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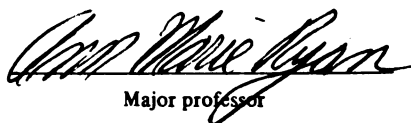
**ACHIEVING RECRUITING GOALS: APPLYING WHAT
WE KNOW ABOUT PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT ACROSS
A RANGE OF ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGE**

presented by

Christine Renee Scheu

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

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**ACHIEVING RECRUITING GOALS:
APPLYING WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT ACROSS A
RANGE OF ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGE**

By

Christine Renee Scheu

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ABSTRACT

ACHIEVING RECRUITING GOALS: APPLYING WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT ACROSS A RANGE OF ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGE

By

Christine Renee Scheu

The current study investigated the possibility of manipulating the type of information provided in recruiting brochures to influence applicant behavior and perceptions. Specifically, the extent to which, the type of information provided in a recruiting context (i.e., fit information) influences applicant intentions to apply, organizational image, and applicant quality and quantity was examined. A conceptual model is presented to explain the relationships between fit, image, familiarity, information type, and applicant quality. A 3 (company image: positive, neutral, negative) x 2 (type of fit information: complementary or supplementary) between subjects design was employed. The manipulation for type of information provided failed; as a result, type of information provided had no impact on intentions to apply, organizational image, or applicant quality and quantity. However, the results indicate that organizational image influences intentions to apply, organizational image is malleable, and that familiarity influences the amount of change that can be expected in organizational image. Implications for future research and practice are discussed.

For my father, George Scheu

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

As early as the 1960's, researchers have been warning us that the pool of qualified applicants is shrinking, and as a result, organizations will find themselves competing for employees (Behling, Labovtiz, & Gainer, 1968). This prediction has borne itself out, as unemployment rates are lower than they have been in decades (Nassar, 1999) and growth in the labor force will soon be at its lowest level since the 1930's (Johnston & Packer, 1987).

Recognition of this competition for employees has led researchers and organizations alike to place more emphasis on recruiting and attracting applicants (Barber, 1998; Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, & Slaughter, 1999; Rynes, 1991; Stroops, 1984). In fact, some argue that recruiting has become a critical aspect of the selection process (Barber, 1998; Werbel & Landau, 1996). Specifically, in the early stages of the staffing process, recruiting can influence the size of the selection pool and ultimately affect selection ratios and utility (Barber, 1998; Boudreau & Rynes, 1985; Barber & Roehling, 1993), while later in the process it can mean the difference between an applicant's acceptance or decline of a job offer (Barber, 1998). It is estimated that with all the resources invested in this process, an organization's average cost per hire is in the thousands (Martin & Raju, 1992).

Although the recruiting literature has expanded in recent years, most of the empirical research focuses on post-offer decisions (Barber & Roehling, 1993) as opposed to decisions made by applicants at early stages, such as choosing which organizations to apply to. As Barber (1998) points out, it is critical that we understand the activities and

decisions of this initial stage because they are the foundation for later recruiting stages, selection, and job choice.

The research that does focus on this initial stage of recruitment suggests that potential applicants frequently have a limited amount of information upon which to base their initial application decisions (Rynes, 1991). Furthermore, the information applicants collect about a company typically comes from a variety of sources including company employees, products, advertisements, word-of-mouth, and recruiting materials (Barber, 1998; Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993; Saks & Ashford, 1997). Based on these sources, applicants are likely to develop general impressions or perceptions of an organization. Two perceptions that have recently come to the forefront of the recruiting and staffing literature are person organization (PO) fit, or the degree of compatibility between a person and an organization (Kristoff, 1996), and organizational image, a loose structure of knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about an organization (Tom, 1971).

The empirical literature suggests that both PO fit and image perceptions influence applicant attraction and intentions to apply (Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Bretz, Ash, & Dreher, 1989; Cable & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1996; Gatewood et al., 1993; Highhouse et al., 1999; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristoff, 1996; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1990; Saks & Ashford, 1997; Tom, 1971; Turban & Greening, 1996; Turban & Keon, 1993); however, the literature has not examined the relationship between these two constructs even though researchers frequently conduct studies in both areas and cite the same empirical pieces¹. Furthermore, the research has yet to focus on developing recruiting materials to capitalize on the effects of PO fit and image on applicant behavior. Specifically, can the content of

¹ As will be discussed in-depth in later sections, image and PO fit are expected to have a recursive relationship.

recruiting materials be manipulated to optimize the balance between applicant quantity and quality for organizations across a range of image (i.e., organizations with positive, negative, and neutral images)? In today's competitive market, it would be in an organization's best interest to vary the content of its brochures to influence applicant behavior and meet current organizational needs. However, the same strategies are not likely to be equally successful across the range of organizational image. For instance, an organization with a negative image may have to settle for simply attracting more applicants, while a popular positive image firm may be looking to reduce costs by having unqualified applicants self-select out of the process.

Additionally, considering the impact image has on applicant attraction and intentions to apply, organizations with neutral or negative images would be well served if they could change or improve their corporate image. However, the image/recruiting literature has yet to address this issue. That is, is organizational image malleable and if it is, how might a firm change these general impressions?

Given that organizational image is likely to have such a large impact on applicant behavior and perceptions, the current study examines how organizational image is affected by the type of information in recruiting brochures. Specifically, working within a recruiting context, can the type of information provided (i.e., fit information) influence applicant intentions to apply, organizational image, and applicant quality and quantity? The conceptual model for the current study is presented in Figure 1 and will be discussed in depth in later sections. The following pages will outline what we know about recruiting materials, PO fit, and image in an effort to lay the groundwork for the current study.

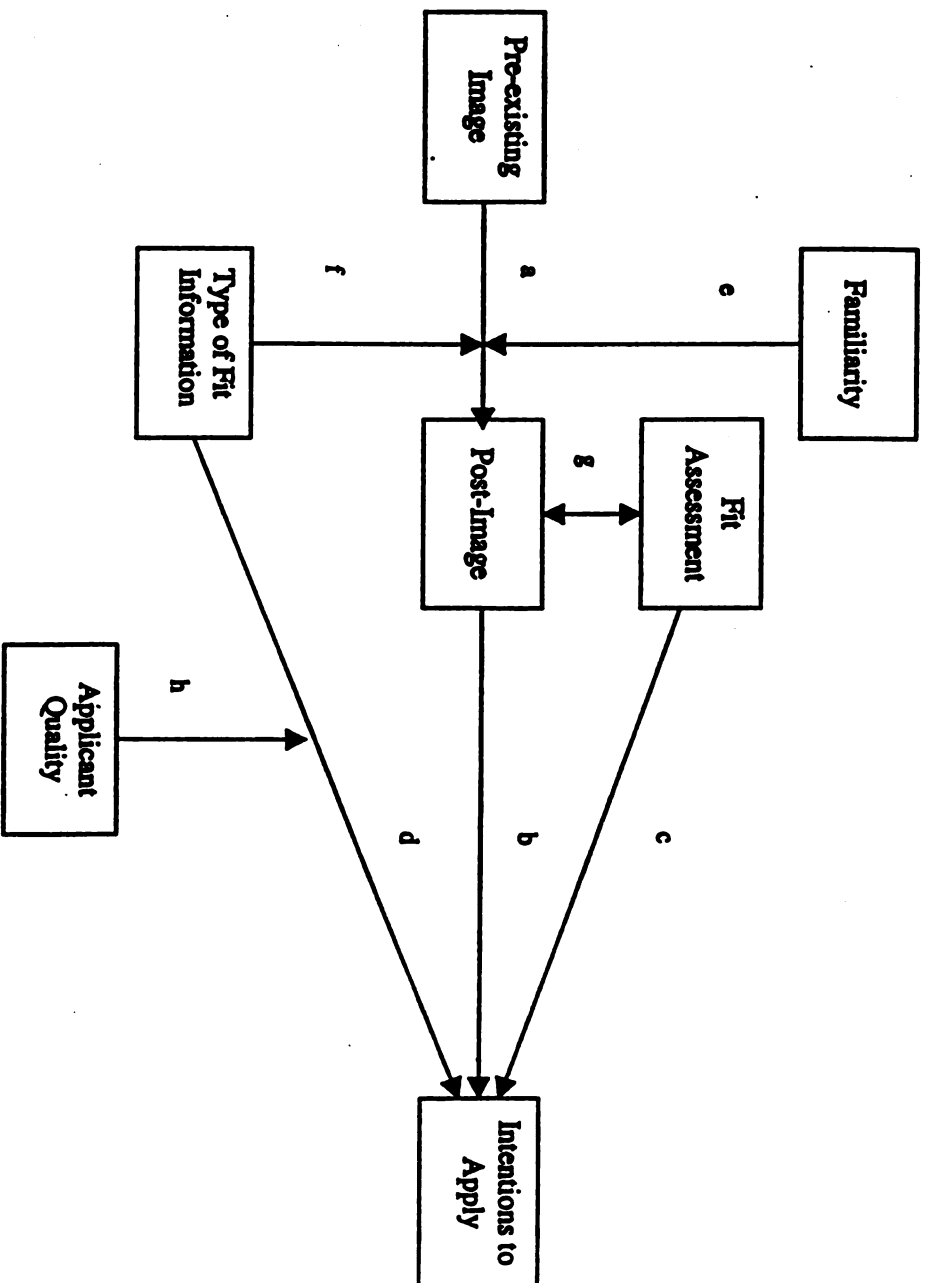


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Recruiting Literature

Considering that recruiting materials are one of the few applicant informational sources that organizations have direct control over, it is not surprising that researchers have investigated the role played by various recruiting materials (e.g., advertisements and brochures) in a job seeker's application decisions. It is believed that most job seekers will review recruiting materials before deciding where to apply and that these materials will influence their decisions (Barber, 1998). The following paragraphs will outline what we know about how these materials influence applicant decisions.

The practitioner literature largely focuses on the appearance of recruiting materials and their impact on attracting an applicant's attention (Barber, 1998). This literature indicates that design features such as color, type of font, and advertisement size (Redman & Matthews, 1992), as well as the novelty of approach (Koch, 1990) are important to attracting attention. However, due to the rapid changes in what is new and likely to draw one's attention, there is virtually no academic literature addressing these issues (Redman & Matthews, 1992).

The academic recruiting literature has largely focused on the content of recruiting materials and how it may impact potential applicants (Barber, 1998). Specifically, these studies have addressed the amount of information provided, the impact of specific types of information, and the specificity of information. Studies addressing the amount of information provided suggest that it is positively related to intentions to apply (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Gatewood et al., 1993; Herriot & Rothwell, 1981); that is, potential applicants prefer more information. This is not especially surprising considering that most applicants have access to a limited amount of information at this point in the

process (Rynes, 1991). Although, it is possible that information overload could hinder this relationship, there are no studies addressing this issue (Barber, 1998).

Several studies have addressed the impact of job attributes and other specific types of information including compensation, geographic location, and human resource practices. The practitioner and academic literatures indicate that it is important to include compensation information in recruiting materials and that this information can influence decisions to apply (Barber and Roehling, 1993; Cable & Judge, 1994; Laabs, 1991; Redman & Matthews, 1992; Rynes, Schwab, & Heneman, 1983; Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989). Similarly, geographic location has been found to be an important factor in the application decision (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Rynes & Lawler, 1983) although a study by Noe, Steffy, and Barber (1988) suggests that the influence of location may vary as a result of family status and community ties, such that, those who are more established are less likely to consider relocation. Finally, various human resource practices such as family friendly policies, benefits, and reward systems have been found to influence applicant attraction and intentions to apply (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997). It is believed that differences in human resource practices are perceived by applicants as signals to company beliefs, culture, and PO fit (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Simply stated, potential applicants tend to draw inferences based on available information that will allow them to differentiate between organizations.

A handful of studies have addressed the specificity of the information presented in recruiting materials. In general, these studies have focused on manipulating how specifically job qualifications are described in recruiting advertisements. The basic premise of this research is that individuals will self-select out of the application process if

they do not perceive a good fit between their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and those sought by an organization (Kristoff, 1996; Schneider, 1987). However, studies addressing specificity have found mixed results. Belt and Paollio (1982) manipulated the specificity of job requirements in advertisements for fast food managers and found no significant differences in intention to apply. The researchers suggest that the failure to find specificity effects stemmed from either the overwhelming effect found for other variables in the study (i.e., corporate image) or the instructions may have implied that all subjects were qualified for the position. Mason and Belt (1986) investigated the specificity of job descriptions and job qualifications and found that more detailed job requirements successfully reduced the number of unqualified applicants intending to apply (i.e., self-select out). However, no effect was found for the specificity of job descriptions. Similarly, Thorsteinson, Ryan, and McFarland (1997) manipulated the specificity of job descriptions and job qualifications and found that applicants were less likely to respond to ads that included specific exclusionary job qualifications. Overall, although the results are somewhat mixed, there is evidence to suggest that specifically stating job requirements will cause less qualified applicants to self-select out of the process.

In summary, the literature suggests that applicants are seeking information and that they will react to and draw inferences from the available recruiting materials. That is, applicants will use the available information as signals or indicators of other organizational factors that the available information does not directly address (e.g., fit, image, organizational policies and culture; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991; Spence, 1973). However, most of the studies to date have focused on a very

limited set of content or organizational attributes (e.g., compensation, and location); thus, it is unclear how applicants would respond to other types of information (e.g., fit information; Barber, 1998). Additionally, we still know very little about how information can affect organizational image. That is, can an organization's image be changed or improved by providing potential applicants with certain types of information (e.g., fit information)?

Person Organization Fit

In recent years, the concept of PO fit has received a great deal of attention in the empirical literature. References to PO fit can be found in research involving job choice, selection, recruiting, socialization, and performance outcomes. Although the concept of PO fit has been deemed somewhat elusive (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990), in a global sense PO fit is the degree of compatibility between a person and an organization (Kristoff, 1996). The literature has demonstrated that PO fit is related to multiple outcomes and attitudes including attraction, job choice, performance, work attitudes, and turnover; such that a good fit or the perception of a good fit yields higher levels of attraction, performance, work attitudes, and organizational tenure (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1996; Chan, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristoff, 1996; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Turban & Keon, 1993; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). Considering the number of positive outcomes associated with good PO fit, it would be in an organization's best interest to focus on fit early in the job search and recruiting process.

However, the literature suggests that there is a disconnect between the type of fit organizations initially focus on (i.e., complementary fit or resources, opportunities, or KSAs) and the type of fit applicants initially focus on (i.e., supplementary fit or goals,

values, and norms; Cable & Judge, 1996; Kristoff, 1996). Specifically, it appears that organizations are interested in identifying a set of individuals with the necessary KSAs while applicants place more emphasis on finding an organization that has characteristics (e.g., values, personality, goals, etc.) similar to their own.

Before further exploring this disconnect, it is important to understand how these two types of fit differ. As previously mentioned, the concept of PO fit has been considered somewhat elusive (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). This elusive nature stems from the many ways researchers have chosen to define fit in recent years (e.g., need-supplies fit, demands-ability fit, supplementary fit, complementary fit; Kristoff, 1996). Kristoff (1996) recognized that these definitions were not all mutually exclusive and attempted to organize these multiple perspectives into the two broad categories of *supplementary* and *complementary* fit. In Kristoff's model, supplementary fit involves a person-organization match on characteristics such as goals, values, norms, and attitudes; complementary fit involves a match of resources, opportunities, or KSAs. These broader definitions provide us with an organizing framework for both the effects of PO fit and the existing empirical literature; however, this is not to say that there is no overlap between supplementary and complementary fit. In fact, Kristoff's model does concede some degree of overlap between the categories. The following paragraphs will outline the findings of the job search and recruiting literature associated with these two broad categories of PO fit.

Supplementary Fit

As previously mentioned, supplementary fit involves a person-organization match on characteristics such as goals, values, norms, and attitudes. Furthermore, the literature suggests that applicants place a good deal of emphasis on supplementary fit (Cable &

Judge, 1996; Kristoff, 1996). Several studies have addressed issues regarding the effects of supplementary fit or perceived supplementary fit in the early stages of the job search. These studies suggest that applicants prefer organizations whose values and personality closely match their own (Barnett, Vaughan, & Moody, 1997; Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Judge & Cable, 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Keon, Latack, & Wanous, 1982; Tom, 1971). Furthermore, applicants make job choice decisions that are consistent with their PO fit perceptions and these perceptions are influenced by recruitment efforts (Cable & Judge, 1996; Saks & Ashford, 1997).

It is also important to note that individual differences in applicants can impact how much influence fit perceptions have on applicant application and job choice decisions. Specifically, applicants who have, or believe they have, more job opportunities have the freedom to seek positions with a better fit; that is, these applicants can be more selective (Breaugh, 1983; Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991). Additionally, the literature suggests that conscientious and self-aware job seekers will place more emphasis on PO fit when making career decisions than those who are less conscientious and self-aware (Kristoff, 1996).

From an organization's perspective, supplementary fit is likely to come into play later in the staffing process (Kristoff, 1996). The literature suggests that interviewers may be making PO fit judgements (Bretz, Rynes, & Gerhart, 1993; Cable and Judge, 1997; Rynes, & Gerhart, 1990). When specifically targeting the influence of supplementary fit on interviewers' decisions the literature suggests that perceived fit perceptions have large effects on interviewers' hiring decisions (Cable & Judge, 1997). Although a focus on supplementary fit at this point in the process should benefit

organizations by increasing employee tenure (Carlson & Connerly, 1999), organizations may be attracting the wrong type of applicants by not emphasizing supplementary fit earlier in the process (e.g., in brochures and other recruiting materials) which is when applicants place more emphasis on this type of information. Furthermore, it is important for organizations to recognize that applicants will draw inferences from the information available to them. Thus, if organizations do not provide information regarding company goals, values, personality, etc., applicants are likely to infer this information from other sources. That is, applicants will use other experiences or pieces of information (e.g., benefits, compensation, company policies) as indicators or signals of company goals and values (i.e., supplementary fit; Rynes et al., 1991)². Due to the limited information available to applicants, they may draw incorrect conclusions; thus, it may be in an organization's best interest to emphasize supplementary fit up front.

In addition to providing the type of information applicants are looking for, directly addressing supplementary fit in recruiting materials may have an additional benefit for many organizations. Specifically, providing information regarding company personality, goals, or values may impact organizational image (i.e., a loose structure of knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about an organization). The literature suggests that supplementary fit information will have a stronger effect on attitudinal outcomes than will complementary fit (Kristoff, 1996). If one extends this notion, supplementary fit information should impact knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about an organization or organizational image. This may be particularly helpful for an organization with a negative image.

²A more in-depth discussion of signaling theory is provided in the subsequent section on organizational image.

Additionally, if applicants perceive a good fit with an organization, chances are they will feel more positively towards it for self-preservation reasons. Social identity theory suggests that our self-concepts are in-part shaped by the organizations we identify with (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1985); thus, if we determine that an organization holds values similar to our own (i.e., supplementary fit), it becomes more difficult for us to view that organization in a negative light. As a result, one's general feelings or impressions of the organization (i.e., image) should improve making one more likely to pursue employment with the organization.

Although none of the existing empirical research has addressed the relationship between fit and image, past conceptual work suggests that the fit/image relationship is recursive. That is, image and fit perceptions will affect each other. For instance, if an individual holds a negative image of an organization she will be less likely to believe she fits, although if the individual perceives a good fit with an organization she may adjust her image perceptions (i.e., for self preservation or to appear consistent). As this is an individual cognitive process, we can not predict the direction of the adjustments to fit and image for any given individual; we can merely predict that these two perceptions should affect each other.

Complementary fit

As previously mentioned, complementary fit involves a match of resources, opportunities, or KSAs. From the practical perspective, it is important to note that organizations typically focus on complementary fit early in the staffing process. Specifically, organizations are interested in identifying a set of individuals with the necessary KSAs. From this set of individuals the literature suggests that the organization

will ultimately select the applicants it perceives as having the best supplementary fit and offer these applicants positions (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1996; Cable & Judge, 1997; Kristoff, 1996). From a research perspective, there are several studies on the early stages of job choice and recruiting with aspects that can be classified as complementary fit focused (Kristoff, 1996). However, it is important to note that this distinction was made by Kristoff (1996) post hoc and not by the original authors; thus, many of these studies still make references to values, which is now recognized as an aspect of supplementary fit. Furthermore, all the published studies since Kristoff's 1996 article have focused on supplementary fit issues, thus leaving our understanding of complementary fit somewhat incomplete.

Only one of the studies classified as complementary fit focuses on the organization's perspective. Specifically, Rynes and Gerhart (1990) investigated interviewers' assessments of applicants' PO fit. Their results suggest that interviewers are looking for more than basic employability; that is, they are looking for individuals who will fit the organization. Once basic job qualifications are accounted for, interviewers use characteristics such as warmth, goal orientation, applicant attractiveness, and leadership skills to evaluate applicants. However, the interviewers' first priority was identifying candidates with the necessary KSAs. This study supports the notion discussed above that organizations are interested in identifying a set of individuals with the necessary KSAs and from this set of individuals the organization will select the applicants it perceives as having the best supplementary fit (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1996; Cable & Judge, 1997; Kristoff, 1996).

The remaining studies on complementary fit focus on application and job decisions made by job seekers on the basis of complementary fit based information. Bretz, Ash, and Dreher (1989) investigated applicant attraction to organizations offering either individual or organizational based reward systems. Their results suggest that individuals who were high in need for achievement would be more likely to apply to organizations offering individual based reward systems therefore improving the potential for PO fit. Similar results regarding reward systems were found by Turban and Keon (1993). Specifically the study found that subjects who were high in need for achievement were more attracted to organizations that offered performance based as opposed to seniority based reward systems. Along the same lines, Cable and Judge (1994) found that different types of compensation systems (e.g., fixed vs. contingent, individual vs. group, and job based vs. skill based) attracted different types of people. That is, people holding different types of goals and values were attracted to organizations offering different compensation systems, which suggests that organizations can improve PO fit and attract different types of people by offering a particular compensation system. Finally, Rynes, Bretz, and Gerhart (1991) found that job characteristics (some of which were complementary fit in focus; e.g., training and advancement opportunities) played a critical role in applicants' fit assessments.

As one might ascertain from the discussion above, skill-based fit is often overlooked in the complementary/PO fit literature (Carlson & Connerley, 1999). The majority of the complementary fit literature focuses on rewards and opportunities and ignores KSAs; however, a fair amount of person-job (PJ) fit literature has focused on KSAs (Chan, 1996; Saks & Ashford, 1997). The underlying notion of PJ fit is

demand/abilities fit or the idea that an individual has the KSAs that a particular job requires (Chan, 1996). The literature suggests that PJ fit is related to job satisfaction, performance, and tenure (Saks, 1994; Saks & Ashford, 1997). Additionally, the gravitational hypothesis suggests that individuals will gravitate towards occupations/jobs that match their ability level (McCormick, DeNisi & Shaw, 1979; McCormick, Jeanneret, & Mecham, 1972). A recent study by Wilk and Sackett (1996) found empirical support for this hypothesis. Specifically, the study found evidence that individuals will change jobs until they achieve an ability-complexity fit.

Essentially, both the complementary and PJ fit literatures suggest that applicants will use reward, opportunity, and skill based information as signals of PO fit. However, there are no PO fit studies directly addressing the effects of KSA information on applicant behavior. The failure to address KSAs in the complementary/PO fit literature probably stems from the traditional belief that jobs are the core of the organization and that jobs are clearly defined and comprised of a specific static set of responsibilities (McCormick, Jeanneret, & Mecham, 1972; Lawler, 1994). However, the nature of organizations has dramatically changed over the past 20-30 years. Organizations and the positions within them change at a rapid rate, organizations are flatter and more decentralized increasing the need for employees to self-manage, and the concept of teams has increased the need for cross-training and a wider array of skills (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1996; Lawler, 1994; McFadden & Hubbard, 1998). These changes suggest a need to move away from the traditional job-based organization and focus on broader classifications of characteristics and KSAs that cut across positions in the organization (Carlson & Connerley, 1999; Lawler, 1994). These broader classifications are typically

referred to as competencies (e.g., communication skills, and employee/peer development) and can be addressed at the organization level as opposed to the job level. Additionally, it is likely that there are a number of very popular core competencies that will be consistent across organizations (Carlson & Connerley, 1999) making it possible for researchers to address competency issues and still conduct generalizeable research. That is, researchers can focus on competencies that are not specific to a particular organization making the results relevant to multiple organizations.

Both the practitioner and the popular literature suggest that many organizations are adopting the competency approach (Caudron, 1997; Laabs, 1997; McFadden & Hubbard, 1998; Nichols & Sikes, 1996). Once a company establishes its core competencies, these competencies permeate most human resource functions including training, promotions, pay, and selection (Lawler, 1994). Thus, it is a logical step to incorporate competencies into recruiting efforts as well. In today's competitive market, organizations would be well served if they could reduce costs by attracting fewer unqualified applicants (Carlson & Connerley, 1999). The literature suggests that one way to accomplish this goal would be to specifically (Mason & Belt, 1986; Thorsteinson, et al., 1997) or more accurately describe (Carlson & Connerley, 1999) the competencies an organization is looking for in recruiting materials. As previously discussed, there is evidence to suggest that providing specific information regarding job qualifications will lead to fewer unqualified applicants applying for positions (Mason & Belt, 1986; Thorsteinson, et al., 1997). Additionally, the gravitational hypothesis suggests that applicants are looking to achieve an ability-complexity fit (McCormick, DeNisi & Shaw, 1979; McCormick, Jeanneret, & Mecham, 1972; Wilk & Sackett, 1996); thus, it follows

that advertising the competencies required to succeed in an organization would assist applicants in achieving this sense of fit.

The bottom line is that for many organizations the goal is to attract qualified applicants, not simply more applicants, and providing competency based complementary fit information may be the way to achieve this goal. However, it is important to note that additional research is needed to disentangle the roles of different types of fit (Carlson & Connerley, 1999). As previously mentioned, the research has typically addressed PO fit as an area; that is, the complementary and supplementary fit distinctions were made post hoc and I am not aware of any studies that have attempted to separate fit into the classifications provided by Kristoff (1996; i.e., supplementary vs. complementary) and study their effects.

In summary, there are two broad classifications of PO fit, namely supplementary and complementary. Based on past research there is reason to believe that applicants initially place greater emphasis on supplementary fit and organizations initially place greater emphasis on complementary fit. This disconnect could have implications for organizations in terms of the size and quality of their selection pool. That is, the type of information communicated to potential applicants early in the staffing process may influence application behaviors and perceptions of the organization (i.e., PO fit and image). Specifically, complementary fit information is expected to cause less qualified applicants to self-select out of the process. Additionally, the literature suggests that job seekers are initially interested in supplementary fit information, thus, by providing this information one is likely to attract additional applicants. Finally, supplementary fit

information is expected to influence organizational image more than complementary fit information. This image-fit relationship is further explored in the following section.

General Image Literature

As previously mentioned, image appears to play a key role early in the job choice decision process (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Gatewood et al. 1993; Rynes, 1991); however, it is important to note that the existing image literature is sparse and lacks a clear focus. Despite the state of the literature, there have been some consistent findings and accepted assumptions, which are described below.

Primarily, it is agreed upon that applicants typically have limited information on which to base their application decisions (Rynes, 1991). As a result, applicants are likely to rely on and make inferences about the characteristics of an organization based on the information available (e.g., recruiting materials, advertisements; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991; Spence, 1973). Furthermore, the literature clearly indicates that organizational image is related to intentions to pursue further contact with a firm (Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Gatewood et al., 1993; Turban & Greening, 1996; Highhouse et al., 1999). And finally, not everyone holds the same corporate image (Gatewood et al., 1993). There is evidence that executives hold corporate images that are not only different from those of applicants but based on different criteria. Specifically, executives, from outside the firm, base their corporate image perceptions on economic indicators, whereas, applicants largely base their perceptions on familiarity (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Gatewood et al., 1993). However, based on the current literature it appears that potential applicants generally have similar perceptions of organizations. Specifically, Belt and Paolillo (1982) found no differences in image rankings when they divided their sample into 8 subgroups on the

basis of race, sex, and student status. Similarly, Highhouse et al. (1999) found virtually no differences in the fast-food restaurant image perceptions of their high school and senior citizen samples. Overall, however, we still know very little about how image impressions work, when they come into play, what they are based on, the magnitude of their effects, or their malleability.

Image Defined

One of the key questions for this area of study is what is organizational image from an outsider's perspective? The insider/outsider distinction is important one thus, it is important to note that all the studies discussed below are defining image from the perspective of an organizational outsider (e.g., potential applicant) as opposed to the image held by a member of an organization which may be affected by numerous other variables such as work group culture and climate.

The "what is organizational image?" question is not easily addressed because each study seems to define image in a slightly different manner. Tom (1971) defined image as a loose structure of knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about an organization. Although this is a rather broad definition, it does seem to capture the highly subjective nature of the term image and it is similar to definitions used in fields such as marketing (Dicter, 1985 as cited in Barber, 1998). Since Tom (1971), researchers have attempted to define image in a narrower sense by focusing on different types of image. Belt and Paolillo (1982) looked at corporate image, which they defined as a set of attributes about a particular firm, which can be induced from the way the employer deals with its employees, customers, clients, and society. Gatewood et al. (1993) interpreted this definition as simply a reaction to a company name and have tried to differentiate

corporate image from recruitment image, or the reaction to recruitment advertisements or materials. And most recently, Highhouse et al. (1999) focused on what they called company employment image or an organization's image as a place to work.

In my opinion, these narrower definitions are largely splitting hairs. This opinion is based on the fact that we actually know very little about image, its effects, or its dimensions. Furthermore, we know that the typical applicant has a limited amount of information about potential employers; thus it is unlikely that they have enough information to create multiple images of a company, not to mention ones that are completely independent. With this in mind, the current study defined image as Tom (1971) did, as a loose structure of knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about an organization held by a potential applicant.

In addition to the issue of how to define or conceptualize image as discussed above, it is important to note that the image literature does not always measure or operationalize image in a manner that is consistent with the definition. For instance, some studies (e.g., Tom, 1971) have defined image in a broad manner, while measuring image in a very specific or detailed manner (Barber, 1998). Others have narrower/more detailed definitions and then simply employ company rankings or a rating on a single item as a measure of image (i.e., a very general or generic means of measuring image; Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Gatewood et al., 1993; Turban & Greening, 1996). This issue will be addressed in more detail with regard to specific studies.

Explaining the Relationship Between Image and Applicant Attraction

Regardless of how one chooses to define image, the next logical question is why should image be related to recruitment and applicant attraction? From a cognitive

perspective, social identity theory suggests that our self-concepts are in-part shaped by the organizations to which we belong (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). That is, when an individual identifies strongly with an organization, the attributes he/she uses to define it also define him/her. This perspective is bolstered by the findings of Tom (1971) who found that an individual's most preferred employer was the one most similar to themselves. As a result, membership in an organization that the individual or others perceive negatively can lead to negative personal outcomes such as stress and depression (Dutton et al., 1994). The more strongly one identifies with an organization, the stronger the positive or negative effects (Dutton et al., 1994). Considering the central role work plays in many people's lives, it would follow that individuals would be attracted to organizations with a positive image (Dutton et al., 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1985).

In a more indirect fashion, familiarity with an organization may influence image development, applicant attraction, and recruiting efforts. Cognitive psychology suggests that individuals will pay more attention to and more easily recall familiar items than unfamiliar ones (Catelli & Zogmaister, 2000; Christie & Klien, 1995). Additionally, consumer research has demonstrated that pairing new products with familiar established products (e.g., through product comparison ads) is an effective strategy for increasing consumer recognition and awareness of new products and brand names (Dube & Schmitt, 1999). Similarly, research in education has demonstrated that it takes less attention to comprehend articles and learn material on familiar topics than unfamiliar both in written and video/verbal formats (Shimoda, 1993; Thorson & Lang, 1992). Thus, it follows that potential applicants may pay more attention to or need less attention to recall

advertisements and information regarding familiar companies. Over time, this accumulation of information from various sources will develop into an organization image (Behling, Labovtitz, & Gainer, 1968). As a result, applicants may have impressions of organizations or pre-existing images that developed long before they were exposed to recruiting materials (Barber, 1998; Behling, Labovtitz, & Gainer, 1968). Potential applicants' prior impressions (i.e., pre-existing image) and degree of familiarity with an organization may affect how much subsequent recruiting efforts influence one's opinions of an organization (Gatewood et al., 1993). For example, if a potential applicant is very familiar with and has a well developed image for company X, the information presented in the recruiting materials may have less impact than it would for someone less familiar with the organization. Additionally, familiarity may influence how much one's pre-existing image is affected or altered by the recruiting materials.

Other factors that may affect the impact of recruiting materials on applicant perceptions and ultimately image are the marketing theories of signaling and umbrella banding. The basic premise of these theories is that consumers do not like uncertainty so companies try to send signals regarding product quality to consumers (Erdem, 1998; Wernerfelt, 1988). These signals generally come in the form of warranties and service guarantees because the high quality companies know that lower quality companies can not afford to match these signals (Boulding & Kimani, 1993). Based on these signals, consumers draw conclusions about companies and their products and avoid some of the uncertainty associated with purchases (Boulding & Kimani, 1993; Erdem, 1998; Wernerfelt, 1988). Over time, consumers become familiar with the companies and the quality of their products, allowing companies to extend the types of products and services

they offer (i.e., umbrella branding; Erdem, 1998; Wernerfelt, 1988) while capitalizing on the quality perceptions of their parent products. Consumers do not consider a new line of products as high risk because of their previous experiences with the company and its products serve as a bond with the consumer (Erdem, 1998; Wernerfelt, 1988). If one extends this concept to image and recruiting, it follows that potential applicants will draw on various signals and past experiences with a company such as its products, employees, and advertising to reduce uncertainty when evaluating whether a company will make a good employer³. As previously mentioned, recent studies have found support for signaling theory such that applicants interpret information and experiences provided during the recruiting process as indicators of broader organizational characteristics (e.g., image and PO fit; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Rynes et al., 1991).

Essentially, reliance on company image and signals is likely related to a lack of information (Rynes et al., 1991). As previously mentioned, many applicants have very little information on which to base their application decisions and as a result may base their decisions on their generalized perceptions of the organization's image. Although there has been no direct test of this hypothesis in the recruiting or image literature, a similar phenomenon has been observed in the social psychology literature. Specifically, research has shown that individuals can and will form an impression of someone based on a very limited encounter (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993; Borkenau & Lieke, 1992; Kenny, Horner, Kashner & Chu, 1992). With this in mind, it follows that individuals develop pre-existing images of organizations over time based on signals and

³ A similar application of signaling theory was used by Spence (1973). Spence essentially applied this theory in reverse by suggesting that organizations use signals from applicants such as education level and past experience to reduce the uncertainty involved in the hiring process.

limited encounters with company products, employees, advertisements etc. When a potential applicant is provided with additional information from organizational recruiting materials, this new information should be incorporated into and have some impact on the pre-existing image of the organization. That is, there is good reason to believe that image is malleable. Furthermore, as previously discussed there is reason to believe that supplementary fit information should have a greater impact on organizational image (i.e., knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about an organization) and other attitudinal outcomes than complementary fit information; thus, organizations concerned about their image may want to emphasize supplementary fit information.

Studies Relating Applicant Attraction and Organizational Image

There are very few studies that have specifically investigated the relationship between applicant attraction and organizational image. One of the first empirical studies of applicant attraction and image in the recruiting literature was conducted by Tom (1971). The primary objective of the study was to determine if applicants preferred employers whose image was similar to their own self-concept. In this study, image was defined as a loose structure of knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about an organization. The study involved 100 students from the University of California who were registered with the school's career placement services. The students completed a 15 scale personality measure (Adjective Check List) and a six scale values measure (Study of Values) for their most and least favored employer; at least a week later, participants completed the same measures to describe themselves. The results indicated that participants preferred organizations whose image was similar to their own image or self-concept.

In many ways this was largely a fit study. That is, applicants indicated that they felt more favorably about organizations they perceived to be similar to themselves in terms of values and personality (i.e., measures commonly used in supplementary fit studies). This tells us little about how or why potential applicants were considering these organizations in the first place, or where these organizations fell on the continuum of organizational image. For instance, did the least favored employer have a negative organizational image, was it simply the least similar to the applicant, or the least favorable of the positive image employers? Additionally, the conceptual and operational definitions employed in this study are inconsistent. Specifically, Tom (1971) defined image in a broad manner, however, the study measured image using instruments designed to target specific constructs, namely personality and values (Barber, 1998).

The next study addressing applicant attraction and organizational image was not published until 1982 by Belt and Paolillo. The goals of the study were to determine if potential applicants are more likely to 1) respond to a newspaper ad for a positive image firm or a negative image firm and 2) respond to an ad with specific or non-specific job requirements. In a pilot test, 218 students were asked to rank 20 local fast food restaurants from most favorable to least favorable. The rankings for each company were summed to create an image index. After dividing the sample into 8 sub-samples on the basis of race, sex, and student status (i.e., graduate or undergraduate) it was determined that image rankings were consistent across the samples⁴. The actual experiment involved 200 students divided into four conditions; positive image low specificity, positive image high specificity, negative image low specificity, negative image high specificity. Each

⁴ The positive image firm fell within the top three for each sub-group and the negative image firm was within the bottom three for each sub-group.

subject viewed 5 neutral ads⁵ and one experimental ad where the company name and the position qualifications were manipulated. All advertised for a fast food manager position and were similar in terms of size, shape, content, layout and use of white space (i.e., factors previously determined to influence the effectiveness of advertisements (Redman & Matthews, 1992). The students were asked to read each advertisement and indicate how likely they were to respond. The results indicated that 30% of the likelihood in responding could be attributed to corporate image and there was no significant difference in response likelihood of specific and non-specific advertisements.

Practically, this study has several limitations. For example, the participants were shown newspaper advertisements that were very similar in terms of both design and content. As a result, applicants had very little information on which to base their impressions or differentiate between these companies. That is, applicants with little information use what is available; thus, if the information provided fails to differentiate between the organizations, their pre-existing image becomes more salient. This tells us little about the role image plays when there is other information available which differentiates between the organizations or how pre-existing image may be altered by additional information. A second limitation is that the researchers did not collect any information regarding the subjects' familiarity with the companies; thus, it is possible that the negative image companies were simply the least familiar. Furthermore, this study only looked at the extremes, that is, positive and negative image companies and does not tell us anything about those companies that have a neutral organizational image. Finally, the conceptual and operational definitions of image are somewhat inconsistent. Specifically, image was defined as a set of attributes about a particular firm, which can be

⁵ The neutral advertisements used companies that fell in the middle rankings.

induced from the way the employer deals with its employees, customers, clients, and society; however, image was merely based on ranking company names. That is, no questions regarding how the firms dealt with its employees, customers, clients, or society were factored into the image index.

Gatewood et al. (1993) attempted to address four questions in their study: 1) are potential applicants' image perceptions consistent with those of executives, 2) is there a difference between the general corporate image and the image held by potential applicants (i.e., recruiting image), 3) what are the dimensions and correlates of the recruiting image and, 4) if general image and the recruiting image differ, are they both related to applicants' intentions to apply? The study used five groups of business majors from the University of Georgia; the researchers used a different group of students for each part of the study. Students used to assess corporate image were provided with the company name, while those used to assess recruiting image viewed advertisements from the College Placement Council Annual (i.e., a campus recruitment publication). Twenty-six firms from the Fortune 500 list and 13 firms that had recruiting advertisements in the College Placement Council Annual were used in the study. For the 26 Fortune 500 firms, corporate image was assessed using the same eight scales (i.e., quality of management; quality of products or services; long-term investment value; innovativeness; financial soundness; ability to attract, develop and keep talented people; community and environmental responsibility; and use of corporate assets) completed by the executives in the Fortune survey. For the thirteen firms from the College Placement Council Annual, overall corporate image and recruitment image were assessed using a five point rating.

The results indicated that potential applicant's image perceptions were not consistent with the perceptions of executives in the Fombrun and Shanley study (1990)⁶ and that potential applicants do not rely on the market and accounting performance indicators used by executives. The researchers also concluded that general corporate image (i.e., reactions to a firm's name) is different from recruiting image (i.e., reactions to recruiting advertisements) although both types of image are related to application intentions. Finally, these researchers concluded that image perceptions are largely a function of the amount of information available to a potential applicant and that applicants will perceive a company more positively as long as they have additional information, regardless of its content.

The primary weakness of Gatewood et al's (1993) study is that the conclusions drawn from the results are somewhat extreme. Specifically, it is highly unlikely that corporate image is entirely separate from recruiting image. It is possible that applicants may hold a company in very high regard and never consider working there; however, it is hard to believe that corporate image would not influence their impressions regardless of what the recruiting materials may say. This finding may result from the use of different samples for each aspect of the study instead of measuring both corporate and recruiting image for the same group of applicants. A study conducted by Scheu, Ryan, and Nona (1999) found that the ratings provided based on company name alone (general corporate image) were highly correlated with ratings of the company after reviewing the recruiting

⁶ Fombrun and Shanley (1990) investigated the components of company reputation (i.e., image). The study looked at 292 firms rated in Fortune's 1985 survey of executives. These executive ratings form the basis for Fortune's annual corporate reputational rankings by industry. The results indicated that corporate executives (i.e., company outsiders) use market and accounting signals as indicators of economic performance, institutional signals (e.g., media visibility and social responsibility) as indicators of

portion of its web site (recruiting image). Furthermore, the assertion that perceptions will improve with mere exposure to information is hard to believe. In fact the authors themselves indicate that one would expect potential applicants to evaluate the information they are presented with, even if it is all positive, in terms of fit. Scheu et al. (1999) found that after viewing the recruiting sections of company web-sites the impressions of some companies declined while others improved, suggesting that potential applicants do evaluate the information and alter company perceptions as a result.

Turban and Greening (1996) investigated the relationships between corporate social performance (i.e., a firm's tendency to act responsibly when dealing with employees, customers and the community), reputation (i.e., image), and applicant attraction. The study used corporate social performance data for 189 companies obtained from the Kinder, Lydenberg, Domini & Co. Company Profiles database. Each of these companies' reputations was rated on a five point scale by 75 students; however, 28 firms were eliminated from the study because less than 2/3 of the students indicated they were familiar enough with the companies to provide reputation ratings. Attractiveness ratings were obtained for the remaining companies (161) from 34 college seniors. The stimulus for all ratings was simply company name. The results indicated that corporate social performance is positively related to reputation and attractiveness as an employer and that reputation is positively related to attractiveness.

One practical limitation of this and most other studies is the focus on familiar organizations. If image is a large component of attraction, what can companies with no or very weak images do to attract applicants? Furthermore, although this study included

conformity to social norms, and strategy signals (e.g., diversification) as signals of strategic postures when determining where a firm falls relative to its competitors.

organizations whose image ratings ranged from 2.47 – 4.87 (on a five point scale), we still don't know how an organization's pre-existing image may be affected by the type of information available to applicants, or when/how the effects of a negative organizational image can be overcome.

The most recent study was conducted by Highhouse et al. (1999). Although the primary purpose of this study was to illustrate techniques for identifying image dimensions and benchmarking by industry, the study did address potential applicant attraction. Specifically, the study investigated the perceptions of a group of high school students and a group of retirees towards 20 local fast food chains. Company employment image or an organization's image as a place to work was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Turban and Keon's (1993) applicant attraction scale. Each subject was randomly assigned a questionnaire with one company's logo and asked to respond to each item as it applied to the company indicated. The results indicated that the 15 image dimensions the study identified for fast food restaurants (e.g., advancement opportunities, work atmosphere, advertising, chain size, hours, location, respectability, pay, etc.) were equally predictive of intentions to apply for both the high school (n= 336) and retiree (n= 102) samples and that image perceptions were similar for both samples. These findings suggest that recruitment strategies for these two applicant pools may not need to be very different despite the large age difference.

This study has a couple of weaknesses. The first is that this study defined company employment image as an organization's image as a place to work, which is somewhat inconsistent with the image questions asked. Specifically, company employment image was measured using an adapted applicant attraction scale. Examples

of the adapted question include “I’d prefer a job there over a job in most other fast-food restaurants” and “If I were looking for a fast-food job, a job there would be very appealing.” These adapted questions still appear to be measuring applicant attraction as opposed to the company’s image as a place to work. The second potential weakness of this study is the assertion that the fifteen dimensions found represent image. A number of these dimensions including location, pay, work hours, work variety, and task demands would be more accurately described as job attributes. As previously mentioned, job attribute information has been shown to be an important factor in application decisions (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1994; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997; Laabs, 1991; Noe, Steffy, & Barber, 1988; Redman & Matthews, 1992; Rynes, Schwab, & Heneman, 1983; Rynes & Lawler, 1983; Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989), which is a viable alternative to the study’s findings.

Although these studies have increased our understanding of the role image plays in the recruiting process, as discussed above, they each have their limitations. It is important to note that one of the most prevalent and serious limitations is inconsistency in the definition and operationalization of image. Specifically, some studies employ very global assessments of image such as a single item rating, while others equate image with values, personality, or job attributes. Furthermore, the stimuli vary greatly between studies. Specifically, some studies provide applicants with advertisements while others simply use company name. As a whole, these limitations leave several questions unanswered. Specifically, none of the research has directly addressed the full range of image; that is, most have not considered positive and negative image firms and no study has considered the levels in-between (i.e., neutral). Without this knowledge it is difficult

to determine the magnitude of image effects, the relative importance of image under various conditions, or how and when companies can compensate for a negative image.

Similarly, information or a lack thereof appears to play a critical role and should be further investigated. Specifically, is the key the amount or content of the information provided, and can providing certain types of information (e.g., supplementary fit information) compensate for, or even change, an applicant's pre-existing image of a company? As previously discussed, the literature suggests that supplementary fit information will have a stronger effect on attitudinal outcomes than will complementary fit (Kristoff, 1996). If one extends this notion, supplementary fit information should impact organizational image.

Another issue that needs to be further addressed is that of familiarity. Previous research suggests that familiarity should influence a company's image, and how a potential applicant responds to recruitment materials; however, very little is known about how potential applicants respond to unfamiliar companies for which they have a very weak or no image perceptions. Additionally, studying unfamiliar companies may shed light on how potential applicants develop an image by investigating what types of information potential applicants depend on, and how they interpret various recruitment materials. The current study addressed a number of these questions and issues.

Current Study

As previously discussed, the pool of qualified applicants is shrinking and as a result organizations find themselves competing for employees (Behling, Labovtitz & Gainer, 1968). In today's competitive market, it would be in an organization's best interest to vary the content of its brochures to influence applicant behavior and meet

current organizational needs. The current study investigated the possibility of manipulating the type of information provided in recruiting brochures to influence applicant behavior and perceptions. Specifically, working within a recruiting context, can the type of information provided (i.e., supplementary or complementary fit) influence applicant intentions to apply, organizational image, and applicant quality and quantity? The relationships between these concepts are depicted in the study's conceptual model (see Figure 1). A brief overview of the model is provided below. The model and its specific links will be discussed in detail throughout this section.

Overview of the Conceptual Model

In this model (see Figure 1), it is proposed that job seekers start out with a pre-existing image of potential employers. As previously discussed, this pre-existing image develops over time based on signals and limited encounters with company products, employees, advertisements, etc. Similarly, job seekers will vary on the degree of familiarity they have with potential employers and this is expected to affect how much job seekers will be influenced by the recruiting process. As these job seekers enter the recruiting process they will receive various types of information that is likely to influence their knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about an organization (i.e., image; Tom, 1971), resulting in a revised or post-image of the organization. Similarly, based on the available information job seekers will make some determination of how well they would fit at various organizations (i.e., perceived fit assessment). However, due to the need for self-preservation and consistency, job seekers' fit assessments and post-images are expected to influence each other. Ultimately, the available information, post-image, and fit assessments will impact job seekers' intentions to apply. Finally, the relationship

between information type and intentions to apply is expected to be weaker for the more selective qualified applicants.

Effects on Intentions to Apply

The literature suggests that there are a number of factors that may influence job seekers' application decisions, including the recruiting/selection process, job attributes (e.g., compensation, location, benefits, etc), company policies (e.g., reward systems, promotion systems, family friendly and diversity programs, etc), individual differences (e.g., conscientiousness, confidence of employability, etc), the available information, organizational image, and fit perceptions to name a few (Barber, 1998; Barber & Roehling, 1993; Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Breauigh, 1983; Bretz, Ash, & Dreher, 1989; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Gatewood et al., 1993; Highhouse et al., 1999; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristoff, 1996; Laabs, 1991; Noe, Steffy, & Barber, 1988; Redman & Matthews, 1992; Rynes, Bretz & Gerhart, 1990; Rynes, Schwab, & Heneman, 1983; Rynes & Lawler, 1983; Saks & Ashford, 1997; Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989; Tom, 1971; Turban & Greening, 1996; Turban & Keon, 1993). As indicated by the model (see Figure 1), the current study addressed the influence of post-image (link b), type of information (link d), and perceived fit (link c) on application intentions.

Previous research on organizational image clearly suggests image is related to applicant attraction and intentions to pursue further contact with a firm (Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Gatewood et al., 1993; Highhouse et al., 1999; Tom, 1971; Turban & Greening, 1996). Specifically, the literature indicates that applicants prefer organizations with a positive image over organizations with a negative image (Belt & Paolillo, 1982;

Gatewood et al., 1993; Highhouse et al., 1999; Turban & Greening, 1996). However, it is important to note that previous research has failed to look at the entire range of organizational image (i.e., positive, neutral, and negative image). The current study expanded upon past research by addressing this issue. Based on the results of past research it is hypothesized that:

H1: Intentions to apply will increase as post-image increases. (link b)

The current study also investigated the effects of information type on applicant intentions. The existing literature indicates that applicants are seeking information and that they will react to and draw inferences from recruiting materials. However, past research has typically focused on a very limited set of content/organizational attributes, thus, it is unclear how job seekers would respond to other types of information. The current study was particularly interested in how potential applicants' perceptions and behaviors may be affected by supplementary vs. complementary fit information and how various organizations can capitalize on these effects to achieve their recruiting goals. Specifically, negative and neutral image organizations generally have to settle for attracting applicants, not weeding out applicants; while positive image firms may be looking to reduce costs by having unqualified applicants self-select out of the process. Because recruiting brochures can only be so long, it would be very useful to know what types of information (i.e., supplementary vs. complementary) companies should emphasize to achieve the desired results (i.e., quality vs. quantity).

As previously discussed, applicants place a good deal of emphasis on supplementary fit, make job choice decisions that are consistent with their fit perceptions, which are in turn are influenced by recruitment efforts (Barnett, Vaughan, & Moody, 1997; Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Judge & Cable, 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992;

Kristoff, 1996; Keon, Latack, & Wanous, 1982; Saks & Ashford, 1997; Tom, 1971).

Additionally, if supplementary fit information is not provided, applicants will infer this information from other sources. Thus, by providing supplementary fit information organizations increase the likelihood that applicants will draw accurate fit conclusions. Although some job seekers may choose not to apply to the organization because they perceive a poor fit, these numbers should not be especially large because the value and goal information provided is typically general, very positive, and non-exclusionary.

Complementary fit information, on the other hand, could be perceived as exclusionary and reduce the number of applicants. Specifically, based on the existing literature, there is reason to believe that recruiting materials containing information about specific competencies (i.e., complementary fit information) will cause less qualified applicants to self select out of the process (Mason & Belt, 1986; McCormick, DeNisi & Shaw, 1979; McCormick, Jeanneret, & Mecham, 1972; Thorsteinson, Ryan, & McFarland, 1997; Wilk & Sackett, 1996). If one extends this to the current study, it follows that complementary fit information provided early in the recruiting process should deter less qualified applicants while supplementary fit information should deter comparatively fewer applicants due to its non-exclusionary nature. Thus it is hypothesized that:

H2: Intentions to apply will be higher when applicants are supplied with supplementary fit information than when supplied with complementary fit information. (see Figure 1 link d)

Along the same lines, past research indicates that individual differences can impact how much influence fit perceptions have on applicant application and job choice decisions. Specifically, applicants who have (or believe they have) more job opportunities have the freedom to seek positions with a better fit, that is, qualified

applicants can be more selective (Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Breaugh, 1983). As a result, these applicants tend to look for reasons to weed out organizations. Thus, for qualified applicants, complementary fit information should provide little to discourage them; however, if anything in the supplementary fit information is perceived negatively, they are likely to self select out of the process. Thus it is hypothesized that:

H3: Applicant quality will moderate the relationship between the type of information provided and intentions to apply such that type of information provided will have less of a relationship to intentions to apply for qualified applicants. (link h)

Another factor that is expected to influence applicant attraction and intentions to apply is perceived fit with an organization (link c). Perceived fit refers to one's beliefs or expectations regarding compatibility with an organization. Although these beliefs or perceptions may or may not be accurate, (i.e., Accuracy is generally associated with actual as opposed to perceived fit) they are expected to play a critical role in the initial decision process. That is, if potential applicants do not hold positive fit perceptions they may not apply to an organization, thus, making actual fit or the accuracy of these perceptions irrelevant. As previously discussed, the literature clearly suggests that applicants prefer organizations whose characteristics are similar to their own (Barnett, Vaughan, & Moody, 1997; Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Judge & Cable, 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Keon, Latack, & Wanous, 1982; Tom, 1971), that applicants make job choice decisions that are consistent with their PO fit perceptions, and that these perceptions are influenced by recruitment efforts (Cable & Judge, 1996; Saks & Ashford, 1997). It is important to reiterate that past research has typically addressed global fit assessments and has made no effort to investigate or measure different types of fit assessments (i.e., complementary and supplementary). In keeping with past research, the

current study employed one fit measure; however, the questions have been adapted to reflect both types of fit and a factor analysis will be run to determine if there are two factors. Thus it is hypothesized that:

H4: Intentions to apply will be positively related to assessments of fit. (link C)

When discussing fit perceptions, it is also important to mention that the image fit relationship is expected to be recursive (link g). As previously discussed, this is an individual cognitive process; thus, we can not predict the direction of the adjustments to fit and image for any given individual. We can merely predict that these two perceptions should be related each other. That is, in some cases individuals will adjust their fit perceptions to be more in line with their image perceptions while in other cases individuals will adjust their image perceptions to make them more consistent with their fit perceptions. Furthermore, it is expected that there will only be a moderate correlation between post image and the perceived fit assessment. This expectation is based on the notion that although fit and image will affect each other, they remain separate constructs. Thus it is hypothesized that:

H5: Post image and the perceived fit assessment will be moderately correlated.

Effects on Post Image

In addition to application intentions, the current study also sought to expand past research by addressing the possibility of image malleability. That is, can an organization improve or change its image? Considering the impact image has on applicant attraction and intentions to apply, organizations with neutral or negative images would be well served if they could change or improve their corporate image. It is believed that individuals develop pre-existing images of organizations over time based on signals and

limited encounters with company products, employees, advertisements, etc. When a potential applicant is provided with additional information from recruiting materials, this new information should be incorporated into and have some impact on the pre-existing image of the organization (link a).

The current study was specifically interested in the effects of fit information on organizational image (link f). As previously discussed, providing applicants with supplementary fit information (i.e., company personality, goals, or values) may impact perceptions of organizational image. The literature suggests that supplementary fit information will have a stronger effect on attitudinal outcomes than will complementary fit (Kristoff, 1996). If one extends this notion, supplementary fit information should impact knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about an organization or organizational image and complementary fit information should have less of an effect. Thus the current study hypothesizes that:

H6: The type of fit information provided will moderate the pre/post image relationship such that the greatest changes in image perceptions will be found when applicants are supplied with supplementary fit information.
(link f)

Another factor that is likely to moderate the pre-post image relationship is an applicant's familiarity with an organization (link e). Past studies suggest that familiarity with an organization may influence image development, applicant attraction, and recruiting efforts. Specifically, there is good reason to believe that applicants are not 'blank slates' (Barber, 1998). That is, over time, potential applicants accumulate information from various sources and this information forms the basis for an organization image (Behling, Labovtitz, & Gainer, 1968). As a result, applicants may have impressions of organizations or pre-existing images that developed long before they were

exposed to recruiting materials (Barber, 1998; Behling, Labovtitz & Gainer, 1968).

Potential applicants' pre-existing image perceptions and degree of familiarity with an organization may affect how much subsequent recruiting efforts influence opinions of an organization (Gatewood et al., 1993). For example, if a potential applicant is very familiar with and has a well developed image for company X, the information presented in the recruiting materials may have less impact than it would for someone less familiar with the organization. Additionally, familiarity may influence how much one's pre-existing image is affected or altered by the recruiting materials. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H7: Familiarity will moderate the pre/post image relationship such that the less familiar the applicant is with the organization the more image will change from pre to post. (link e)

Chapter 2

METHODS

Subjects

All participants were recruited from psychology classes at a large mid-western university and received course credit for their participation. The pilot study included 25 participants. 76% of the participants were female and 84% were White. 52% of the participants were between the ages of 18 and 20 and 56% were juniors and seniors. The experiment included 203 participants total and there were approximately 34 people in each of the six cells. 75% of the participants were female and 86% were white. 74% of the participants were between the ages of 18-20 and 42% were juniors and seniors. Demographic comparisons of the pilot and experimental samples indicate that there were no significant differences between the two groups of participants. Additionally,

comparisons of the two experimental conditions indicated that there were no significant demographic differences between the groups.

Design

A 3 (company image: positive, neutral, negative) x 2 (type of fit information: complementary or supplementary) between subjects design was employed. A between subject design was used because it allowed the information provided to the subjects to remain constant (i.e., complementary or supplementary) across organizations and avoid potential order effects. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the 6 conditions using the roll of a die and were asked to review one of two sets of recruiting materials and answer a series of questions.

Procedure

A pilot study was conducted to select three companies for the experiment. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to investigate student perceptions of various companies and were asked to complete a consent form (see Appendix A). Each participant then received a survey that instructed them to rate 10-15 manufacturing based Fortune 500 companies using the image scale developed for this study (see Appendix B for measures). In addition to image questions, the survey contained demographic questions for later comparisons of the pilot and experimental samples and the familiarity scale to establish some sense of how the sample varies in its familiarity within and between the organizations. Past research indicates that students are not familiar with many companies found on lists such as the Fortune 500 (Scheu et al., 1999; Turban & Greening, 1996), and this should be taken into consideration when selecting organizations for the experiment. After completing the survey, participants

were provided with a debriefing form (see Appendix C). The goal of the pilot was to identify companies that varied in image and ultimately include 1 positive, 1 negative, and 1 neutral image organization in the experiment. The final decision regarding which companies to include was based on the means and variances of the image data.

The data for the actual experiment was collected in two parts. At least 24 hours prior to the actual experiment, participants completed a self-evaluation of their competencies as part of the pre-screening questionnaires completed on the subject pool web site (see Appendix E). Additional competency questions were included to draw attention away from the competencies relevant to the experiment. The goal was to collect this information at a separate point in time to prevent participants from making any connection between the competencies advertised in the complementary fit condition and the self-ratings. Experiment participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to evaluate recruiting materials and were asked to complete a consent form (see Appendix D). Each participant received a packet for one of the six conditions. Each packet contained either the supplementary (i.e., values) or complementary (i.e., competencies) based recruiting materials developed for this study (see Appendix E for recruiting materials). For this study, values were defined as “enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state is preferred to its opposite, thereby guiding individuals’ attitudes, judgements, and behaviors” (Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1989, Rokeach, 1973). The specific company values described in the supplementary fit condition included Ravlin and Meglino’s (1987) four values and an additional 5 values from the Organizational Cultural Profile (OCP)⁷; these five values were among the most

⁷ The OCP was used as a measure of organizational values by Cable & Judge (1996, 1997)

frequently mentioned values on company web sites (Scheu et al., 1999). For this study, competencies were defined as broad classifications of characteristics and skills that cut across positions in organizations. The specific competencies described in the complementary fit condition were selected from a taxonomy developed by Tett and his colleagues (1999). After conducting a detailed literature review and a series of surveys, Tett (1999) identified 9 dimensions and 53 competencies. The current study included one competency from each of the nine dimensions. The packets contained demographic questions, a pre-image measure, a familiarity scale, a post-image measure, and questions regarding their intentions to apply (see Appendix B).

Instructions in the packet informed participants that company X (i.e., the company they were assigned to) was updating segments of its recruiting materials and that the company wanted to see how students respond to the current draft. As research indicates that design features can influence the impact of recruiting materials (Redman & Matthews, 1992), participants were informed that company X is concerned with the content of the materials not the layout or design. Before reviewing any materials, the participants completed the demographic questions, the familiarity scale, and the pre-image scale. After completing these questions, participants were asked to review the materials, pretend they were looking for a job and answer the remaining questions accordingly. As previously mentioned, past research has indicated that job attributes can play an important factor in job choice decisions (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1994; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997; Laabs, 1991; Noe, Steffy, & Barber, 1988; Redman & Matthews, 1992; Rynes, Schwab, & Heneman, 1983; Rynes & Lawler, 1983; Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989); in an effort to take job attributes out of the

equation, participants were also informed that they should assume the company has a position they would be interested in, the position pays well relative to similar positions in other companies, and there are positions available in good locations. After participants completed the questions in the packet, they were provided with a debriefing form (see Appendix F).

Measures

The subjects completed a variety of measures, which are described below. The items are provided in Appendix B.

Familiarity. This scale assessed respondents' familiarity with the organizations included in the study. The familiarity scale consisted of 10 items rated on a 5-point likert scale, which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questions composing the scale were adapted from Gatewood et al. (1993).

Intentions to apply. This scale assessed respondents' intentions to apply to the organization. The scale consisted of 4 items rated on a 5-point likert scale which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and two items that were rated as yes, no, or maybe. These questions were developed for the study in an attempt to capture more of a behavioral component of application intentions. The first 4 questions were adapted from Ployhart and Ryan (1998). In past studies, the reliability estimates ranged from .72 to .88.

Pre/Post Image. This scale assessed image as a loose structure of knowledge, beliefs, and feelings about an organization held by a potential applicant. The scale consisted of 18 items rated on a 5-point likert scale, which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The scale was developed by compiling items from a

number of sources including Barber and Roehling (1993), Cable and Judge (1997), Goltz and Giannantonio (1995), and Highhouse et al. (1999).

Fit Assessment. This scale assessed respondents' perceived fit with the organization. The scale consisted of 6 items rated on a 5-point likert scale, which ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The scale was developed by compiling items from Cable and Judge (1996), and Goltz and Giannantonio (1995).

Competency Assessment. This scale assessed respondents' perceived competencies (e.g., team building, customer focus, creative thinking, self-development). The scale consisted of 9 items rated on a 5-point likert type scale, which ranges from "not at all skilled" to "very skilled." The scale was developed for the purpose of this study.

Demographics. Information regarding various demographic variables including sex, race, age, years in college.

Applicant Quality. Scores for applicant quality were derived by standardizing and subsequently summing individuals' competency assessment scores, GPA, and ACT scores (or the SAT equivalent to the ACT). The competencies relevant to the study were summed to create a single value; this approach was taken to reduce the weight attributed to self-ratings in the quality composite. Finally, missing GPA and ACT information was addressed by using mean replacement.

Manipulation Check. These 4 questions were designed to see if the participants understood the content of the information they received. The pre-image measure served as a manipulation check to ensure that the participants perceived the organization as being in the correct image grouping (i.e., positive, neutral, negative).

Distracter Questions. These 6 questions were included to make the experiment more believable. The instructions indicated that that company X is updating segments of its recruiting materials and the company wants to see how students respond to the current draft; as a result, students would expect to provide their comments or reactions to the materials. The items were rated on a 5-point likert scale, which ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

Chapter 3

RESULTS

Pilot Data

To reiterate, a pilot study was conducted in an effort to identify three companies that varied in organizational image (i.e., 1 positive, 1 negative and 1 neutral). 25 participants rated 15 companies on image and familiarity. The means and standard deviations for image and familiarity are presented in Table 1. The three companies selected for the experiment were: (a) Kodak, a high image organization, (b) Proctor and Gamble, a neutral image organization and (c) Phillip Morris, a low image organization. These particular companies were selected because they spanned the range of image and varied on degree of familiarity. There was a noticeable relationship between familiarity and image such that as familiarity increased image perceptions generally increased (see Table 1). The average correlation between fit and image was $r = .31$. Finally, coefficient alpha was calculated for each of the image and familiarity scales. The alphas for familiarity ranged from .42 to .96 with an average of .75. The alphas for image ranged from .90 to .94 with an average of .91.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics & Correlations for the Pilot Data

	Image		Familiarity		Image/ Familiarity
Company	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Correlation
Boeing	61.28	7.00	21.32	6.84	.695**
ConAgra	53.64	0.91	15.70	5.63	-.004
Dow Chemical	60.92	8.45	27.48	6.12	.121
Du Pont	60.60	5.40	25.40	4.37	.469*
Ford	62.76	9.26	32.28	4.38	.155
General Motors	63.48	6.95	30.92	6.15	.403*
Intel	65.40	7.89	27.96	5.14	.442*
International Paper	53.56	5.36	17.76	5.90	.364
Kodak	66.92	7.14	31.84	4.10	.371
Lockheed Martin	55.48	3.85	17.72	6.69	.595**
Lucent Technologies	58.84	8.80	22.32	9.50	.707**
Microsoft	66.72	9.16	34.24	3.72	.300
Philip Morris	53.00	9.00	22.04	8.20	.046
Proctor and Gamble	60.44	6.94	26.76	6.98	.091
R. J. Reynolds	57.84	9.10	24.20	6.47	.519**

Note. Organizations in bold were chosen for the final experiment. N= 25. * $p \leq .05$.

** $p \leq .01$. Possible scores on the image scale ranged from 18-90. The average range for image across the 15 organizations was 25.2 with a low of 4 and a high of 51.

Preliminary Analyses

A series of exploratory factor analyses were run to examine the factor structure of the fit and image measures. Traditionally, PO fit measures have been comprised of 1-4 questions and have acceptable alphas (i.e., .70 or above). In most cases the same types of measures were employed regardless of the type of fit being investigated. The current study used both the traditional fit questions (Cable & Judge, 1997; Goltz & Giannantonio, 1995) which are more reflective of overall and supplementary fit (e.g., values) and included additional questions with a complementary fit (e.g., skills and abilities) focus. A principal axis factor analysis with a varimax rotation indicated that the items all loaded on a single factor. This factor was the only factor with an eigenvalue over one, and accounted for approximately 50% of the variance. Based on the results of this analysis and the high alphas, a single fit scale was used for all analyses.

As previously discussed, past research has not adequately or consistently measured organizational image as a construct. As a result, a new measure was developed for this study. A series of principal axis factor analyses with varimax rotations were conducted on the pre and post image measures across all the data to examine the dimensionality of this measure. The measure appears to be multidimensional but the factors are not interpretable and they are not consistent from pre to post image. Thus, the factor structure of this measure was examined within company and from pre to post; however, these factors were also uninterpretable. This is not surprising considering that the measure is comprised of 18 items and the samples within company (i.e., approximately 68) are too small to yield stable factors (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & MacCallum, 1999).

Finally, a principal components⁸ factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on the image and fit measures to further examine the relationship between these constructs. Due to the difficulties associated with interpreting the image factor analyses discussed above, the analysis was run forcing two factors. The results indicate that image and fit are distinct constructs; that is the image and fit items load on different factors. The first factor was composed of image items, had an eigenvalue of 8.34, and accounted for approximately 35% of the variance. The second factor was composed of fit items, had an eigenvalue of 2.52, and accounted for approximately 11% of the variance.

Coefficient alpha was calculated for each of the measures across all data and within company and fit conditions (See Table 2). Alpha was at or above .70 for all measures with the exception of Kodak's familiarity alpha. Kodak's alpha may have been lower than the others due to a high familiarity with its products and advertisements and low familiarity with the organization as an employer. Similarly, the means and standard deviations were calculated for all measures across all data (See Table 3) and within company and fit conditions (See Table 4). Table 5 presents the intercorrelations between all the measures and demographic information.

Of particular interest is the significant correlation between self-reported competencies and fit $r = .28$ $p < .01$. Specifically across all the data, those who reported higher competency ratings perceived a better fit. Examining the correlations by fit

⁸ Due to the amount of shared variance between the two variables, the principal axis analysis failed and the more lenient principal components analysis was used instead.

Table 2

Reliability of All Measures

Measure	Overall	Kodak	Proctor & Gamble	Philip Morris
Familiarity	.83	.53	.85	.87
Pre-Image	.91	.90	.88	.90
Post-Image	.93			
Intentions to Apply	.84			
Fit	.79			
All 25 Competencies	.89			
9 Relevant Competencies	.74			
SUPPLEMENTARY FIT				
Post-Image	.93	.94	.92	.73
Intentions to Apply	.83	.73	.81	.91
Fit	.75	.81	.78	.92
COMPLEMENTARY FIT				
Post-Image	.93	.94	.90	.94
Intentions to Apply	.84	.84	.80	.87
Fit	.82	.76	.83	.85

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Experimental Data

	Overall							
	Kodak (N=67)		Proctor & Gamble (N=64-68)		Philip Morris (N=68)		Overall (N=196-203)	
Scale	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Familiarity	30.21 ^a	4.20	23.94 ^b	7.27	22.75 ^b	8.75	25.60	7.70
Fit	23.91 ^c	2.92	23.49 ^c	2.73	23.15 ^c	3.10	23.51	2/90
Intentions to Apply	19.68 ^d	4.86	19.64 ^d	4.82	18.89 ^d	5.79	19/40	5.16
Pre-Image	65.49 ^e	7.70	58.94 ^f	5.67	55.08 ^g	8.05	59.81	8.38
Post-Image	72.34 ^h	9.99	67.90 ⁱ	8.28	65.37 ⁱ	10.55	68.52	10.03
GPA ^j	3.10	1.10	3.00	1.01	3.15	1.05	3.10	1.05
ACT ^k	24.29	3.54	24.63	2.86	24.07	2.91	24.32	3.09
SAT	1243	40.41	1086	156.94	1110	-	1141.11	136.61
Quality	0.58	1.71	0.63	1.68	0.54	1.70	0.59	1.70
9 Relevant	34.00	4.24	34.00	4.15	33.65	4.24	33.87	4.19
Competencies								

Note. Different superscripts in the same row indicate that the means are significantly different from each other. ^aThe Ns for ACT range from 49 –57 within company and N= 160 overall; ^bThe Ns for SAT range from 3-5 within company and N=9 overall.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for the Experimental Data

Scale	Supplementary Fit							
	Kodak (N=34)		Proctor & Gamble (N=34)		Philip Morris (N=30-34)		Overall (N=102)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Familiarity	29.53	4.28	23.47	6.72	23.44	8.88	25.48	7.40
Fit	24.40	2.61	23.24	2.67	23.44	2.23	23.32	2.54
Intentions to Apply	20.15	4.37	19.53	4.86	18.50	5.98	19.39	5.11
Pre-Image	64.91	7.31	58.41	4.59	54.18	6.64	59.17	7.65
Post-Image	73.38	9.51	68.38	8.18	63.85	10.49	68.54	10.13

Complementary Fit								
Scale	Kodak (N=33)		Proctor & Gamble (N=34)		Philip Morris (N=32-34)		Overall (N=93-101)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Familiarity	30.91	4.06	24.41	7.85	22.06	8.69	25.74	8.03
Fit	23.36	3.15	23.74	2.81	22.85	3.78	32.32	3.26
Intentions to Apply	19.19	5.35	19.77	4.84	19.31	5.65	19.41	5.25
Pre-Image	66.09	8.18	59.48	6.62	56.00	9.26	60.48	9.06
Post-Image	71.27	10.49	67.41	8.84	66.88	10.54	68.49	9.97

Note. Different superscripts in the same row indicate that the means are significantly different from each other. ^aThe Ns for ACT range from 49 –57 within company and N= 160 overall; ^bThe Ns for SAT range from 3-5 within company and N=9 overall.

Table 5

Intercorrelations for All Scales and Measures

Scale	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. GPA	198	1.00											
2. ACT	160	.29**	1.00										
3. SAT	9	.64	-	1.00									
4. Race ^a	202	0.00	-.11	-	1.00								
5. Sex ^b	203	-.10	-	-.48		1.00							
			.24**										
6. Intentions to Apply	196	-.02	-0.00	-.28	.05	-.01	1.00						
7. Pre-Image	202	-.04	.080	.42	0.00	.07	.38**	1.00					
8. Post-Image	203	-.08	-.05	-.100	0.00	.15*	.44**	.71**	1.00				
9. Fit	203	-.09	0.00	-.60	-.02	.14	.47**	.37**	.54**	1.00			
10. Familiarity	203	-.09	.04	.05	.07	-.80	.05	.34**	.06	.07	1.00		
11. Competencies	203	-.01	.07	.23	.05	-.05	.11	.06	.13	.28**	.04	1.00	
12. Quality	203	.69**	.61**	.66	-.02	-.16*	.05	.05	.01	.12	-.02	.63**	1.00

Note. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. ^a = coded; 1 = White 2 = Minority. ^b = coded, 1 = male; 2 = female.

condition reveals a higher correlation for respondents in the complementary fit condition $r = .34$ $p < .01$ (i.e., those who reviewed recruiting materials stressing competencies) than the supplementary fit condition $r = .24$ $p < .05$. A Fisher's Z transformation for comparing correlations from independent samples indicates that these correlations are not significantly different from each other. This suggests that the relationship between fit and self-reported competencies may simply be a reflection of applicant confidence rather than a fit assessment based on the competencies emphasized in the complementary fit condition. Another potentially interesting correlation is the one between gender and post-image $r = .15$ $p < .05$. Specifically, females typically gave higher post-image ratings than males. This correlation suggests gender differences in image perceptions and image malleability and should be addressed in future research.

Manipulation checks were performed for both image and fit perceptions. For image, the manipulation involved selecting companies that were generally thought of as high, neutral, and low image organizations. Based on the pilot data, Kodak, Proctor & Gamble, and Philip Morris were selected as the high, neutral, and low image organizations respectively. To determine if the image manipulation was effective a one-way ANOVA with contrasts was conducted using the pre-image measure. The result of this analysis indicates that there was a significant difference in the image means between companies, $F(2,199)=35.72$, $p < .01$. Furthermore, the pattern of means indicates that the image manipulation was successful; that is, Kodak's initial image ratings were higher than Proctor & Gamble's, which in turn were higher than Philip Morris' (i.e., the contrasts indicate that the pre-image means for each of the organizations are significantly different from each other; see Table 3).

For type of information, the manipulation involved providing participants with either supplementary (i.e., information regarding the company's values), or complementary fit information (i.e., information regarding the competencies an employee needs to be successful). To assess the effectiveness of this manipulation, all participants answered 4 yes/no questions regarding the type of information they received (see Table 6). An overall Pearson chi-square test indicates that there was a significant relationship between fit condition and the type of information the participants believed they received for the first $\chi^2(1, N=203) = 6.91$, second $p < .05$, 2 $\chi^2(1, N=203) = 8.12$, $p < .05$, and fourth $\chi^2(1, N=200) = 17.22$, $p < .05$ questions. A significant relationship was not found for question three $\chi^2(1, N=202) = 2.78$, $p > .05$. The raw frequency information for these questions, however, both overall and broken down by fit type and company indicates that for all practical purposes the manipulation failed (see Table 6). In nearly all cases, the vast majority of participants believed that they received both supplementary (i.e., information regarding the company's goals and values) and complementary (i.e., information regarding the type of characteristics, skills, and abilities the company is looking for in new employees) fit information, regardless of the fit condition. Due to the significance of the chi-squares, one may argue that there are mixed results and that the manipulation was simply too weak to influence the majority of participants.

Company Analyses

Before addressing the specific hypotheses which consider the data set as a whole, potential differences between the three companies are discussed to provide the reader

Table 6

Frequencies for the Fit Manipulation Check

Item	Answer	Supplementary Fit				Complementary Fit	
		Kodak	Proctor & Gamble	Philip Morris	Kodak	Proctor & Gamble	Philip Morris
The materials included information regarding the type of characteristics, skills, and abilities the company is looking for in new employees.*	Yes	88%	82%	85%	97%	100%	91%
	No	12%	18%	15%	3%	0%	9%
The materials included information regarding the company's goals and values.*	Yes	94%	100%	94%	88%	73%	91%
	No	6%	0%	6%	12%	27%	9%
I did <u>not</u> receive any information about company goals or values.	Yes	3%	0%	12%	6%	18%	9%
	No	97%	100%	88%	94%	82%	91%
I did <u>not</u> receive any information about the types of skills or characteristics new employees should have.*	Yes	15%	23%	18%	0%	3%	3%
	No	85%	77%	82%	100%	97%	97%

Note. The bold rows represent how people should have responded if the manipulation had worked. * $p \leq .05$ for the chi-square analyses.

with a better feel for the data. As previously mentioned, this is one of the first studies to attempt to consider a full range of organizational image; as a result, a series of analyses were conducted to explore potential differences between the three companies. As part of the experimental manipulation, three organizations were selected that initially differed on organizational image. As previously discussed, this manipulation was successful (see Table 3 for contrast results). Additionally, a one-way ANOVA comparing post-image means indicated that significant differences between the companies remained even after reviewing the recruiting materials $F(2, 200) = 9.02, p < .01$. Specifically, Kodak's image ratings were still higher than Proctor and Gamble's, which in turn were higher than Philip Morris'; however the means for Proctor and Gamble and Philip Morris were not significantly different from each other (see Table 3 for contrast results).

Due to the potential for differences across the range of organizational image, one-way ANOVAS⁹ with contrasts were conducted within each company for each of the key measures in the study. A one-way ANOVA comparing fit perception means indicated that there were no significant differences between companies, $F(2, 200) = 1.16, p = .316$ (see Table 3 for contrast results). Similarly, a one-way ANOVA comparing application intentions indicated that there were no significant differences between companies, $F(2, 193) = .482, p = .618$ (see Table 3 for contrast results). Finally, a one-way ANOVA comparing familiarity means indicated that there were significant differences in familiarity ratings $F(2, 200) = 21.99, p < .01$ such that Kodak's familiarity ratings were

⁹ Individual ANOVAS were employed instead of an omnibus MANOVA due to the difficulty associated with justifying a linear composite of the dependent variables tested (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Additionally, Box's M indicated that the covariances are not equal across the dependent variables; thus violating a key MANOVA assumption (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

higher than Proctor and Gamble's, which in turn were higher than Philip Morris'; however the means for Proctor and Gamble and Philip Morris were not significantly different from each other (see Table 3 for contrast results).

Hypothesis Tests

Hypothesis 1 stated that intentions to apply would increase as post-image increased. To test this hypothesis a correlation was calculated between intentions to apply and post-image. Across all the data there was a significant moderate correlation of $r = .44$ $p < .01$; correlations of $r = .45$ $p < .01$ were found for each company individually, thus, supporting Hypothesis 1. This result is consistent with past research, which suggests that image is related to applicant attraction and intentions to pursue further contact with a firm (Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Gatewood et al., 1993; Highhouse et al., 1999; Tom, 1971; Turban & Greening, 1996). However, this is the first study to demonstrate this effect across a range of organizational image.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that intentions to apply would be higher when applicants were supplied with supplementary fit information than when supplied with complementary fit information. To test this hypothesis an independent samples t-test was conducted across all the data $t(194) = -.03$, $p = .98$ and within company (see Table 7). The results indicate that there were no mean differences in application intentions across type of fit information; thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. This is not surprising considering the manipulation check indicates that the type of information manipulation failed.

Table 7

Independent Samples t-tests Comparing Intentions to Apply Means for the Supplementary and Complementary Fit Conditions

Company	Supplementary Fit		Complementary Fit		Mean Difference	t-value	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Overall	19.39	5.11	19.41	5.25	.02	-.031	.976
Kodak	20.15	4.37	19.19	5.35	.96	.800	.427
Proctor & Gamble	19.53	4.86	19.77	4.84	-.24	-.195	.846
Philip Morris	18.50	5.98	19.31	5.65	-.813	-.567	.573

Note. The Ns with in company ranged from 30 to 34. The overall Ns ranged from 94 to 102.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that applicant quality would moderate the relationship between the type of information provided and intentions to apply such that the type of information provided would have less of a relationship to intentions to apply for qualified applicants. As discussed in the methods section, applicant quality was a composite variable consisting of standardized scores for GPA, ACT/SAT, and the sum of the 9 self-report competency ratings collected at least 24 hours prior to the experiment; missing data was addressed using mean replacement. To test this hypothesis a moderated regression analysis was conducted. In step one, intentions to apply was regressed on type of information; in step two intentions to apply was regressed on type of information and applicant quality; the third step involved testing the interaction term. The results indicated that there were no significant main effects or interactions for the information type/intentions to apply relationship (see Table 8). These non-significant results were obtained with and without mean replacement in the quality composite. In addition to the quality composite, GPA, SAT/ACT, the competency composite, and each of the nine

competencies were tested individually as potential moderators. Similar to the quality composite, no main effects or interactions were found. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. This finding is consistent with the failure of the fit manipulation; that is, there was no relationship to moderate.

Table 8
Moderated Regression: Intentions to Apply Regressed on Fit and Quality

Step: Variable(s)	R ²	ΔR ²	β	p
1: Type of Fit Information	.000	.000	.002	.978
2: Type of Fit Information	.003	.003	-.002	.956
Quality			.055	.976
3: Type of Fit Information	.004	.004	.011	.836
Quality			.163	.883
Type of Fit * Quality			.116	.469

Note. β is the standardized Beta. N = 198

Hypothesis 4 stated that intentions to apply would be positively related to assessments of fit. To test this hypothesis a correlation was calculated between intentions to apply and fit. Across all the data there was a significant moderate correlation of $r = .44$ $p < .01$; thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported. Additionally, the correlations within company were calculated $r = .40$ for Kodak $p < .01$, $r = .48$ for Proctor and Gamble $p < .01$ and $r = .50$ for Phillip Morris $p < .01$. A Fisher's Z transformation for comparing correlations from independent samples indicates that these correlations are not significantly different from each other.

Hypothesis 5 suggested that post-image and the perceived fit assessment would be moderately correlated. To test this hypothesis a correlation was calculated between post-image and fit. Across all the data there was a significant correlation of $r = .54$ $p < .01$, which according to Cohen (1977) would be considered a high correlation; thus the

relationship between fit and post-image was somewhat stronger than expected. The correlations within company were also relatively high $r = .61$ $p < .01$ for Kodak, $r = .69$ $p < .01$ for Proctor and Gamble and $r = .37$ $p < .01$ for Phillip Morris. A Fisher's Z transformation for comparing correlations from independent samples indicates that the correlations between Kodak and Philip Morris ($z = +2.30$ $p < .05$) and Proctor and Gamble and Philip Morris ($z = +3.30$ $p < .05$) are significantly different from each other. This pattern may suggest that the lower the organization's image the harder it is for potential applicants to admit or recognize fit. This would be consistent with the cognitive dissonance and self-preservation views previously discussed; however, it is also possible that potential applicants simply feel they will not fit in a low image organization.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that the type of fit information provided would moderate the pre/post image relationship such that the greatest changes in image perceptions would be found when applicants are supplied with supplementary fit information. To test this hypothesis a moderated regression analysis was conducted. In step one, post-image was regressed on pre-image; in step two post-image was regressed on pre-image and type of information; the third step involved testing the interaction term. The results indicated that there were no significant main effects or interactions for the type of information/image relationship (see Table 9); however, pre-image was obviously a significant predictor of post-image (see Table 9). Thus, Hypothesis 6 was not supported. Once again, this is not surprising considering the manipulation check indicates that the fit manipulation failed.

Table 9

Moderated Regression: Post-Image Regressed on Pre-Image and Type of Information

Step: Variable(s)	R ²	ΔR^2	β	P
1: Pre-Image	.506	.506	.711	.000
2: Pre-Image	.509	.003	.716	.000
Type of Fit Information			-.059	.236
3: Pre-Image	.513	.004	.916	.000
Type of Fit Information			.393	.280
Pre-Image * Type of Fit			-.513	.210

Note. β is the standardized Beta. N= 203

Hypothesis 7 predicted that familiarity would moderate the pre/post image relationship such that the less familiar the applicant is with the organization the more image would change from pre to post. To test this hypothesis a moderated regression analysis was conducted. In step one, post-image was regressed on pre-image; in step two post-image was regressed on pre-image and familiarity; the third step involved testing the interaction term. The results indicated that there were significant main effects for both pre-image and familiarity (see Table 10). There was also a significant interaction between pre-image and familiarity in the predicted direction (see Table 10 & Figure 2). That is, the less familiar the applicant was with the organization the more image improved from pre to post. This effect appears to be particularly strong for organizations with a more negative pre-image. Thus, Hypothesis 7 was supported.

Model Overview

The proposed model (see Figure 1) indicates that providing potential applicants with additional information from recruiting materials would impact the pre-existing image of the organization (see Figure 1 link A). Specifically, it was expected that the positive recruiting information would lead to improved post-image perceptions. To

determine the impact the recruiting materials had on image perceptions, a dependent t-test was conducted between pre and post-image perceptions. The results indicate a

Table 10

Moderated Regression: Post-Image Regressed on Pre-Image and Familiarity

Step: Variable(s)	R ²	ΔR ²	β	P
1: Pre-Image	.506	.506	.711	.000
2: Pre-Image	.543	.037	.780	.000
Familiarity			-.205	.000
3: Pre-Image	.554	.011	.265	.001
Familiarity			-1.09	.277
Pre-Image* Familiarity			1.17	.032

Note. β is the standardized Beta. N= 204

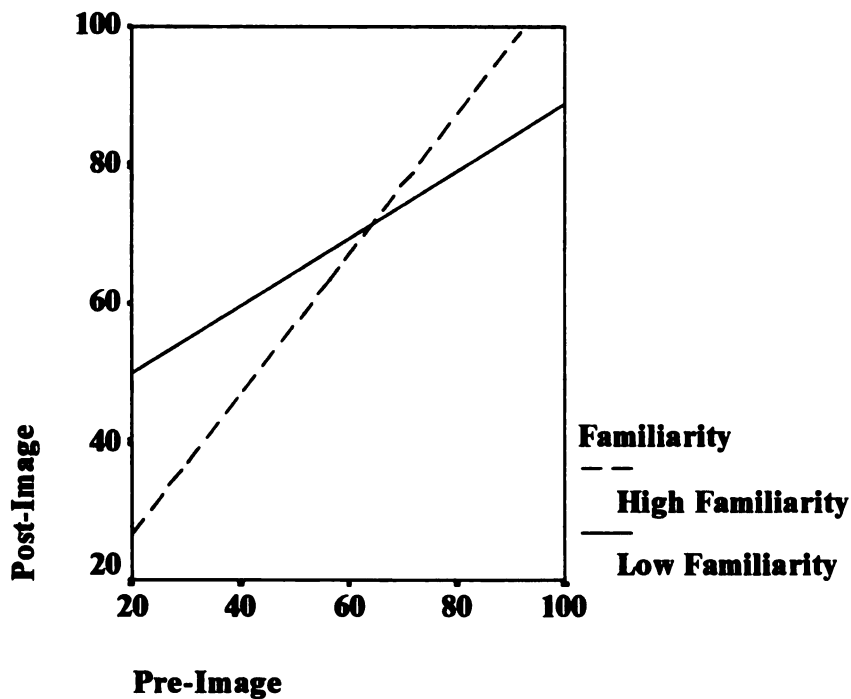


Figure 2. Relationship between pre and post image as a function of familiarity. Note that for graphing purposes, familiarity was dichotomized using a mean split.

significant change in image perceptions such that for each company, image perceptions improved significantly after reviewing the recruiting materials (see Table 11).

Table 11

Paired Samples t-tests Comparing Pre/Post Image Means

Company	Pre-Image		Post_Image		Mean Difference	t-value	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Overall	59.82	8.38	68.51	10.05	-8.69	-17.20	.000
Kodak	65.49	7.71	72.34	9.99	-6.85	-9.45	.000
Proctor & Gamble	58.94	5.67	67.87	8.34	-8.93	-8.88	.000
Philip Morris	55.09	8.05	65.37	10.55	-10.28	-12.35	.000

Note. The overall N = 202. The Ns by company ranged from 67-68.

The model also indicates that post-image mediates the pre-image/application intentions relationship. To test this, first a simple partial correlation was computed between pre-image and application intentions controlling for post image. The results indicate that controlling for post-image eliminates the pre-image/application intentions relationship, that is the correlation drops from $r = .38$, $p < .05$ to $r = .10$, $p = .15$. Additionally, Barron and Kenny's (1986) 3-regression equation method for testing mediation was employed. Specifically, post-image was regressed on pre-image ($R^2 = .51$; $\beta = .85$, $p < .01$), application intentions was regressed on pre-image ($R^2 = .15$; $\beta = .24$, $p < .05$) and application intentions was regressed on pre-image and post-image ($R^2 = .21$; $\beta = .08$, $p = .15$ and $\beta = .18$, $p < .01$ respectively). According to Barron and Kenny (1986), mediation is demonstrated if the independent variable (IV) affects the mediator,

the IV affects the DV, and the mediator affects the DV and the IV has less affect in equation 2 than equation 3. As is evident from the numbers presented above, this pattern holds for the proposed relationship. That is, post-image mediates the pre-image/application intentions relationship.

The remaining paths in Figure 1 were discussed in the hypothesis testing section. Specifically, links f, d, and h were not significant due to the failure of the information type manipulation. Familiarity did moderate the pre/post-image relationship (see Link e), fit assessments and post-image were correlated (see Link g) and fit assessments were related to intentions to apply (see Link c).

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

The current study was designed to investigate the possibility of manipulating the type of information provided in a recruiting context to influence applicant behavior and perceptions. More specifically, can the type of information provided (i.e., supplementary or complementary fit) influence applicant intentions to apply, organizational image, and applicant quality and quantity? The results of this study provide general support for the image and application intentions related hypotheses: (a) post-image is positively related to intentions to apply, (b) post-image is related to fit perceptions, (c) fit perceptions are positively related to intentions apply. However, the hypotheses related to type of information provided were not supported. Finally, exploratory analyses of company differences suggest that image is malleable. These findings and their implications are discussed in the following sections.

Role of Image

Past research indicates that image is related to applicant attraction and intentions to pursue further contact with a firm (Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Gatewood et al., 1993; Highhouse et al., 1999; Tom, 1971; Turban & Greening, 1996). Specifically, the literature indicates that applicants prefer organizations with a positive image over organizations with a negative image (Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Gatewood et al., 1993; Highhouse et al., 1999; Turban & Greening, 1996). The current study sought to extend past research to include the full range of organizational image (i.e., positive, neutral, and negative image). Consistent with previous research it was found that intentions to apply increase as image increases. One caveat, however, remains; that is, does this study truly represent the full range of image? Although this study has included a wider range of image than previous work, it remains unclear if Philip Morris, the low image organization in this current study, is really representative of negative image organizations. Specifically, can the image perception improvements found in the current study be expected in practice for an organization that is perceived very negatively? Another interesting question along these lines, is with today's technology and the global economy allowing organizations to cast a broader recruiting net, are we likely to encounter applicant pools that know enough about an organization to hold a very negative perception of the organization? Using the current study as a guide, one has to consider the possibility that the answer is no. Although the pilot study sample was small, 15 Fortune 500 organizations were considered and none of these organizations were consistently perceived very negatively, even though there were respondents at both ends

of the image continuum. Future research should further explore these issues using larger and more diverse samples.

The current study also extends our understanding of image by demonstrating that organizational image can be changed and improved by providing applicants with positive recruiting information. This finding is consistent with signaling theory (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Rynes, 1991; Spence, 1973) in that the recruiting materials acted as signals or indicators that the organization was a good place to work; this information was integrated into participants' pre-existing image perceptions thus leading to improved image perceptions. The change in image perceptions may also be explained by some of the persuasion literature. Specifically, this literature indicates that similar information obtained from multiple sources (Harkins & Petty, 1981) and information that matches existing attitudes (Fabrigar, & Petty, 1999; Petty & Wegener, 1998) tends to be more persuasive. Thus, if the information provided in the recruiting materials is consistent with previous perceptions and information it is likely to enhance image perceptions. Persuasion theories however, do not offer much insight regarding the image improvements found for low image organizations.

From a research perspective, future studies should consider what types of information have the largest impact on image perceptions and ultimately image malleability (e.g., fit information, company policies, employee testimonials, newspaper articles and other 'objective' sources). This type of research may give us further insight into image formation and techniques for changing attitudes and perceptions. In terms of practice, organizations looking to improve their chances of attracting applicants may want to provide potential applicants with easy access to recruiting style information in an

effort to improve image perceptions. Based on the current study, this may be especially beneficial for organizations that have a relatively low image and are not especially well known; that is these organizations may be able to make the greater improvements in image perceptions than highly familiar organizations with image problems.

Along the same lines, additional efforts should be made to understand the malleability of image over time. That is, how does an organization's image change or evolve over time, and what can organizations do to repair a damaged image? This type of research could be especially interesting if it was focused on familiar organizations that have recently or at one time took a strong image hit due to very public negative incidents such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill, Texaco's racial discrimination problems, or Microsoft's anti-trust cases. Can these organizations take steps to more quickly recover their positive pre-incident image or is time alone the only way to repair damage to a familiar organization's image? Based on the results of the current study, one might predict that the more familiar applicants are with an organization, the more difficult it will be to change their perceptions. This prediction and the findings of the current study are consistent with the extant literature and theory. That is, past studies suggest that familiarity with an organization may influence image development, applicant attraction, and recruiting efforts (Barber, 1998; Behling, Labovitz & Gainer, 1968; Gatewood et al., 1993). Specifically, applicants' pre-existing image perceptions and degree of familiarity with an organization may affect how much subsequent recruiting efforts influence opinions of an organization (Gatewood et al., 1993). Thus, as found in the current study, if a potential applicant is very familiar with and has a well developed image for company X, the information presented in the recruiting materials may have less impact than it

would for someone less familiar with the organization. Furthermore, the human tendency to pay more attention to familiar items than unfamiliar ones (Christie & Klien, 1995) is likely to increase potential applicants' awareness and memory for negative information related to highly familiar organizations. Thus, making image repair a difficult process for familiar organizations.

Finally, the current study investigated the relationship between fit and image perceptions. The existing literature has failed to address this relationship even though researchers frequently conduct studies in both areas and cite the same empirical pieces. The current study found a strong but far from perfect correlation between the two constructs across all the data, and the pattern of within company correlations suggests that the relationship between fit and image declines as image declines. Additionally, an exploratory factor analysis suggests that fit and image are two distinct factors. This supports the expectation that although fit and image will affect each other, they remain separate constructs. As previously discussed, these findings are consistent with social identity theory which suggests that our self-concepts are in-part shaped by the organizations we identify with (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). As a result, if we determine that we are a good fit with an organization, it becomes more difficult for us to view that organization in a negative light. However, this is an individual cognitive process, thus, making it difficult to predict the direction of adjustments for fit and image perceptions. Future research should attempt to further disentangle these constructs to determine if the relationship is truly recursive or if there is a causal direction to this relationship. Ideally, this research would be longitudinal in nature and would consider both cognitive and affective theories.

Considering the role of image beyond the current study, several issues still need to be addressed. Perhaps one of the most important issues is understanding the process for completely unfamiliar or essentially imageless organizations. Research in this area is critical for helping us better understand how organizational images are formed, what types of information are most influential in image development, and helping us to further disentangle the image/familiarity relationship. This type of research could be especially beneficial for small .com start-up companies and other lesser-known technology companies, which are competing with much larger and more familiar technology firms for a limited number of highly skilled employees.

Finally, the current study took the first step in exploring the malleability of image; however, a number of interesting questions remain. Specifically, are there gender, personality, or other individual differences that may impact how much or how quickly image perceptions can be changed? The correlation between gender and post-image found in the current study suggests that female image perceptions may be more malleable than male perceptions. Should this relationship be replicated in future research, it could have far reaching implications for typically male dominated industries and organizations (e.g., law enforcement, engineering) which are looking to diversify their workforce. Additionally, one might expect personality variables such as openness to experience to influence the image malleability and development process. That is, those who are typically open to new ideas and experiences may be more willing to change their image perceptions. Looking beyond individual differences, what are the other parameters that limit or enhance an organization's ability to change its image? From a practical perspective this type of information could be very valuable for organizations which are

trying to attract or change perceptions of particular types or groups of applicants. While from a research perspective, it can provide us with a greater understanding of applicant behavior and decision processes.

Type of Information

The current study attempted to manipulate the type of information (i.e., supplementary vs. complementary fit) subjects received with the expectation that the type of information provided would differentially affect image perceptions and application intentions. As previously discussed, the manipulation failed and hence all the related hypotheses were not supported. One potential reason for this failure is applicants' tendency to draw inferences from the information available to them. Based on previous research it was expected that applicants would use other experiences or pieces of information (e.g., benefits, compensation, company policies) as indicators or signals of company goals and values (Rynes et al., 1991) or supplementary fit if they were not explicitly provided with this information. The results of the current study however, suggest that applicants also draw inferences from the available materials regarding skills and characteristics or complementary fit. Although this is an interesting research finding, it does not necessarily change the practical implications previously discussed. That is, assuming the disconnect outlined in the literature regarding the type of fit organizations emphasize (i.e., complementary fit) vs. the type of fit information applicants are seeking (i.e., supplementary fit) is accurate, organizations still need to clearly present supplementary fit information to ensure they are sending the desired message as opposed to allowing potential applicants to extrapolate and read between the lines. From a research perspective however, additional research is needed explore what types of

inferences are made by applicants. Understanding the inference process is likely to become increasingly important as the internet is quickly becoming a primary informational source for many potential job applicants. This medium has the potential to reduce the interactive component of recruiting process, thus, leaving more applicants to infer fit from written statements as opposed to early recruitment and selection interactions.

Another reason the manipulation may have failed is that it was too weak for a between subjects design. That is, if respondents had reviewed both versions of the materials maybe the focus on the company's goals and values (i.e., supplementary fit) versus the employees' skills and characteristics (i.e., complementary fit) would have been more evident and as a result yielded the expected differences. Essentially in the absence of a comparison, the subjects' natural tendency to extrapolate the unknown from the available information was too strong for the manipulation to overcome. Future research should consider investigating the proposed relationships using a within subjects design.

On a broader level, we must consider the possibility that although supplementary and complementary fit can be defined as conceptually distinct by researchers, this distinction may not apply to applicants. That is, applicants may consider fit a unitary concept and as a result, fit is either good or bad regardless of whether the fit perception is based on goals/values or skills/abilities. This possibility would be consistent with the factor analysis results for the current study's fit measure, which demonstrated a single fit factor despite efforts to include questions with a supplementary vs. complementary focus. From a research perspective, however, additional efforts should be made to further clarify the conceptual distinction between fit types. Since Kristoff's (1996) seminal article on

fit, the focus has primarily been on supplementary as opposed to complementary fit. As a result, we still know very little about the concept of complementary fit, which could become an increasingly important construct should the competency approach to selection and training continue.

Although I believe additional research should be done to increase our understanding of these two broad fit classifications, one might also need to consider revisiting the definitions and the classifications in an effort to further refine and clarify the distinctions between them. As previously discussed, Kristoff (1996) attempted to organize multiple fit perspectives into the two broad categories of *supplementary* and *complementary* fit to reduce the confusion associated with the concept of fit (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). These broader definitions provide us with an organizing framework for both the effects of PO fit and the existing empirical literature; however, this is not to say that there is no overlap between supplementary and complementary fit. Furthermore, it is possible that the complementary and supplementary labels drawn from Muchinsky and Monahan 's (1987) work have been extended too far by Kristof's framework and more research appropriate titles and definitions need to be established.

Finally, the results of the results of the current study do not allow one to adequately address issues regarding applicant quality, information type, and increasing self-selection. Future research should further explore these issues with an emphasis on understanding what drives desirable self-selection or withdrawal from the application process. Based on the current literature it is not unreasonable to believe that supplementary fit information could play a critical role in the self-selection process. Specifically, organizations may not only need to provide this type of information but

make an effort to present this information in a very clear and accurate form. That is, organizations may find it beneficial to be very honest as opposed to simply positive if they really expect the supplementary fit information they provide to differentiate the organization and its applicant pool.

Limitations

Although this study provides interesting insights into the role and malleability of organizational image, there are a number of limitations. One potential limitation is the use of college students as opposed to real job applicants. It is important to note however, that the goal of this study was to consider the role of image early in the recruiting process; thus, actual applicants may not be the best sample as they have already made the choice to apply. Furthermore, college students will comprise a good portion of future applicants to these organizations so it is important for us to understand what their image perceptions are and whether they can be altered.

A related limitation involves the use of application intentions as opposed to actual behavior. Critics of the recruiting literature argue that intentions are not equivalent to actual behavior (Rynes, 1991). Although this may be a weakness of the current study, efforts were made to tap actual behavior by including questions regarding the subjects' interest in meeting with campus recruiters and receiving a complete recruiting packet. It is expected that the inclusion of these behaviorally oriented questions would make the intentions measure more reflective of actual behaviors.

Similarly, some may argue that the situation was too artificial and as a result participants did not take the study seriously. This does not appear especially likely however based on the responses to the distracter questions included in the study. The

open-ended questions in particular, suggest that participants believed they were providing feedback to the organization and took the experiment seriously. Additionally, several participants in every experimental session inquired about when the recruiters for company X would be coming to campus, and if company X was paying the school to do this research or if the university did it for free. These types of responses and inquiries strongly suggest that the cover story for the experiment was believable and as a result participants were more likely to take the study seriously.

From a methodology perspective, failing to pilot the manipulation for the type of information eliminated this study's ability to address the bottom half of the model. This is a limitation that future studies can avoid. Specifically, future research should provide participants with a list including goals, values, norms, and competencies and ask them to classify each item into one of the above categories. This will establish if these concepts are distinguishable by lay persons. This study should be done both as a simple paper and pencil study and with a verbal protocol analysis to help us understand the thoughts guiding this classification. It would also be interesting to conduct a verbal protocol analysis using materials similar to those used in the current study to determine how inferences about competencies were drawn from information regarding values and vice-versa. The key to addressing the limitation encountered in this study is to understand the thought processes that led to the manipulation failure.

Finally, it is possible that many of the relationships demonstrated by the study are the result of general positive affect and/or method bias. Although this is possible, the results do indicate differences in organizational image which are consistent with the pilot test and many of the relationships tested do vary by organizational image. Additionally,

many of the results were as predicted. This suggests that although general affect and method bias may have played a role, they do not account for all of the results demonstrated by the study.

Conclusions

The present study has attempted to critique and extend the existing knowledge-base with regard to organizational image and has taken the first step towards exploring the relationship between organizational image and PO fit. As the competition for employees continues to increase, a better understanding of organizational image, PO fit, and the impact of other types of information on the recruiting process will play a critical role for both researchers and practitioners alike. Future research needs to take a closer look at these issues and attempt to explicate these relationships beyond the initial steps taken in the current study.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent

AN INVESTIGATION OF COMPANY PERCEPTIONS

Cover Sheet and written consent form for the pilot study

SUBJECT'S NAME: _____

DATE: _____

CLASS YOU WANT CREDIT FOR (OR NAME OF PROFESSOR):

INVESTIGATORS' NAMES: Christine Scheu, Ann Marie Ryan

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES: The purpose of this study is to investigate student perceptions of various companies. You will be asked to provide your opinions/perceptions of several Fortune 500 companies. You will also be asked to provide some demographic information.

ESTIMATED TIME REQUIRED: 30 minutes

RISKS: There are no risks associated with this procedure.

BENEFITS: Where appropriate, students will receive course points/credit.

ANONYMITY: To maintain anonymity, use **only** your experiment ID number (your first initial and the last 5 digits of your social security number) on all surveys and op-scan sheets. **DO NOT** write your name or student ID number on any forms other than this consent form. You will not be identified in any way by your responses.

If you have any additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact us at 355-2171.

CONSENT:

You have been fully informed of the above described procedure and its possible risks and benefits. You understand that you will be able to review your responses at a later date and be fully debriefed on them if you desire. You give permission for participation in this study. You know that the investigator and his/her associates will be available to answer any questions you may have. If at any time, you feel your questions has not been adequately answered, you may speak with the Head of the Department (Gordon Wood, 355-9563), or the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (355-2180).

You understand that you may decline to answer any item and are free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without penalty. You are also aware that within one year of your participation a copy of this Informed Consent form will be provided upon request.

Signature of participant

APPENDIX B

Measures

Familiarity (*This measure is completed in the pilot and in the experiment before reviewing the recruiting materials*)

1. I recall seeing advertisements for this organization
2. I know what types of products and services are produced by this organization
3. I have purchased products or services from this organization
4. I know people who have worked for this organization
5. I have worked for this organization
6. I have studied this organization in class or for a project
7. I have read articles about this organization
8. I have seen brochures or written materials produced by this organization
9. I have been to this organization's web-site
10. I am familiar with this organization

Intentions to Apply (*This measure is completed after reviewing the recruiting materials*)

1. I would consider applying to this company.
2. If offered a job from this company I would accept.
3. I have no interest in applying to this company. (R)
4. I would recommend this company to my friends.
5. I would like to receive a complete recruiting packet from Kodak.
If you said you would like to receive a complete recruiting packet from Kodak please provide a mailing address:
6. I would be interested in meeting with a representative of Kodak should one visit MSU to recruit applicants.

If you said you would be interested in meeting with a representative of Kodak please provide your email address so a representative can contact you.

Pre/Post Organizational Image *(This measure is completed in the pilot and in the experiment before and after reviewing the recruiting materials)*

1. X cares about its customers.
2. X cares about its employees.
3. X treats its customers well.
4. X treats its employees well.
5. X is a reputable organization.
6. X is a prestigious organization.
7. X is a challenging place to work.
8. X has a negative reputation in the community. (R)
9. X is a progressive organization.
10. X is a competitive organization in its industry.
11. X provides quality goods and services.
12. X is a good organization to work for.
13. X is a responsible organization.
14. X has good commercials or advertisements.
15. I have heard good things about X.
16. I would be embarrassed to work at X. (R)
17. X cares about the community.
18. X is only interested in profits. (R)

Fit Assessment *(This measure is completed after reviewing the recruiting materials)*

1. The values and 'personality' of this organization reflect my own values and 'personality'.
2. My values match those of the current employees in the organization.
3. My skills and abilities reflect the skills and abilities the organization is looking for.
4. I would be a good match or fit for this organization.
5. I have the qualities this organization is seeking.
6. I think people who work at this organization are similar to me.

9 Relevant Competencies *(This measure is completed prior to attending the experiment using 5-point likert type scale, which ranges from “not at all skilled” to “very skilled.”)*

1. **Team Building** – ability to get individuals to work together to achieve a common goal.
2. **Decisiveness** – ability to make tough decisions without hesitation.
3. **Customer Focus** – capable of maintaining and improving customer satisfaction.
4. **Personal Responsibility** – capable of accepting responsibility for your own actions, decisions.
5. **Creative Thinking** -- capable of thinking creatively and to and encouraging others to do the same.
6. **Resilience** – capable of maintaining a positive attitude in response to failure.
7. **Oral & Written Communication** – ability to express yourself clearly, succinctly, pleasantly and in a straightforward manner.
8. **Self-Development** – Motivated to seek out and engage in self-improvement opportunities.
9. **Technical Proficiency** – typically know or can learn what is necessary to get the job done.

Full List of Competencies Completed by Participants *(This measure is completed prior to attending the experiment using 5-point likert type scale, which ranges from “not at all skilled” to “very skilled.”)*

1. **Decision Making** – uses good judgement in resolving problems
2. **Personal Responsibility** – capable of accepting responsibility for your own actions, decisions.
3. **Rule Orientation** – understands the importance of organizational rules and policies, and willingly follows them
4. **Resilience** – capable of maintaining a positive attitude in response to failure.
5. **Orderliness** – capable of maintaining a high degree of organization in your physical work environment
6. **Seeking input** – actively pursues other’s suggestions and contributions
7. **Short-term Planning** – capable of preparing the steps needed to complete tasks before action is taken.
8. **Technical Proficiency** – typically know or can learn what is necessary to get the job done.
9. **Problem Awareness** – can identify situations that may require action to promote success or prevent failure
10. **Listening Skills** – actively attends to what others are saying

11. **Oral & Written Communication** – ability to express yourself clearly, succinctly, pleasantly and in a straightforward manner.
12. **Urgency** – ability to respond quickly to pressing demands
13. **Self-Development** – Motivated to seek out and engage in self-improvement opportunities.
14. **Assertiveness** - capable of stating views confidently, directly, and forcefully
15. **Decisiveness** – ability to make tough decisions without hesitation.
16. **Goal Setting** – can identify work objectives and the methods for achieving them
17. **Public Presentation** – capable of effectively and comfortably presenting material to groups of people.
18. **Creative Thinking** -- capable of thinking creatively and to and encouraging others to do the same.
19. **Initiative** – willing to take the preliminary steps to do what needs to be done without direction
20. **Adaptability** – capable of adapting to new situations and immediate work demands
21. **Team Building** – ability to get individuals to work together to achieve a common goal.
22. **Stress Management** – ability to effectively deal with feelings of job-related stresses and their causes
23. **Monitoring** – actively compares current work progress to predetermined standards, objectives, and deadlines
24. **Customer Focus** – capable of maintaining and improving customer satisfaction.
25. **Task Focus** -- capable of staying on task despite complexity and/or ambiguity

Demographics (*This measure is completed in the pilot and in the experiment before reviewing the recruiting materials*)

1. Year in school.
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
2. Age.
 - a. 18-20
 - b. 21-22
 - c. 23-24
 - d. 25-30
 - e. over 30

3. Gender.

- a. Male
- b. Female

4. Race.

- a. African American
- b. Asian American
- c. Hispanic American
- d. Middle Eastern American
- e. Native American
- f. White American
- g. Other

5. Cumulative GPA

- a. Less than 1.0
- b. 1.0 – 1.5
- c. 1.6 – 2.0
- d. 2.1 – 2.5
- e. 2.6 – 3.0
- f. 3.1 – 3.5
- g. 3.5 – 4.0
- h. If first semester freshman provided high school GPA _____

6. Total SAT or ACT Score _____

Manipulation Check (*This measure is completed after reviewing the recruiting materials*)

- 1. The materials included information regarding the type of characteristics, skills, and abilities the company is looking for in new employees.
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 2. The materials included information regarding the company's goals and values.
 - a. True
 - b. False

3. I did not receive any information about company goals or values.
 - a. True
 - b. False

4. I did **not** receive any information about the types of skills or characteristics new employees should have.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Note: Pre-image questions will serve as the manipulation check for image groupings.

Distracter Questions (*This measure is completed after reviewing the recruiting materials*)

1. I like the message conveyed by this draft.
2. I think the information provided in this draft would be perceived well by other applicants.
3. I think this information should be included in the company's recruiting materials.
4. I think these materials are well written.
5. I do not believe the information provided is relevant to applicants.
6. Please provide any additional comments you have about the materials you just reviewed.

APPENDIX C

Debriefing Form for the Pilot

Debriefing Statement

Recruiting job applicants and ultimately qualified employees is a critical aspect of any organization's staffing process. If an organization is to succeed in today's competitive global market it must be able to attract and hire qualified employees. In an effort to accomplish this, organizations spend thousands of dollars each year to acquire the "right" employees (Martin & Raju, 1992). With so much money invested in attracting and hiring the most qualified employees it is critical that we understand the factors that influence why job seekers choose one organization over another. Research indicates that one factor job seekers consider when deciding where to apply is an organization's reputation. We are preparing a study that will further investigate issues regarding company reputations and how a company's reputation affects their ability to attract employees. However, before we begin the actual experiment we need to know how students feel about a variety of organizations. The surveys you completed today will provide us with that information and allow us to continue our research. Thank you for participating. If you have any additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact Christine Scheu or Ann Marie Ryan at 355-2171.

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RECRUITING MATERIALS

Cover Sheet and written consent form for the experiment

SUBJECT'S NAME: _____

DATE: _____

CLASS YOU WANT CREDIT FOR (OR NAME OF PROFESSOR):

INVESTIGATORS' NAMES: Christine Scheu, Ann Marie Ryan

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES: The purpose of this study is to evaluate recruiting materials. You will be asked to review some recruiting materials and provide your opinions. You will also be asked to provide some demographic information.

ESTIMATED TIME REQUIRED: 30 minutes

RISKS: There are no risks associated with this procedure.

BENEFITS: Where appropriate, students will receive course points/credit.

ANONYMITY: To maintain anonymity, use **only** your experiment ID number (your first initial and the last 5 digits of your social security number) on all surveys and op-scan sheets. **DO NOT** write your name or student ID number on any forms other than this consent form. You will not be identified in any way by your responses.

If you have any additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact us at 355-2171.

CONSENT:

You have been fully informed of the above described procedure and its possible risks and benefits. You understand that you will be able to review your responses at a later date and be fully debriefed on them if you desire. You give permission for participation in this study. You know that the investigator and his/her associates will be available to answer any questions you may have. If at any time, you feel your questions has not been adequately answered, you may speak with the Head of the Department (Gordon Wood, 355-9563), or the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (355-2180).

You understand that you may decline to answer any item and are free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation in this project at any time without penalty. You are also aware that within one year of your participation a copy of this Informed Consent form will be provided upon request.

Signature of participant

APPENDIX E

Pre-screen Materials

This is the prescreen for the perceptions of recruiting materials experiment. It will only take you a couple minutes and you will receive one credit for completing this and one for the actual experiment for a total of two credits. You must complete both the pre-screen and the experiment to receive credit. Below is a list of skills/abilities and their definitions. Read each one and then rate how good you are at that skill/ability. Remember we all have strengths and weaknesses so you should not be rating yourself as very skilled or unskilled for every question.

Competencies *(This measure is completed prior to attending the experiment using 5-point likert type scale, which ranges from “not at all skilled” to “very skilled.”)*

1. **Decision Making** – uses good judgement in resolving problems
2. **Personal Responsibility** – capable of accepting responsibility for your own actions, decisions.
3. **Rule Orientation** – understands the importance of organizational rules and policies, and willingly follows them
4. **Resilience** – capable of maintaining a positive attitude in response to failure.
5. **Orderliness** – capable of maintaining a high degree of organization in your physical work environment
6. **Seeking input** – actively pursues other’s suggestions and contributions
7. **Short-term Planning** – capable of preparing the steps needed to complete tasks before action is taken.
8. **Technical Proficiency** – typically know or can learn what is necessary to get the job done.
9. **Problem Awareness** – can identify situations that may require action to promote success or prevent failure
10. **Listening Skills** – actively attends to what others are saying
11. **Oral & Written Communication** – ability to express yourself clearly, succinctly, pleasantly and in a straightforward manner.
12. **Urgency** – ability to respond quickly to pressing demands
13. **Self-Development** – Motivated to seek out and engage in self-improvement opportunities.
14. **Assertiveness** - capable of stating views confidently, directly, and forcefully
15. **Decisiveness** – ability to make tough decisions without hesitation.

16. **Goal Setting** – can identify work objectives and the methods for achieving them
17. **Public Presentation** – capable of effectively and comfortably presenting material to groups of people.
18. **Creative Thinking** -- capable of thinking creatively and to and encouraging others to do the same.
19. **Initiative** – willing to take the preliminary steps to do what needs to be done without direction
20. **Adaptability** – capable of adapting to new situations and immediate work demands
21. **Team Building** – ability to get individuals to work together to achieve a common goal.
22. **Stress Management** – ability to effectively deal with feelings of job-related stresses and their causes
23. **Monitoring** – actively compares current work progress to predetermined standards, objectives, and deadlines
24. **Customer Focus** – capable of maintaining and improving customer satisfaction.
25. **Task Focus** -- capable of staying on task despite complexity and/or ambiguity

Cover Story

(Provided after demographic information and pre-image measures were completed)

Company X is updating sections of its employee recruiting materials and would like to see how students respond to the current draft. As you review the small recruiting section Company X has provided, please remember that Company X is only concerned with the content of the materials not the layout or the design. As you review the materials, pretend you are looking for a job and assume that 1) Company X has a position you would be interested in, 2) the position pays well relative to similar positions in other companies, and 3) there are positions available in good locations. After reviewing the material provided, please answer the remaining questions.

Experimental Materials Supplementary Fit

Who Are We & Where Are We Going?

X is a global Fortune 500 organization that provides products and services in over 100 countries. Our company has experienced tremendous growth and success during the past decade and we are continually expanding our market and range of products and services. As the new millennium approaches, we will continue to strive to be leaders in our industry worldwide. But we realize that the only way to ensure our continued success is to maintain a top-notch workforce. This goal clearly depends on our ability to find quality employees who share our organization's core values.

Our Core Values:

Here at X our entire corporate philosophy is guided by our 9 core values:

1. **Concern for others** – We consider it our responsibility to be compassionate, supportive, and concerned about the welfare of our employees and their families.
2. **Achievement** – We believe in continually improving our skills and abilities, seizing opportunities, and achieving our objectives.
3. **Honesty** -- We believe in maintaining the highest ethical standards, taking responsibility for our mistakes and being open and honest with each other, our customers, and the community at large.
4. **Fairness** -- We strongly believe in being fair and impartial in all policies and interactions, considering different points of view, and judging others on the basis of their abilities.
5. **Competitiveness** -- We strive to be competitive in our industry and believe that competition is healthy, leads to continual improvement, and higher quality goods and services.
6. **Quality** – This is the cornerstone of our success. We strive to provide the highest quality products and services available. And we are committed to continually improving and surpassing the industry's quality standards.
7. **Innovation** – We have never been shy about experimenting with new ideas and technologies and we strongly encourage our employees to look for new and creative way to solve to both organization and industry problems.
8. **High Performance Expectations** – We know our customers and our employees have high expectations for this organization and we continually strive to meet and exceed these expectations at all levels of the organization and provide the resources and support necessary for optimal performance.
9. **Social Responsibility** – We are obligated to consider the impact of our choices and actions on the community at large and to use that information to act in a responsible manner.

Who Are We & Where Are We Going?

X is a global Fortune 500 organization that provides products and services in over 100 countries. Our company has experienced tremendous growth and success during the past decade and we are continually expanding our market and range of products and services. As the new millennium approaches, we will continue to strive to be leaders in our industry worldwide. But we realize that the only way to ensure our continued success is to maintain a top-notch workforce. This goal clearly depends on our ability to find quality employees who possess the skills and characteristics central to success in our organization.

The Ideal Employee

Here at X the ideal employee is one who possesses 9 core competencies:

1. **Team Building** – Our organization consists of numerous cross-functional teams so it is critical that our employees can identify and integrate various organizational roles to achieve the spirit of collaboration and cooperation.
2. **Decisiveness** – We live and work in a fast paced environment so our employees must be able to make tough decisions without hesitation.
3. **Customer Focus** – Our success depends on being responsive to our customers. Thus, employees must be capable of maintaining and improving customer satisfaction and understanding/anticipating the customers' needs.
4. **Personal Responsibility** – Our employees enjoy a good deal of autonomy and as result must accept responsibility for their own actions, decisions, and directions to peers and subordinates.
5. **Creative Thinking** -- Creativity is critical if we are to remain on the cutting edge. We expect our employees to think creatively and to foster creative thinking within the organization and their work teams.
6. **Resilience** – Not every new idea succeeds thus employees must be capable of maintaining a positive attitude in response to failure both for themselves and their work groups.
7. **Oral & Written Communication** – We communicate with our customers and each other on a daily basis; thus, it is critical that employees can express themselves clearly, succinctly, pleasantly and in a straightforward manner both verbally and in writing.
8. **Self-Development** – This is a rapidly changing industry and to be successful we must stay up-to-date. We expect employees to seek out and engage in self-improvement opportunities.
9. **Technical Proficiency** – Employees must possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to get the job done in a timely and effective manner.

APPENDIX F

Debriefing form for the experiment

Research indicates that job seekers consider an organization's reputation an important factor when deciding where they will apply. We are trying to determine how students perceive recruiting information and how this information affects students' opinions of companies. In a time where it is increasingly difficult to find qualified applicants and it is important for us to understand how recruiting information affects people's perceptions and opinions of organizations and if certain types of information can change applicants' opinions toward an organization.

Each participant in this study was asked to review one of two sets of recruiting materials for a particular organization. The materials you reviewed were developed solely for the purpose of this study and although they are similar to real recruiting materials they are not actually associated with any particular organization. In order to understand the role played by both a company's reputation and specific types of information, it was necessary for us to provide everyone with one of two types of information (i.e., information about company goals and values vs. information about the types of characteristics, skills, and abilities new employees should have) and simply vary the name of the organization to see how this affects opinions and application behaviors. We expect that companies can improve their reputations and attract more qualified employees by including the type of information you reviewed today in their recruiting materials. Additional details regarding the results of this study will be available upon request in 4-6 months. Thank you for participating in our research. If you have any additional questions or concerns please feel free to contact Christine Scheu or Ann Marie Ryan at 355-2171.

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