a selection decision which eliminates this risk or at least reduces it to an acceptable or controllable level.¹⁰ In this sense, the manager follows a minimax decision strategy. That is, he looks over the range of possible negative consequences that may happen to him from making a particular appointment and he eliminates those alternatives that may lead to unacceptable consequences. Having once narrowed the field to those alternatives whose worst possible results are at the least tolerable, the manager chooses that alternative which offers him the greatest expected payoff.

The manager responsible for making a managerial or professional type staffing decision may not be able to take advantage of statistical techniques derived from prediction models of selection. This can occur because too few candidates are available or considered for the job in

7. H. Mangone Cleveland, C. L. Adams, and J. C. Adams, *The Overseas Americans* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960), and William DeGearing, "How to Minimize Overseas Recruiting Risks," *Management Review*, LVI (March, 1967), 12-18.

8. Lee Cronbach, and G. C. Gleser, *Psychological Tests and Personnel Decisions* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1965).

9. G. A. Bassett, *Selecting Managers: A Study of the Personnel Selection Decision Process* (Behavioral Research Personnel Management Exempt Compensation Personnel and Industrial Relations: General Electric Company, 1968).

10. *Ibid.*

question, selection research on a variety of predictors may be out of the question, or little faith is placed in the meaning and worth of predictor information which is available. Under such circumstances, the decision-maker is apt to take advantage of whatever information is available and that he assumes to be valid and relevant.

In a recent survey of business and behavioral science literature concentrating on managerial effectiveness, Campbell and associates recognized the dearth of empirical research on the behavior of the manager responsible for selecting an individual. It is their conclusion that:

In practice, personnel decision-makers use the available information in as yet unspecified ways when a man is being considered for a job, regardless of the validity of information available or the various predictors they choose.¹¹

The Impact of the Environment

The selection of managerial personnel for international assignments does not differ in principle from the selection of individuals to occupy managerial positions in domestic operations. The essential foundation is the relationship between the characteristics of the individual and the environment and demands of the job. The peculiar problem of overseas selection is that the crucial variables in the man and the situation become increasingly difficult to identify and measure. The person assigned abroad is faced with environmental factors surrounding his job and his style of life that are unknown to his domestic counterpart, and these forces can be pivotal in determining the person's success or failure.

Heenan identified three aspects of the environment he considered to be of primary importance.¹² *First*, the overseas manager is going to be separated from headquarters by physical distance. As a result, he must be willing and able to make decisions without consulting or relying on the advice of the home office. This overseas manager represents the company and he is "the man on the spot." *Second*, sociocultural elements can prove to be of utmost significance in terms of an international manager's effectiveness. It has been estimated that 15 to 20 percent of overseas personnel turnover results from the inability of the individual or his family to adjust to a foreign culture. *Third*, the skills required to guide an overseas facility or operation may prove to be the nemesis of an individual. Whereas specialized skills are at a premium within domestic opera-

11. J. P. Campbell, M. D. Dunette, E. E. Lawler, III, and K. E. Weick, *Managerial Behavior, Performance and Effectiveness* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1970), p. 470.

12. David A. Heenan, "The Corporate Expatriate Assignment to Ambiguity," *Columbia Journal of World Business*, V (May-June, 1970), 49-54.

tions, the American overseas may be expected to demonstrate generalized skills requisite for maintaining and guiding a relatively small scale subsidiary facility and there may have been little opportunity for the manager to have obtained the necessary expertise prior to his transfer abroad.

Faced with these dilemmas, how do managers cope with the forces of uncertainty which are inherent in the determination of whom is selected? This study is concerned with providing more systematic evidence on the manager's perceptions of the risk related to the making of the decision and the influence that perceived job conditions have on the selective criteria used by the decision maker. In other words, the objective of this report is:

- (1) To examine how the personnel decision-maker seeks to control the level of risk perceived to be intrinsic to the staffing decision.
- (2) To examine the effect that perceived job environmental conditions have on the decision-maker's judgment of the various aspects of the candidates' qualifications.

Research Method

The data for this study were collected by means of a questionnaire. The questions were designed to secure information about a specific managerial or staffing decision the respondent had recently made. It was the objective of the questionnaire to identify the various search activities performed by the personnel decision-maker, his perceptions of the job conditions and work environment and his judgments concerning the importance of various selection criteria relative to the job in question. The instructions to the managers were as follows: *As a frame of reference, we would like to get information about the procedures you used in making a recent overseas assignment.*

Research done by Bassett and Myer played an instrumental part in the development of the questionnaire used in the study, and the rationale employed in its construction is reported elsewhere.¹³ In addition, a series of interviews were held with managerial personnel involved in international operations of several companies, and these interviews were designed to probe the circumstances and mechanics of the international selection decision process. The combination of Bassett and Myer's previous investigation and the results of the interviews enabled this investigator to develop a questionnaire which examined several of the crucial variables involved in the selection decision process.

Although the questionnaire covered many facets of the selection

13. Bassett, *Selecting Managers*,

decision process, only the following aspects of the selection decision will be reported here:

THE AMOUNT OF PRESSURE THE DECISION MAKER FELT to have been involved in making the selection decision. (The significance or gravity of the selection decision as perceived by the appointing manager.)

The Perceived Level of the CANDIDATE'S QUALIFICATIONS. (The appointing manager's estimate of the individual's capacity to perform the job.)

The LENGTH OF TIME the manager had personally observed the appointee's performance prior to his selection.

The AMOUNT OF RISK the manager felt he was undertaking in making the appointment. (The degree of confidence the manager felt that the person chosen would succeed on the job.)

THE CRITERIA OR QUALIFICATIONS against which the selection was made. (The measures by which candidates for the position were evaluated.)

Sample Data Gathering Procedures

The sample of respondents consisted of 53 upper middle level management personnel assigned to the international divisions of three companies. These respondents represent such functional areas as manufacturing, marketing and personnel.

Briefly, the companies may be described as follows:

Company A: This company is a large, worldwide chemical company. During the year preceding the study, 33 persons were assigned abroad to a managerial or professional position. The questionnaire's response rate for this company was 91 percent.

Company B: This company is a large glass container company with operations located throughout the world. In the year before the initiation of the research project, 14 persons were selected for international posts. For Company B, the response rate was 93 percent.

Company C: This company is a large consumer products company with worldwide operations. During the year immediately before the launching of the investigation, 10 persons were transferred abroad to managerial positions. For Company C, the response rate was 100 percent.

Data Gathering Procedure

The questionnaires were distributed individually to those managers identified by the International Personnel unit of their respective organizations as having been responsible for making an international personnel

staffing or selection decision in the year preceding the initiation of the study. Accompanying the questionnaire was a formal communication from the head of the international personnel function explaining the project and indicating that the chief operating official of the international division supported the project. Each respondent received a self-addressed envelope in which to return the questionnaire directly to the investigator at the university.

Variables Measured

The data were analyzed on the basis of the variables which follows.

Pressure to Fill the Job

The significance or pressure of the selection decision as perceived by the manager as he made the appointment was one of the variables examined. Following Bassett and Myer's methodology, pressure was defined as a function of two items: "Criticality of the man/job fit" and "urgency to fill the opening." This pressure variable was divided into three categories: "High pressure," "Moderate pressure" and "Low pressure."

The respondents were classified on the following basis: Any manager who reported that it was urgent to fill the position immediately and the man/job fit was either critical or very important was assigned to the "High pressure" category. A manager who indicated that there was some urgency to fill the position and that it was important or desirable to get the best man possible was placed in the "Moderate pressure" category. The manager who reported that there was little or no urgency to fill the position and the man/job fit was unimportant was assigned to the "Low pressure" category. For purposes of analysis and discussion, the "Low pressure" category will be disregarded because the number of respondents classified as experiencing "Low pressure" was too small for statistical analysis. (N = 4).

Level of Qualification of the Individual Chosen

A second variable was the level of qualification of the individual as perceived by the appointing manager. The respondents were asked to describe the "Level of qualifications of the individual finally selected for the position." This variable was divided into two categories: "High Qualifications" and "Low Qualifications." The respondents were classified on the following basis: any manager who reported that the individual selected was fully or overly qualified for the position was assigned to the "High qualifications" category. Those respondents who indicated that the person chosen for the position was deficient in terms of his qualifications for the position was assigned to the "Low qualifications" category.

Calculated Risk

A third variable was amount of risk the manager felt he was accepting by making the appointment. Risk was measured by the item: "How much calculated risk did you feel you were taking when you appointed the man you chose for the job? This question was divided into two categories: "Some risk felt" and "Little or no risk felt." The respondents were assigned to one of the two categories as a result of the degree of risk felt to have been present when the individual was chosen for the job.

Selection Criteria

The respondents were asked to rank order candidate qualifications in terms of importance to the selection decision. These qualifications relate to the candidate's technical ability, professional managerial ability and sociocultural attributes. Bassett and Myer's research, Cleveland, Mangone and Adams'¹⁴ recommendations concerning necessary attributes of an overseas executive, and interviews with international managerial personnel contributed to the development of the selection criteria.

Number of Candidates Seriously Considered

The manner by which the manager reached the selection decision may be influenced by the number of candidates seriously considered. As a result, the managers were asked whether or not a second candidate was seriously considered for the position.

Personal Observation

The managers were asked to indicate the length of time they had personally observed the performance of the candidate prior to the selection decision. For purposes of analysis, the respondents were classified on the basis of whether or not they had had an opportunity to observe the individual's work before the appointment.

Results

In Table 1, the results are presented in terms of the percentage of managers assigned to either the "High" or "Moderate" pressure categories and cross-classified with respect to the following variables: "Perceived level of qualifications of the appointee," "Personal familiarity with the individual's performance prior to his appointment," and "Calculated risk the manager accepted by making the appointment." It is the objective of this table to present data concerning the relationship between the

14. Cleveland, Mangone and Adams, *The Overseas Americans*.

perceived pressure or gravity of the decision as felt by the manager and the manner in which he coped with the above variables. It should be pointed out that although the results are not statistically significant, they are provocative.

TABLE 1

Pressure the Manager Felt Himself to be Under in Making the Decision
Cross-classified by Degree of Pressure, Risk, Qualification and Familiarity*

| | High Pressure (N = 27) | Moderate Pressure (N = 22) | Chi Sq. | Level of Significance |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| Managers that expected at least some degree of risk was taken in making the appointment | 77% | 87% | .159 | NS |
| Managers that estimated the appointee was at least fully qualified | 83% | 71% | .686 | NS |
| Managers who had personally observed the individual's past performance | 52% | 41% | .378 | NS |

*Expressed in percent

As a general observation it seems clear that the degree of pressure felt by the manager did influence his choice with respect to the quality of the person selected, the degree of confidence he had in the man's success on the job, and the likelihood of choosing an individual whose performance he had personally observed. More specifically, the managers behaved in the following ways.

First, regardless of the degree of pressure felt by the manager, a large percentage of the respondents reported that they were taking a calculated risk by choosing the person they did for the job. However, it should be pointed out that the greater the degree of pressure felt by the manager the more apt he was to choose a person he considered likely to succeed. That is, under "High pressure" conditions 23 percent or approximately one of four managers felt certain that the man chosen for the job would succeed. Among managers classified as feeling "Moderate pressure" 13 percent reported no risk with respect to the individual appointed.

Second, the results in Table 1 show that the greater the pressure felt by the manager, the more likely he was to choose an individual whom he judged to have high qualifications for the job. Although both groups of managers tended to choose individuals whom they regarded as being fully qualified for that specific job, the “high pressure” group was more apt to choose such a person than the “moderate pressure” group.

Third, an examination of the data show that the greater the degree of pressure felt by the manager the greater the likelihood of choosing an individual whose performance he had personally observed prior to the selection decision.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that the managers in this study believed the decision each had made was indeed a risky one. However, they did regard the appointee to have high qualifications for the job and almost 50 percent of the respondents had personally observed the appointee’s performance prior to the appointment.

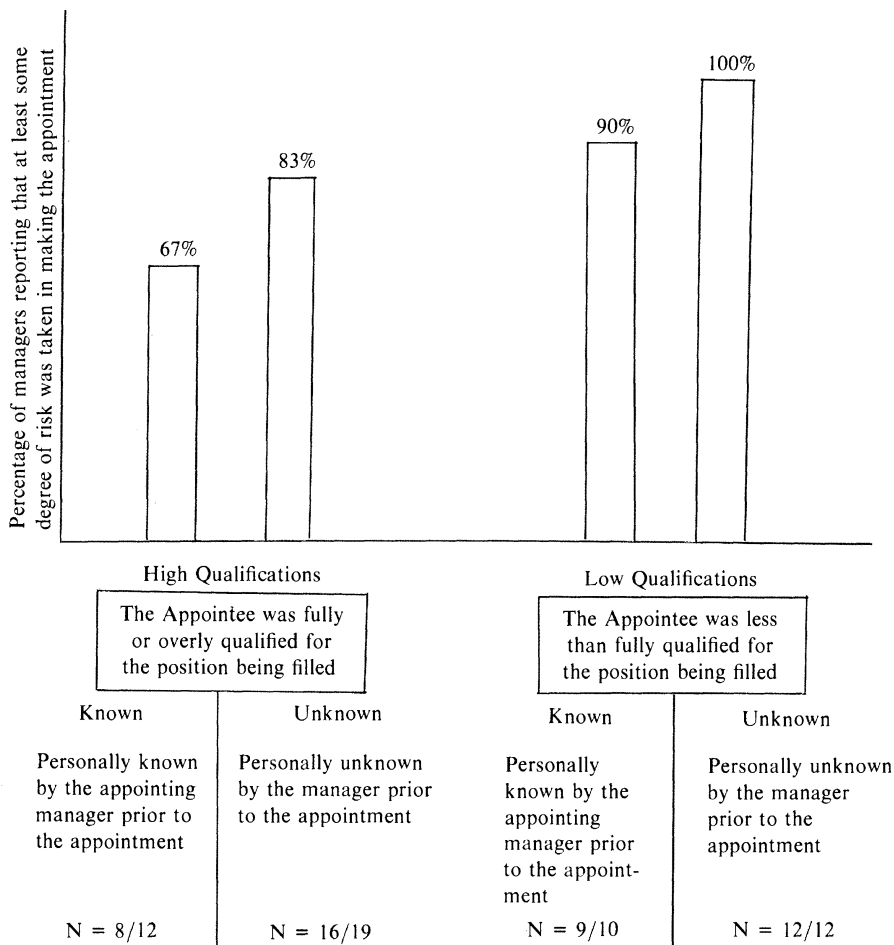
When comparing the “High-pressure” manager responses with those of the “Moderate pressure” group, it becomes apparent that the degree of pressure felt by the manager does in fact exert a differential effect on behavior. The manager faced with “High pressure” was more likely than the “Moderate pressure” manager to select an individual (1) whom he had observed in the past, (2) whom he considered to have high qualifications, and (3) whom he considered likely to succeed. Stated in a different way, the manager faced with a “Moderate pressure” decision situation was more likely than his “High pressure” counterpart to select an unfamiliar, less qualified individual whom he considered to be a riskier choice. Future research will have to be undertaken to understand in greater depth the managers’ responses to the perceived pressure or gravity of the selection decision.

In the following figure the objective is to present data concerned with some of the factors managers employ to reduce to an acceptable or controllable level the personal risk inherent in the selection decision. Managers attempted to control risk by increasing the candidate’s level of qualifications and by appointing an individual whose performance had been personally observed prior to the appointment. This observation is derived from an examination of the data in the figure. There is a trend that as one moves from the situation in which the appointee had high qualifications and was known to the manager to that situation in which the appointee had low qualifications and was unknown to the manager, the percentage of managers who reported some degree of calculated risk was taken in making the appointment increased. Stated in a different way, when the appointee had high qualifications and was known to the manager, one of three respondents reported there was no calculated risk taken as a result of the appointment. When the appointee was not fully qualified and he was known to the manager, calculated risk was found

to be undertaken by 90 percent of respondents who had made such an appointment. Although this trend is provocative, substantial inquiry must be made into its significance and its ramifications not only in terms of the manner by which selection decisions are reached but also with respect to the effective utilization of personnel within the organization.

FIGURE 1

Calculated Risk Taken in Making the Appointment as a Function of the Estimated Level of Qualifications and Personal Observation of Past Performance



$X^2 = 5.750$
 $P = .15$
 $df = 3$

Familiarity with a person's performance prior to filling a vacancy may have an impact on the candidate search process carried out by the manager as well as whether more than one candidate will be seriously considered for the job. In Table 2 results are presented concerning the relationship between familiarity and if more than one candidate had been seriously considered. The results show that the manager's familiarity with a person's prior performance did influence his willingness to earnestly consider more than one candidate. Among those managers who were familiar with an individual's past performance, 50 percent of the respondents indicated that only the appointee had been seriously considered. For those managers who were unfamiliar with the appointee's past performance, 8 percent indicated that only the appointee had been seriously considered. A chi square test was applied and results were found to be significant at the .05 level.

TABLE 2
FAMILIARITY WITH PRIOR PERFORMANCE AND
CONSIDERATION OF MORE THAN ONE CANDIDATE

| | <u>Personal Observation</u> | |
|--|---|---|
| | Had Personally observed the appointee's performance prior to the appointment | Had not Personally observed the appointee's performance prior to the appointment |
| There was no second candidate seriously considered | 50% | 08% |
| There was a second candidate seriously considered | 50% | 92% |

$X^2 = 12.5521$

L.S. = $> .05$

df = 1

The manager's judgment concerning the relative importance or influence that various types of candidate qualifications had in the selection decision are presented in Table 3. This table presents the mean ranks for each of the thirteen candidate qualifications, and it is possible to compare

the rank orders of the qualifications with respect to such situational variables as the degree of pressure perceived by the manager. The ranks ranged from rank 1 (the most important) to rank 13 (the least important). For example, for the High pressure subgroup, "leadership skill" ranked first in terms of importance then in descending order "proven performance" was second followed by "administrative skills" and on until "potential for more responsible position" ranked 13th in terms of importance to the particular decision.

TABLE 3
RANK ORDERS OF THE MEAN IMPORTANCE THAT
CERTAIN SELECTION HAD ON THE SELECTION
DECISIONS

| <u>SELECTION CRITERIA</u> | <u>PRESSURE UNDER WHICH THE DECISION WAS MADE</u> | |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| | <u>High Pressure</u> | <u>Moderate Pressure</u> |
| Leadership Skills: ability to command respect | 1 | 3 |
| Proven performance in a similar job | 2 | 1 |
| Administrative Skills | 3 | 8 |
| General perceptiveness and grasp of problems | 4 | 4 |
| Willingness to accept responsibility of the job | 5 | 6 |
| Direct knowledge of this particular job | 6 | 5 |
| Knowledge of the company its policies and its problems | 7 | 7 |
| His reputation | 8 | 10 |
| Willingness to accept overseas assignment | 9 | 9 |
| Ability to work with foreign employees | 10 | 11 |
| Past performance in overseas assignment | 11 | 2 |
| Wife's attitudes for overseas assignments | 12 | 12 |
| His potential for more responsible position | 13 | 13 |

In Table 3, several findings are immediately discernible. First, as one would expect, the perceived conditions under which the appointment was made did have an effect on the relative importance of the various candidate qualifications. Second, although there was variety in terms of the importance the managers attached to the various qualifications, "proven performance in a similar job" was of primary consideration to the managers regardless of the situation. This candidate qualification ranked first in importance when the manager was faced with "Moderate pressure" and *second*, in terms of importance when there was "High pressure." *Third*, general managerial attributes appear to have been central to the managers as they made their decisions. Irrespective of the situation, "leadership skills," "general perceptiveness and grasp of problems" were among those candidate qualifications judged to be relatively most influential in the appointment. *Fourth*, among those factors considered to be of least relative importance in the selection decision were those qualifications concerned with the individual's ability to adapt to the environment and culture of the host nation. Among the five candidate qualifications considered to be of least importance by the respondents irrespective of situational classification were: "wife's attitudes," "ability to work well with foreign employees," and "willingness to accept on overseas assignment."

It becomes apparent that the degree of pressure had some influence on the managers' choice. Under the "High pressure" classification, the respondents stressed those attributes typically ascribed to a normative delineation of professional managerial qualities: "leadership skill," "proven performance," "administrative skill," "general perceptiveness and grasp of problems," and "willingness to accept responsibility of the job." For those managers confronted with "moderate pressure" emphasis was much more job performance oriented. Three of five qualifications ranked as the most influential in the decision were "proven performance," "past performance in an overseas position," and "direct knowledge of the job." There was less emphasis placed upon the significance of professional managerial attributes.

Implications of the Findings

This study was exploratory in nature and although the sample size was relatively small, certain conclusions can be derived from the data.

1. It is clear that the managers considered international selection decisions to entail risk and personal cost. For the manager responsible for making the decision to select and assign an individual to an international post, a poor decision can lead to serious consequences for himself and those whom he manages. Inferior performance by the appointee can harm the manager's image in his superior's eyes and jeopardize his future within the organization, it can require the manager to intervene and spend

an inordinate amount of time shoring up the ineffective performer, it can lead to reassignment of the appointee and the side-effects arising from such a personnel transfer, it can increase the work load of the remaining members of the foreign subsidiary who are now required to accept a portion of the duties of the vacated job, and it can have an impact upon the enterprise's degree of success in that particular geographic location.

The manager seeks to regulate the level of personal risk inherent in the selection decision by means of appointing an individual with high qualifications for the job and whose prior performance he has personally observed. The general observation that international selection decisions are considered to be risky and that managers seek to control risk by means of selecting an appointee who is highly qualified and familiar is significant and interesting; however, a finding that is potentially more significant is that as pressure increased, the frequency with which a manager would select a person of high quality and with whom he was familiar increased as well.

Selecting an individual who is fully qualified and familiar is the best of all possible worlds, because the manager will have a person whom he judged to have the expertise to handle the job and whose strengths and weaknesses are known. Such a situation permits the manager to predict the candidate's performance with a high degree of confidence, and, as a consequence, the manager gains some measure of control over the risk and personal costs of a poor decision.

A strategy such as this may be optimal for the manager but the decision can be considered to be suboptimal in terms of the organization's overall effectiveness and the appointee's career development. McKean argues that suboptimization in decision making is an organizational fact of life, and it occurs because too limited criteria are used by the manager as he decides what is to be done.¹⁵ With respect to the selection decision, the manager concerned with advancement and promotion is likely to recognize that his managerial career is dependent on his ability to accomplish certain assigned objectives. Consequently, it is to the manager's advantage to select subordinates who are well qualified to perform their jobs and hence guarantee that performance of the group meets the goals it was formed to meet. From this narrow criteria the manager will have accomplished his objective and he will be judged as successful; however, from the broader goals of effective utilization of the firm's human resources and the development of each person's potential the manager's decision might be judged as less than optimal.

15. Roland McKean, "Sub-Optimization Criteria and Operations Research," in *Organizational Decision Making*, ed. by Marcus Alexis and Charles Z. Wilson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), pp. 164-173.

Selecting a person who is fully qualified for a position suggests the possibility that the job will be overmanned, the individual will be prevented from growing and developing as a result of the assignment, and the job may hold little challenge for him. The end result is the distinct possibility of job dissatisfaction. For the firm engaged in international commerce job dissatisfaction can prove to be a considerable financial burden. Research studies have consistently found relationships between job satisfaction and absenteeism as well as turnover.¹⁶ That is, the person dissatisfied with his job is likely to transfer or seek employment opportunities elsewhere. According to Miller, the financial expense of turnover is substantial and can easily reach \$50,000 for selecting, training and transporting a manager and his family abroad before he begins to pay off in his international assignment.¹⁷ Recognizing that managers attempt to control the risk of a poor decision by means of selecting persons judged to be overly qualified for the appointment should stimulate companies to investigate their own means whereby selection decisions are reached and to take corrective steps whereby the problem of suboptimization can be solved or at least reduced in magnitude.

The fact that technical and managerial qualifications were of primary relative importance as selection criteria is still another example of the manager's concern with reducing or controlling the risk or personal cost of a poor selection decision. It would suggest that while such managerial skills as leadership and administrative ability are highly desirable and can contribute to successful performance, the individuals must be at least technically qualified—hence immediate failure on the job will be prevented. The longer term development of the individual for more responsible managerial positions might be impaired, however, if it is difficult to measure how effectively the manager is developing his human resources, and, as a consequence, the manager will not be evaluated on these more long term criteria.

One of the most provocative findings of the study was the relative depreciation of those criteria relating to the individual's ability to adapt to a foreign environment and culture. There is a wide discrepancy between what has been written about the qualities necessary for managers serving abroad and what those managerial respondents actually considered to be crucial to the selection decision. Apparently, these managers hadn't read the literature, they didn't agree with the importance of considering cultural empathetic aspects or they were selecting individuals

16. E. Lawler, "Attitude Surveys and Job Performance," *Personnel Administration*, XXX (September-October, 1967), 3-5, 23-24, A. J. Schuh, "The Predictability of Employee Tenure: A Review of the Literature," *Personnel Psychology*, XX (_____, 1967), 133-152, and M. S. Vroom, *Work Motivation* (New York: John A. Wiley and Sons, 1964).

17. E. Miller, "Send the Right Man Overseas," *Think*, XXVI (_____, 1960), 26-29.

upon a different agenda. One wonders if there is not indeed a good bit of mythology swirling around in the area of international selection. Additional empirical research must be directed into areas relating to the forces playing on the personnel decision-maker and how the manager uses available information as he determines who is selected. Only additional research will provide us with a better understanding of the dynamics and complexity of the decision.

Finally, this study has introduced a situational element into the selection decision process. The finding that as pressure increased, managers reacted differently in terms of the manner in which they sought to control risk and the relative importance of the various criteria of selection is significant. Thus, the study represents just one more step along the path toward accounting for some of the complexities ignored by the oversimplified selection research of the past.

Conclusion

In summary, it is hoped that the results of this study will encourage other investigators to undertake studies into the problems of selection and in particular describing and explaining how managerial personnel determine who is selected. The outcome of such research should benefit those persons interested in problems of selection because they will come to better understand the personnel decision-maker's behavior in the selection decision and the manner in which such decisions are reached. We will then be in the position of developing a model which more adequately copes with the complexities of personnel selection decision making. For the practitioner and the company engaged in international business, an awareness of the manager's propensity to reduce or control the risk of a poor decision should be worthwhile. Recognition that the manager is likely to place his own interests before those of the company should alert the enterprise to begin developing measures whereby this problem can be controlled or averted. For the firm assigning persons to positions abroad, the ineffective utilization of its international talent can prove to be disastrous to its long run existence. Measures must be taken to guarantee that jobs will be challenging to the appointee, and managers will be formally recognized and rewarded for developing subordinates.