REALISTIC ONLINE RECRUITMENT

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Realistic Online Recruitment
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Recent technological developments have led organizations to reach out to potential job applicants online, but little is known about the effects of web site content on perceived credibility of recruitment information and organizational attraction. Because organizational attraction is the primary phase of the attraction-selection-attrition model, the present study examines the effects of realistic job previews (RJPs) and employee testimonials on perceptions of credibility and organizational attraction. Three hundred and nineteen participants were gathered through an online "snowball" convenience sample, and randomly assigned to one of six job advertisement conditions. This between-subjects component consisted of a 2 (realistic vs. positive) by 2 (testimonial vs. no testimonial) by 2 (picture vs. no picture) factorial design. The use of testimonials and RJPs were expected to increase perceived credibility and organizational attraction. Pearson correlation, analysis of variance, and multiple regression analyses were used to investigate the effects that content variables had on organizational attraction, the degree to which applicants perceived recruitment information as credible, and the influences that individual differences had on the outcomes of interest. Perceived credibility and perceived fit were significant predictors of organizational attraction. Perceived fit mediated the relationship between RJPs and organizational attraction. However this relationship was opposite of predictions, as positive job previews were rated as more attractive than RJPs. Participants with more full-time work experience had a higher perception of credibility of the advertisements containing employee testimonials compared to those who did not. The results have noteworthy implications for online recruitment in organizations.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Despite economic ups and downs, the recruitment of job applicants still remains essential to human resources strategies. There will always be vacancies, which are often difficult for organizations to fill. Recruiters must often compete for talent, in virtually every labor market (Ployhart, 2006). The most talented applicants continue to have enough choices to critically compare their options for employment (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). Therefore, if organizations wish to attract the most qualified employees, they must compete to attract talent to their organization (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). Furthermore, demographic changes most common in the past are expected to change, with an abundance of baby boomers leaving the workforce and a smaller supply of younger workers, placing a greater importance on recruitment efforts in organizations (Ployhart, 2006).

Barber (1998) describes three phases of recruitment which include: generating applicants, maintaining applicant interest in the organization, and influencing job choice. Recently, recruitment efforts have shifted to focus on the earliest recruitment phases, including generating applicants and enhancing organizational attraction (Rynes & Cable, 2003). At this phase, organizations seek to persuade qualified applicants to apply for open positions. It is crucial to understand the impact of these initial recruitment efforts, because if the applicants don’t apply, then they cannot be reached by later recruitment or selection activities (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009).

A great deal of research has indicated that the source through which organizations communicate recruitment information has an impact on generating applicants (Allen, Mahto, & Otundo, 2007). Very little research has investigated applicant attraction in the context of one of the fastest growing sources organizations use to contact potential applicants: organizational web sites (Allen et al., 2007). The Internet has drastically changed the recruitment process for organizations and how applicants search for jobs. For organizations, the web provides an efficient and economical way of providing job and organizational information to a larger number of applicants in a more consistent way than was done in the
past (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). In-house online recruitment also allows organizations to control information presented on the web pages (Selden & Orenstein, 2011). For job applicants, they can immediately search through numerous company-supplied sources of information, which include job postings on company web sites. Surveys indicate that over 90% of organizations in the United States have web sites that are dedicated to communicating recruitment information to job seekers (Cober, Brown, Keeping, & Levy, 2004). With self-generated and self-managed web content, organizational web sites can provide a very low-cost means of generating a pool of candidates for vacant positions (Peters, 2001). However, it’s not as simple as just posting the job. How the information and content is presented will influence the quality of the response.

Although the trend indicates an increasing importance of recruitment web sites as a key component in strategic human resources management, little is known about how web pages affect organizational attraction (Cober et al., 2004). The current study addresses the online recruitment research gap, focusing on applicant attraction as the ultimate dependent variable in the model because it is the most proximal and immediate objective of recruitment efforts (Rynes & Cable, 2003). Existing recruitment research has established applicant attraction as a precursor to applicant behavior (Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993). The majority of research that has examined online applicant attraction has focused on the style and usability of web sites (Lyons & Marler, 2011). However, the current study is concerned with the effects online job advertisement content have on applicant attraction.

A review of several frameworks used to understand recruitment and applicant attraction is provided below. The focus will then shift to organizational attraction as the recruitment outcome of interest. The antecedents of organizational attraction are then covered in detail. Individual variables that relate to applicant attraction are discussed. Specific questions that the present study intends to address will then be described and hypothesis will be presented.

**RECRUITMENT**

Over the last forty years, research in recruitment has increased dramatically (Breaugh, 2008). Given the importance of recruitment, the increased attention is necessary. Recruitment is defined by an organization’s collective efforts to identify, attract, and influence job choices
of competent individuals (Ployhart, 2006). Conceptually, a wide range of methods, practices, and decisions might be included as a part of organizational recruitment. In addition to the increase in the quantity of the studies published, there has also been an increase in the range of topics examined in recruitment research. For example, Saks, Wiesner, and Summers (1996) noted that most early research focused on realistic job previews, traditional recruitment methods (e.g. newspaper advertisements), and recruiter characteristics (e.g. their behavior). More recently, research has shifted to focus on the timing of recruitment efforts, recruit site visits, and online recruiting (Breaugh, 2008).

There are many organizational characteristics that have been shown to have a significant influence on applicant perceptions in the recruitment process, including policies, job factors, compensation, and benefits (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). The majority of research has involved focusing on an organization’s characteristics and recruitment actions, while paying little attention to the effect that intervening job applicant variables have on the recruitment outcomes. These intervening job applicant variables include applicant attention, perceived message credibility, applicant interest, applicant self-insight, and the applicant decision-making process (Breaugh, 2008). If companies are to invest in advertisements for their recruitment solutions, then there will need to be a more in depth understanding of how these efforts are perceived by potential applicants. The current study seeks to address this gap by examining individual differences that influence organizational attraction.

It is important that we understand how these online job advertisement sources impact recruitment outcomes, as job seekers have been shown to use these sources to make application decisions (Barber, 1998). The brand equity concept from marketing research, refers to beliefs held by consumers about a product or service that influences their purchasing preferences relative to other similar products or services (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Therefore, brand equity plays a major role in influencing consumer’s decisions by increasing the likelihood that consumers will choose their branded product or service over others. This concept can also be applied to the recruitment context (Collins & Stevens, 2002). As consumers do with products and services, job applicants form attitudes and beliefs about organizations; these beliefs influence their decision to pursue employment opportunities. Advertising is particularly beneficial when applicants are not familiar with a product or brand, because it provides specific details about attributes relevant to consumers’ decisions
and may result in positive attitudes towards the brand (Collins & Stevens, 2002). In terms of the job advertisement content, there are several frameworks for understanding the effects on applicants’ perceptions of job and organizational attractiveness.

**Signaling Theory**

Spence’s (1973) work on signaling dealt extensively with the employers’ perspective (Celani & Singh, 2011). Spence argued that in most job markets, organizations are not certain of the productive capabilities of an applicant when he or she is hired. The recruitment literature focuses on signaling from an applicant’s perspective. Signaling theory is commonly used to explain how an applicant’s perception of an organization may be influenced by information or signals that are revealed through recruitment activities (Spence, 1973). Research has recognized that many applicants determine unknown organizational characteristics (e.g. climate or compensation) using recruitment-related activities as signals to help them make decisions (Celani & Singh, 2011). Typically, the sender must choose whether and how to communicate information, and the receiving party must choose how to interpret the signal (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011).

Several studies have demonstrated that applicants consider recruitment variables as signals of unknown organization information, including organizational culture or policies (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). For example, research has demonstrated that recruiter behaviors and personal characteristics have been significantly related to applicant’s perceptions of organizational and job attributes (Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998). Cober et al. (2004) found that perceptions of web site content (e.g. information about the company’s training) and style were positively related to organizational attraction. Signaling theory is broad enough to explain the effects of many different organizational characteristics, although the framework does not specifically predict which variables are most important at specific stages of the recruitment process (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). Future research should also consider if the signals being sent through recruitment sources represent a valid and reliable measure of the underlying quality that a signaler is attempting to communicate (Connelly et al., 2011). The current study will use signaling theory as a foundation for predicting how certain variables on job advertisements affect potential applicants’ perceptions.
Vroom’s Expectancy Theory

An additional framework for understanding how individuals process perceptions of an organization is expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964). According to expectancy theory, applicant job choice is a function of the probability of being offered a job (expectancy), the perceived probability of the job having certain attributes (instrumentality), and the perceived attractiveness of those attributes (Barber & Roehling, 1993). In general, individuals will be more attracted to jobs or organizations that they perceive to offer valued characteristics. Attraction is often based on the extent to which the perceived environment is consistent with the applicants’ desires, needs, and goals (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005).

Expectancy theory has played a major role in applicant attraction research by clarifying how applicants make decisions. Strategies used to study expectancy theory in job choice research typically involve asking subjects what they perceive the probability of hire to be, and comparing those perceptions to ratings of job attractiveness or actual job choice. Job applicants are typically more attracted to jobs that they perceive to have a higher likelihood of being hired (Rynes & Lawler, 1983). Another method used for researching the effect expectancy has on applicant job choice is by using policy capturing. These studies experimentally manipulate the levels of expectancy along with other variables to assess their influences on job choices. Research on expectancy in recruitment has been mixed in its effectiveness in predicting job choices, decisions, or ratings of organizational attraction (Rynes & Lawler, 1983).

Barber (1998) points out that this theory does not address where applicants get information about hiring expectancies. Furthermore, expectancy theory does not give consideration to the individual differences that may influence applicant perceptions and decision-making. The current study seeks to use the instrumentality component of the theory to better understand how to present organization and job information to applicants, while maximizing the attraction ratings of individuals who are a good fit.

Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) Framework

Schneider, Goldstein, and Smith’s (1995) Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) is a popular framework for describing the process of mutual adaption between person and organization. The model includes three phases that each operate on the person-organization
(P-O) fit principle. During the attraction phase, individuals’ preferences for an organization are based on the applicant’s implicit estimate of the congruence between their personal characteristics and the attributes of the potential organization (Stevens & Szmerkovsky, 2010). Research has demonstrated that work values are the primary characteristics by which individuals judge P-O fit (Dineen, Ash, & Noe, 2002). Similarly, according to the P-O fit model, individuals high on a particular characteristic will be attracted to an organization that appears to epitomize this attribute (Slaughter, Stanton, Mohr, & Schoel, 2005). This conceptualization is referred to as the needs-supplies perspective, which occurs when an organization satisfies the individual’s needs, desires, or preferences (Kristof-Brown, 2000).

A number of studies have provided support for the attraction component of this theory, which indicates that people are differentially attracted to organizations based on their personality and their perceived fit with the organization (Schneider et al., 1995). According to the ASA model, employees within an organization tend to be homogeneous because they were attracted to, selected by, and chose to remain in a particular organization (Stevens & Szmerkovsky, 2010). Some researchers argue that homogeneity in an organization may not be beneficial for diversity or innovative thinking (Stevens & Szmerkovsky, 2010). However the potential applicants’ perceptions of fit have a major influence on the initial goal of the ASA framework, organizational attraction. Additionally, meta-analyses of P-O fit and outcomes revealed a significant relationship with work attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment and with behaviors such as organizational citizenship, turnover, and performance (De Cooman et al., 2009). Given the benefits of P-O fit, it is advantageous for organizations to attempt to recruit individuals who will fit with their culture. Job seekers’ P-O fit perceptions are based in part, on what information they read about the job and organization that is available to them on company web sites. Organizations must use their web sites to promote accurate perceptions of fit among qualified applicants, while discouraging individuals who are not from applying. The current research investigates specific methods of presenting information online, which will maximize the potential of attracting applicants who are more likely to have a high P-O fit.

The research and theory discussed above provide insights about the various factors that influence applicants’ organizational attraction. Signaling theory explains why certain attributes of a job advertisement may be considered more attractive, because applicants’ use
information as a signal to predict how the organization and job environment will be. Expectancy theory explains the process through which an individual decides to pursue employment that is likely to meet their desired needs and goals. ASA theory describes the tendency for job seekers to be more attracted to organizations where they perceive themselves to be a good fit. These theories provide a good foundation for identifying variables that are important to consider in the early recruitment process that influence applicant perceptions.

**ONLINE RECRUITMENT**

In the earliest phases of the recruitment process, the only interaction most potential applicants may have with the organization is through the recruitment communication from sources such as web sites. Traditional recruiting sources have been largely replaced with web-based recruiting. The initial contact with the web site provides important signals that influence applicant attraction (Allen et al., 2007). Even though web-based recruiting is commonly used, several researchers have indicated that there is a need to understand more about how organizational web sites influence attraction.

To address this gap in the recruitment research, recent studies have focused on characteristics of web sites that correlate with organizational attraction. In regards to an organization’s web site there are several factors that affect applicant attraction, such as web aesthetics, usability, web site attitude, organizational image, familiarity, and content (Cober et al., 2004). Aesthetic features represent the stylistic features of a web site, such as the contrast of colors, pictures, and animation that keep the individual engaged. Allen and colleagues (2007) also found that the richness of a web site was positively related to the attitudes towards the web site and employment intentions. Research by Dineen, Ling, Ash, and DelVecchio (2007) indicated that web sites that contain customized information and pleasing aesthetic features help to attract individuals who are a better fit for the organization.

There is still a need for more empirical research on the organizational image perceptions of potential applicants, especially within the web environment (Lyons & Marler, 2011). According to signaling theory, organizational web site features and employment content are symbolic of broader organizational attributes, such as organizational image. Rynes and Cable (2003) suggest that the best strategy to improve the organizational image is
to provide more information about the job and organization, which can be portrayed on an organization’s web site. The goal of an organization is to also use its web site to attract the applicant who is the best fit. More research is needed to determine the best strategy for presenting online recruitment content using techniques that facilitate a good fit between the applicant and organization.

**Organizational Attraction**

Job seekers identify a small number of early favorite organizations to pursue in their job search, based on very limited information (Allen et al., 2007). Therefore, recent recruitment efforts have shifted their focus on the beginning phases of the recruitment process, which is where applicant attraction is targeted as an outcome. Applicant attraction can be defined as an attitude or expressed general positive affect toward an organization, toward viewing the organization as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001). The most direct measures of attraction would be the actual applications for employment; however, restricting recruitment research to only field studies limits the range of research questions that can be addressed (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003).

Although researchers have stressed that conceptually recruits’ organizational attraction may not directly relate to actively pursuing a job, many have assessed attraction with a combination of company attitudes and job pursuit intentions (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001). High estimates of internal consistency have been used as support for a combination of attitudes and job pursuit intentions. (Highhouse et al., 2003). In addition to company attitudes and job pursuit intentions, some studies have included a third dimension of applicant attraction by assessing the perceptions of a company’s prestige (Turban et al., 1998). Prestige reflects the perception of the degree to which the company’s attributes are regarded as either positive or negative (Highhouse et al., 2003). Previous research has demonstrated that individuals prefer to be associated with organizations that have attractive or prestigious reputations (Allen et al., 2007). Highhouse and colleagues (2003) conducted a factor analysis that supports the measurement of organizational attraction using attractiveness, intentions towards the company, and company prestige as three distinct, interrelated constructs. This study moves toward clarifying and differentiating the constructs of organizational attraction.
and job pursuit intentions. By examining the components of organizational attraction independently, a more complete understanding of organizational attraction may result. The current study measured the three distinct components of organizational attraction independently to assess if it is advantageous to combine them.

**Content of Job Advertisement and Organizational Attraction**

Several researchers have suggested that the job advertisements viewed by potential applicants play an important role in influencing their initial perceptions of an organization (Walker, Feild, Giles, & Bernerth, 2008). Research suggests that the initial decision to apply for a position is partly based on the organizational image presented in the recruitment advertisement (Gatewood et al., 1993). The beginning stages of job searching are ambiguous and unclear, and according to signaling theory, the potential applicants are using the content of the job posting to infer characteristics about the organization. Therefore, organizations must be strategic in the display of content on their job advertisement.

The most influential content on a job advertisement includes the written job description, organization information, compensation information, pictures, links, design, and aesthetics (Cober et al., 2004). Recently, Dineen et al. (2007) found that aesthetics and content simultaneously influenced the cognitive processing of recruitment information. Dineen et al. (2007) presented job seekers with a questionnaire with customized P-O fit feedback, which resulted in a greater recall of information and longer time spent on the website when good aesthetics were also present. A recent meta-analysis indicates that organization and job characteristics are among the strongest predictors of applicant attraction (Chapman et al., 2005). The primary goal of an organization during the initial recruitment phase is to communicate information about jobs and the organization (Allen et al., 2007). Meanwhile, applicants seek to reduce uncertainty, making important career decisions using the incomplete information posted in the content of job advertisements. Therefore, advertisements that provide more information about the job and organization will provide a stronger signal to job seekers and reduce their uncertainty. Providing more information improves the job seekers’ ability to form a mental model of what it would be like to work for an organization, while also increasing positive attitudes towards pursuing employment.
(Allen, Van Scotter, & Otondo, 2004). A key factor tied to the content of recruitment information is the degree to which the informational content is perceived as credible.

**PERCEIVED SOURCE CREDIBILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL ATTRACTION**

Recently researchers have begun to focus on the influence of perceived source credibility on organizational attraction. In general, research suggests that applicants view some sources of information as more credible than others (Allen et al., 2004). Marketing research has also provided evidence that if a consumer perceives a source as having higher credibility than other sources, the consumer is more likely to be receptive of the information (Eisend, 2004). Job applicants are often skeptical of information provided in job ads, which is evident through their perception of certain sources being more credible than others (Fisher, Ilgen, & Hoyer, 1979). Signaling theory suggests that perceived credibility of an information source influences applicant attraction (Baek, Kim, & Yu, 2010). Applicants use any information available as signals to reduce the uncertainty and the risk of pursuing a job they do not fit with, as they evaluate the trustworthiness and the quality of the information source. An organization whose motives and intentions are trusted is more likely to be accepted as credible than an organization that is clearly attempting to persuade or influence (Fisher et al., 1979). Expertise is also an important component of source credibility because one is most likely to believe a source who is perceived as knowledgeable about the subject at hand (Fisher et al., 1979). Expectancy theory supports that increasing the perceived source credibility will positively influence the job seekers’ beliefs that their expectations will be met after entering the organization.

Credibility is critically important in persuasive communication and attitude change (Allen et al., 2004; Eisend, 2004). Breaugh and Starke (2000) suggested that perceived credibility is an important intervening process variable explaining the relationship between recruitment activities and organizational attraction. Research has indicated that perceived source credibility positively influences organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005). Thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

- Hypothesis 1: Perceived source credibility will be positively related to applicant attraction.
Research shows that advertising plays a significant role in increasing perceptions of credibility (Baek et al., 2010). There is little systematic research on the type of recruitment information to include, how that information affects job applicants’ attitudes, and how information is received and processed by the prospective job applicant (Buda & Charnov, 2003). Recruitment researchers have been urged to take a more micro-level approach to understanding job-seekers’ reactions to recruitment messages, especially those delivered through the internet (Reeve, Highhouse, & Brooks, 2006). The current study seeks to incorporate variables in online recruitment that positively impact source credibility in order to attract qualified applicants. There are several ways researchers have attempted to increase their credibility through the content of job advertisements, which are discussed below.

**REALISTIC JOB PREVIEWS**

Realistic Job Previews (RJPs), previously recognized as one of the most researched recruitment topics in the management literature (Rynes & Cable, 2003), continue to serve as a basis for study in the online recruiting context. Because organizations have control over the information presented to job seekers, it is in their best interest to provide as much realistic information as possible to their target audience (Thorsteinson, Palmer, Wulff, & Anderson, 2004). RJPs traditionally communicate a balance of positive and less desirable features of a job, encouraging employees who are a poor fit to select themselves out of the recruitment process (Reeve et al., 2006). A meta-analysis has indicated that using RJPs is associated with lower levels of attrition from the recruitment process, lower turnover, and increased performance (Phillips, 1998), compared to traditionally all positive recruitment messages. However, the effects of RJPs on applicant attraction and job choice have been a secondary focus of the recruitment research (Saks et al., 1996). The potential importance of RJPs studies in regards to attraction addresses a need to attract all qualified job seekers and decrease attraction of those who are unlikely to be a good fit (Maurer & Cook, 2011). Research has indicated that RJPs facilitate matching person-organization-fit (Travagline, 2002).

Early research on RJPs concluded that they did not impair an organization’s ability to attract recruits (Phillips, 1998). In contrast, a study by Bretz and Judge (1998) found a negative relationship between the amount of negative information presented in the RJP and
organizational attractiveness. However, Thorsteinson et al. (2004) found that RJP messages presented through web-based company profiles resulted in higher levels of organizational attraction than exclusively positive messages. They concluded that the realistic information in their study was more positive than the information presented in the Bretz and Judge study. In a meta-analysis by Phillips (1998), the average correlation between receiving an RJP and applicant withdrawal from the selection process was -0.03. However, Breaugh (2008) argued that a key issue with the meta-analysis was that over half of the studies that were included provided the RJP after the individuals had already started work. Furthermore, many of the studies differ in the magnitude of the negative information used in RJP’s, making it difficult to draw a strong consistent conclusion from the meta-analysis. From these competing arguments, the most basic question that remains is whether providing balanced portrayals of job and organizational characteristics will result in a higher rating of applicant attraction.

There are situations where the realistic information can increase the attractiveness of an organization. Research on persuasion has provided support for the importance of source credibility (Fisher et al., 1979). A number of studies have demonstrated the importance of trustworthiness as an important component of credibility during persuasion (Thorsteinson et al., 2004). As the credibility of the recruitment message is believed to be an important factor in the effectiveness of RJP’s, the increased realism may actually enhance the attractiveness of a message to those who highly value trustworthiness in an organization (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). Potential applicants may see the inclusion of realistic information as arguing against the organization’s self-interest, as the company is willing to provide negative information that may detract from their recruitment goal of increasing the number of applications for jobs in their organization. However, too much negative information has been shown to overwhelm applicants (Thorsteinson et al., 2004). Therefore a balanced display of positive and negative information is more likely to result in the desired outcome of organizational attraction than a traditionally all positive message (Phillips, 1998). Thus, the following effects of RJP’s are proposed:

- Hypothesis 2: Recruitment advertisements containing some realistic information will increase attraction compared to those including the traditional, all positive message to applicants.
- Hypothesis 2a: The perceived source credibility will be higher for advertisements with realistic information compared to those with all positive information.
• Hypothesis 2b: Perceived source credibility will partially mediate the effects of RJP s on organizational attraction.

Within the context of RJP s and recruitment information, testimonials or other information provided by current employees have special significance. Researchers believe that the current employees are the most impactful source for recruitment communications (Phillips, 1998). The use of employee testimonials in recruitment research is discussed below.

**Employee Testimonials and Attraction**

Research indicates that potential applicants perceive employees as more knowledgeable than recruiters as sources of employment information (Fisher et al., 1979). Displaying employee testimonials is a tactic that can enhance the recruitment efforts of corporate web sites (Walker, Feild, Giles, Armenakis, & Bernerth, 2009). From a recruitment perspective, incorporating employee testimonials on recruitment web sites brings the benefits of controlling information presented on the web page, as well as positive outcomes that job seekers attribute to more personal sources of information (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). Marketing research has suggested that the use of a testimonial can increase the credibility and persuasiveness of an advertisement (Feick & Higie, 1992). In some cases, sources of testimonials are influential due to their expertise and experience, in other cases the influence is because viewers perceive the source to be similar to them (Fisher et al., 1979). Regardless, the testimonial tactic has not been utilized much in employee recruitment and has much potential to further the field.

To better understand how potential applicants process the information presented by employee testimonials, the current study will draw upon the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). According to ELM, persuasion can occur through both central and peripheral routes (Walker et al., 2008). The central route involves effortful processing. Under these conditions, message recipients possess both the ability and motivation to thoughtfully evaluate a persuasive message. In contrast, the peripheral route involves lower effort processing using cues other than the message content. Therefore, when participants are less motivated to centrally process information, the influence of employee testimonials may be due to the attractiveness of the picture rather than the content provided by the testimonial. To control
for conditions where participants are less motivated to process the advertisement through the central route, the current study will control for the effect of the picture. The advertisements will contain testimonials with a picture, as well as testimonials without a picture. Further, the current study will include conditions with no testimonial and a picture to control for the effect of the picture alone.

Employee testimonials also play an important role in engaging potential applicants. According to Schneider and colleagues’ (1995) ASA framework, potential applicants are more attracted to organizations that they perceive to fit with their personality and values. To influence a potential applicant’s perceptions of fit, information should be presented in such a way that it becomes more personally relevant to the individual (Cober, 2000). Many organizations accomplish this by including employee testimonials about their work life. Research has supported the inclusion of employee testimonials as studies have indicated that people are more drawn to, and affected by, information that comes from other’s first-hand experiences that has direct implications for personal outcomes (Cober, 2000). Employee testimonials serve as an additional source for potential job applicants, and prior research suggests that more information increases organizational attraction. There are a number of marketing studies that indicate the positive impact that a testimonial can have on an organization’s image (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). Thus, the following effects of employee testimonials are proposed:

- Hypothesis 3: Organizational attraction will be higher for advertisements that include an employee testimonial compared to advertisements without them.
- Hypothesis 3a: Perceived source credibility will be higher for advertisements with employee testimonials compared to those without them.
- Hypothesis 3b: Perceived source credibility will partially mediate the effects of employee testimonials on organizational attraction.

**Individual Differences**

According to the widely used ASA theory, different kinds of organizations attract different kinds of people (Schneider et al., 1995). In addition to examining properties that are perceived as attractive, there is also research that addresses individual characteristics such as gender, personality, or ethnicity. The present research is concerned with the effects of individual differences in perceived fit with the organization and work experience.
PERCEIVED P-O FIT

Most of the research on perceptions of attractiveness can be seen as pertinent to the person-organization fit framework. Whether one is examining the process from the perspective of the applicant or organization characteristics, the purpose of a potential applicant forming an impression of an organization’s attractiveness is to help the individual make a choice about which work environment will suit their needs best. In other words, the potential applicants are determining the compatibility between themselves and the organization, which corresponds to the broad definition of person-organization (P-O) fit (Kristof-Brown, 2000). P-O fit is defined as the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: “at least one entity provides what the other needs, or they share similar fundamental characteristics, or both” (Kristof, 1996, p. 4). In a meta-analysis, perceived fit with a job and organization was a stronger predictor of attraction than organization characteristics, recruiter characteristics, and so forth (Chapman et al., 2005). Potential job applicants are likely to react more favorably to job advertisements that they perceive to be congruent with their personal characteristics. Therefore it is important to consider perceived fit when determining the true effects an advertisement has on an applicant’s perceptions and behavior.

An important distinction in the fit literature is the distinction between objective fit and perceived (or subjective) forms of fit. Objective fit involves the gathering of separate information about the person and organization, then assessing their congruence (Resick, Baltes, & Shantz, 2007), whereas perceived fit involves asking the person directly whether or not they believe they are a good fit with an organization (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Recent meta-analytic investigations have referred to this conceptualization as perceived fit or subjective fit (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). The term perceived fit is used here to describe the potential applicants’ perception of their fit with the organization.

Although some studies have examined the effect of perceived P-O fit on job performance after organizational entry, only a few studies have examined the role of perceived P-O fit in the context of online recruitment (Dineen et al., 2002). For example, Dineen et al. (2007) measured perceived P-O fit after the participant had received the fit feedback from the web site, therefore the perception measure was not independent of the feedback provided. In other words, participants may adjust their perceived fit based on the
feedback provided by the web site. Job seekers typically do not receive P-O fit feedback from organizational recruitment web sites. Job seekers learn about an organization’s characteristics through company literature such as job advertisements, brochures, and mission statements, usually on company web sites (Barber, 1998). Even though job seekers may not be aware of their actual fit, during the job search, they tend to form subjective perceptions of how the organization fits with their characteristics in order to decide whether or not to pursue the job application process (Hu, Su, & Chen, 2007).

Unfortunately there is little research that investigates perceived P-O fit and applicant attraction in the context of e-recruitment (Pfeffelmann, Wagner, & Libkuman, 2010). However, according to the ASA Framework, potential applicants are likely to be differentially attracted to organizations based on their work values (Schneider et al., 1995). Job seekers tend to form perceptions of how an organization fits with their personality and values in deciding whether or not they find that organization an attractive place to work (Hu et al., 2007). In addition, signaling theory suggests that potential applicants use the information in the job advertisement to represent signals of the organizational values in order to avoid uncertainty and choosing a job that may be a poor fit. Therefore, it would be beneficial for organizations to understand what characteristics of a message result in a higher P-O fit.

When potential applicants perceive a recruitment message to be credible they are more likely to go on to assess their fit with the organization. The two major components of perceived source credibility, trustworthiness and expertise, will likely moderate the relationship between perceived fit and organizational attraction. When information sources are perceived to be credible, they are viewed as more personally relevant and more useful than less credible sources (Cable & Yu, 2006). Source credibility increases the applicants’ trust that their expectations will be met in the organization, and these perceptions are important determinants of organizational attraction (Thorsteinson et al., 2004). If a message is perceived as credible, then it will lead to more effortful processing of the signals sent through the recruitment message. When an advertisement is viewed as credible an individual may be more likely to go on to further assess their fit with the organization and view that organization as an attractive place to work (Cable & Yu, 2006). Thus the following effects of perceived fit are proposed:
• Hypothesis 4: Perceived fit will be positively related to organizational attraction.
• Hypothesis 4a: Perceived source credibility will moderate the relationship between perceived fit and organizational attraction, such that a higher perception of credibility will strengthen the relationship between perceived fit and organizational attraction.

**Experience as a Moderator of Content**

Previous research indicates that the effects of realistic job previews and testimonials may depend on the experience level of the applicant (Maurer & Cook, 2011). Instrumental learning theory suggests that individuals who have interviewed for more jobs will respond differently to advertisements than those individuals who are new to the job search process (Walker et al., 2008). This theory describes how individuals base job application decisions on successes and failures of prior searches.

Researchers have not always been consistent in measuring the work experience of participants. Most researchers have measured work experience using the amount of time working at a job (Walker et al., 2008). In addition to work tenure, job search experience may also influence individuals’ responses to job advertisements. Therefore, the current study will assess the influence of full-time and part-time work experience and job search experience.

Researchers suggest that job seekers who have more work experience are better able to identify important organization information and are more motivated to find a match with potential employers (Parsons & Cable, 1999). More qualified job seekers also tend to possess greater cognitive ability needed to interpret the meaning of negative information (Reeve et al., 2006). Job seekers with prior search experience should place more emphasis on organizational characteristics that are important when determining their fit with an organization (Kristof, 1996). The credibility of a job advertisement is an important signal that represents a valued organizational characteristic of honesty, which is recognized by experienced job seekers (Walker et al., 2008). Because participants with more job experience tend to be more skilled at interpreting the information presented on job advertisements, they are more likely to recognize signals of credibility that are presented through a realistic job preview or employee testimonial.

The studies investigating experience as a moderator of the effects of RJPs and employee testimonials on perceived source credibility used only student samples (Breaugh, 2008). Since student samples have a smaller range of experience, the current study seeks to
recruit adults with more work experience to investigate the influence that experience has on the perceptions of job advertisements. If an employer tries to provide detailed information about an open position, the effectiveness of the RJP or employee testimonial may be reduced if the applicants receiving the message lack experience in the topic being addressed (Breaugh, 2008). The presence of positive and negative information should influence the organizational attitudes of less experienced job seekers because they either lack the ability or motivation to interpret information provided by job advertisements (Walker et al., 2008). More specifically, the attitudes of less experienced job seekers towards an organization should be greater when positive information is presented than negative. Further, because the less experienced participants will have less job search experience, they will be less likely to recognize the RJs and employee testimonials as signals of credibility. Thus the following effects of experience are proposed:

- Hypothesis 5: Potential applicants’ work experience and job search experience will moderate the relationship between the RJs and perceived source credibility, such that the perceived source credibility of RJs will be higher for more experienced applicants.

- Hypothesis 5a: Potential applicants’ work experience and job search experience will moderate the relationship between employee testimonials and perceived source credibility, such that the perceived source credibility of testimonials will be higher for more experienced applicants.

**Present Study**

In summary, the current study seeks to investigate the effects of the perceived source credibility of an online recruitment message on organizational attraction. Figure 1 summarizes the variables and relationships that are investigated in this study. The study will be manipulating the following content variables that are related to source credibility: RJs vs. traditional all positive previews, employee testimonials vs. no testimonial, and picture vs. no picture. The picture variable was included to control for the effect that the image may have on organizational attraction. The above variables are also expected to influence the perceived source credibility of the job advertisement. All other aspects of the job advertisement design (i.e., layout, design, and color) were held constant.

The individual differences variables of interest are the years of work experience and the participant’s perceived fit. The experience level of the applicant is expected to moderate
the relationship between RJP and perceived credibility. The perceived credibility is expected to moderate the relationship between perceived fit and organizational attraction. The hypotheses for the study are summarized in Table 1.
### Table 1. Current Research Hypotheses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Individual Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Perceived source credibility will be positively related to organizational attraction.</td>
<td>4. Perceived fit will be positively related to applicant attraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Recruitment advertisements containing some realistic information will increase attraction compared to those including the traditional, all positive message to applicants.</td>
<td>4a. Perceived source credibility will moderate the relationship between perceived fit and organizational attraction, such that a higher perception of credibility will strengthen the relationship between perceived fit and organizational attraction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a. The perceived source credibility will be higher for advertisements with realistic information compared to those with all positive information.</td>
<td>5. Potential applicants’ work experience and job search experience will moderate the relationship between the RJPs and perceived credibility, such that the perceived source credibility of RJPs will be higher for more experienced applicants compared to less experienced applicants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. Perceived source credibility will partially mediate the effects of RJPs on organizational attraction.</td>
<td>5a. Potential applicants’ work experience and job search experience will moderate the relationship between employee testimonials and perceived credibility, such that the perceived source credibility of testimonials will be higher for more experienced applicants compared to less experienced applicants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Organizational attraction will be higher for advertisements that include an employee testimonial compared to advertisements without them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. Perceived source credibility will be higher for advertisements with employee testimonials compared to those without them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Perceived source credibility will partially mediate the effects of employee testimonials on organizational attraction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The hypotheses are separated by advertisement content and individual differences as presented in the text above.
CHAPTER 2

METHODS

The methods of administering participants to advertisement conditions, a description of the participants, and the scales used in the study will now be addressed.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were recruited using two methods: online “snowball” method and Amazon’s Mechanical Turk service. There was no significant difference between the two samples on any of the constructs measured in the current study. The first method involved administering an online survey utilizing the researcher’s personal network online (i.e. Facebook and e-mail) to collect a “snowball” sample, such that study participants forward the survey link to other potential participants. This was done to specifically align the survey towards the target population: adults with work experience.

The second method used MTurk, a web-based service (publicly available at http://www.mturk.com) that brings “requesters” and “workers” together for Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs) that can be completed through the web site, such as survey responses, content writing, and market research etc. Research has shown that the quality of data collected using MTurk is good with mean alphas ranging from 0.73 to 0.93 across all scales and compensation levels, and sample characteristics that are usually more diverse than typical American college samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). The current study recruited participants from a diverse worker pool consisting of 100,000 users from over 100 different countries. As an additional quality check, only the participants who have a 95% approval rate or above were allowed to participate in the current study. A participant’s approval rate is calculated as the number of assignments approved divided by the number of assignments submitted on MTurk. On the web site (www.mturk.com) participants have the option of scrolling through a variety of Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs), viewing a short summary for each HIT containing a short title, name of requester, expiration date of the HIT, time allotted for the task, and compensation for participation. Details may include a short
description, keywords, and any qualifications the participants must have. Upon clicking on “view a HIT in this group,” a link that takes participants to the task itself, potential participants have the chance to preview the task and decide whether they would like to participate. If yes, they may participate in the survey and claim their compensation. The online survey was available for three weeks and participants were compensated $0.10. The participants’ were kept anonymous to assure the accuracy of the responses.

Participants in this study were 317 adults; 52% were male, and 48% were female. Of the 317 participants, 115 were recruited using Facebook, the remaining 202 were recruited through Amazon’s MTurk service. There was no significant difference between the two samples for organizational attraction, perceived credibility, P-O Fit, work experience, or job search experience. Originally, there were 354 responses to the survey, but 35 of those responses were removed for not meeting the quality standard of viewing the advertisement for at least 60 seconds. Participants’ age ranged from 19 to 68 with an average age of 30.

Participants had an average of 8.57 years full-time work experience ($SD = 3.4$). Many participants also had part-time work experience with an average of 4.06 ($SD = 2.2$). Prior to the study, participants had conducted an average of 7 full time job searches ($SD = 4.32$) with a positively skewed distribution. Participants had conducted an average of 4.06 part time job searches ($SD = 2.53$) also with a positively skewed distribution. Participants were asked how long they have worked full time or part time in order to determine their work experience level. A power analysis suggested that 212 participants were needed to obtain a power of .80 in this study. The study included 317 participants, which exceeds the sample size needed.

**PROCEDURES AND MEASURES**

Participants completed questionnaires online through the web site Qualtrics (http://www.qualtrics.com). The questionnaires measured four areas of interest: organizational attraction, perceived credibility, perceived fit, and experience level. The first page of the survey included a description of the research as well as contact information for the primary researcher. Participants were then informed about the general purpose of the research. Then each participant was randomly assigned to a different version of the job advertisement. After viewing the job advertisement each participant responded to the same set of questions across conditions.
This study utilized an experimental design with random assignment of participants to one of 6 conditions. This between-subjects component consisted of a 2 (realistic and positive) by 2 (testimonial and no testimonial) by 2 (picture vs. no picture) factorial design. However, the condition containing a testimonial without a picture was excluded from the study since it is unlikely a testimonial would be used without a picture in practice. The pre-testing was conducted with 54 participants in order to validate the advertisements that were designed for each condition. Appendix A provides detail of the content that was different in the realistic job preview conditions compared to the positive job preview conditions. The vast majority (98.15%) of participants in the pre-test successfully identified the realistic and positive conditions correctly.

**Stimuli**

A company profile was created describing the opening for a project manager position, based on similar profiles found on the web. The profiles contained either all positive or a balance of negative and positive information. Two conditions included a testimonial with a picture; the other four did not include the testimonial quote. Two of the conditions had a picture without the testimonial quote, in order to control for the effect that the image has on the organizational attraction. The participants viewed the web page at one of six different URL addresses. An example of the realistic condition, with an employee testimonial, and picture is at http://cardinaltech.weebly.com/, examples of each of the six conditions can be found in Appendix B (Figures 4-9).

**Organization Attraction**

The applicants’ perceptions of organization attraction were assessed using the organizational attraction scale by Highhouse et al. (2003). The 15-item scale included three subscales of organizational attraction: general attractiveness, intentions to pursue employment with the organization, and organizational prestige. The ratings of subscales were on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). As presented below in Table 2, all three subscales were significantly correlated with each other ($p < 0.01$). A sample item from each subscale is as follows. A sample item for general attractiveness is, ‘This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.’ As presented
Table 2. Intercorrelations of Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Attraction Composite</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Attraction General</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.91**</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Attraction Intentions</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.93**</td>
<td>0.79**</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Attraction Prestige</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.85**</td>
<td>0.63**</td>
<td>0.70**</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Credibility</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.52**</td>
<td>0.41**</td>
<td>0.48**</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 P-O Fit</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.84**</td>
<td>0.78**</td>
<td>0.78**</td>
<td>0.69**</td>
<td>0.44**</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Quantities in diagonal represent internal consistency of the scale.

in Table 2, the general attractiveness subscale had an internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha) of 0.83. A sample item for the intentions to pursue dimension is, ‘If this company invited me for a job interview, I would go.’ The intentions to pursue subscale had a reliability of .84 with an average rating of 3.62 (SD = 0.72). A sample item for the prestige dimension is, ‘Employees are probably proud to say they work at this company.’ Prestige had a reliability of .85 with an average rating of 3.58 (SD = 0.62). Item-scale correlations were conducted and all items were significantly correlated with all three dimensions of organizational attraction (p < 0.01). Considering the high correlation between the dimensions of organizational attraction presented in Table 2, the components of attraction were combined into a composite of organizational attraction. A complete list of the items can be found in Appendix C.

**PERCEIVED CREDIBILITY**

Following past research, message credibility was assessed with five items measuring participants’ perceptions of the believability, accuracy, trustworthiness, bias, and completeness of the information provided on the job advertisement (Austin & Dong, 1994). Items measuring perceived bias are reverse coded so that higher scores represent a greater perception of credibility on all items measured on the 7-point scale. The ratings of credibility were on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An example item of the scale is ‘I found the information in the advertisement to be believable’. The perceived credibility scale had a reliability of .80, with an average rating of 3.52 (SD = 0.56). A complete list of items for this scale can be found in Appendix C.
**PERCEIVED FIT**

To determine the relationship between perceived fit and organizational attraction, the Perceived Fit Scale (PFS) scale (Cable & DeRue, 2002) was used. The item consisted of a 9-item scale that was developed to capture specific aspects of fit. The PFS consists of three subscales on a 7-point scale with higher scores reflecting a better fit. The three subscales include: needs-supplies person-job fit (N-S), demands-abilities person-job fit (D-A), and person-organization fit (P-O). Sample items for each scale are as follows. Sample items included: ‘There is a good fit between what this job offers and what I am looking for in a job’ (N-S subscale), ‘The match is very good between the demands of my job and my personal skills’ (D-A subscale), ‘My personal values appear to match the organization’s values and culture’ (P-O subscale). As presented in Table 2, the Fit scale had an internal consistency reliability of 0.93. The average rating of perceived fit was 3.41 ($SD = 0.75$). Item-scale correlations were conducted and all items were significantly correlated with all three dimensions of the perceived fit scale ($p < 0.01$). All dimensions of perceived fit were significantly correlated; therefore the components of perceived fit were combined into a composite measure of perceived fit. A complete list of items for this scale can be found in Appendix C.
CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Zero-order correlations were calculated to interpret the relationship between variables in the research models (see Table 2). Perceived credibility ($r = 0.52, p < 0.01$) and P-O fit ($r = 0.84, p < 0.01$) were significantly correlated with organizational attraction. P-O Fit was also significantly correlated ($r = 0.44, p < 0.01$) with perceived credibility. Demographic variables were also correlated with the scales used in the study, which can be found in Table 3. None of the measures of work experience or job search experience were significantly correlated ($p > 0.05$) with perceived credibility or organizational attraction; those variables were not controlled for in the statistical models.

Table 3. Scale and Demographic Variable Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attraction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Fit</td>
<td>0.839**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>0.518**</td>
<td>0.439**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Work Experience</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>-0.049</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Work Experience</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td>-0.095</td>
<td>0.155*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Job Search Experience</td>
<td>0.061</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>-0.045</td>
<td>0.099</td>
<td>0.141*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Job Search Experience</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.051</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>0.202**</td>
<td>0.303**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.066</td>
<td>-0.061</td>
<td>-0.092</td>
<td>0.799**</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.114*</td>
<td>-0.083</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 2 presents the overall means and standard deviations of the organizational attraction ratings, P-O fit, and source credibility. Table 4, present the means and standard deviations separated by each of the six advertisement conditions. Planned contrast codes were created to analyze the following content variables: Realistic vs. positive, testimonial vs. no testimonial, and picture vs. no picture. To address the unbalanced research design, each of the advertisement content variables was included in the statistical models along with their interactions (i.e., realistic vs. positive*testimonial vs. no testimonial and realistic vs. positive*picture vs. no picture) when testing the study hypotheses. As presented in Table 2, the overall average composite score for organizational attraction was rated between “neither agree nor disagree” and “agree” across all six conditions ($M = 3.58, SD = 0.62$). Table 2 also
Table 4. Descriptive Statistics by Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition 1 Realistic, with Testimonial, and Picture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Composite</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction General</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Intentions</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Prestige</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition 2 Positive, with Testimonial, and Picture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Composite</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction General</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Intentions</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Prestige</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition 3 Realistic, No Testimonial, and Picture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Composite</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction General</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Intentions</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Prestige</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition 4 Positive, No Testimonial, and Picture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Composite</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction General</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Intentions</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Prestige</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition 5 Realistic, No Testimonial, No Picture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Composite</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction General</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Intentions</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Prestige</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition 6 Positive, No Testimonial, No Picture</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Composite</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction General</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Intentions</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attraction Prestige</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

shows that the highest rated dimension of attraction across conditions was intentions $(M = 3.62, SD = 0.72)$. As can be seen in Table 4, Condition 4 (with the positive job preview, no testimonial, and a picture) had the highest composite organizational attraction rating. Contrary to predictions, Table 5 shows that the participants rated the positive conditions higher on all three dimensions of organizational attraction. Although the mean difference between realistic and positive conditions was statistically significant, the difference was not as great as expected.

To address the unbalanced research design, each of the advertisement content variables was included in the statistical models along with their interactions (i.e., realistic vs. positive*testimonial vs. no testimonial and realistic vs. positive*picture vs. no picture) when testing the study hypotheses. A multiple regression analysis was used to test hypothesis 1,
Table 5. Condition Variable Means (SE) by Organizational Attraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Attraction-Composite</th>
<th>Attraction-General</th>
<th>Attraction-Intentions</th>
<th>Attraction-Prestige</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>3.48 (0.05)*</td>
<td>3.42 (0.06)*</td>
<td>3.53 (0.06)*</td>
<td>3.51 (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>3.69 (0.05)*</td>
<td>3.69 (0.06)*</td>
<td>3.72 (0.06)*</td>
<td>3.65 (0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Testimonial</td>
<td>3.57 (0.04)</td>
<td>3.55 (0.05)</td>
<td>3.64 (0.05)</td>
<td>3.55 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial</td>
<td>3.60 (0.05)</td>
<td>3.59 (0.07)</td>
<td>3.60 (0.07)</td>
<td>3.64 (0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Picture</td>
<td>3.58 (0.06)</td>
<td>3.58 (0.07)</td>
<td>3.66 (0.07)</td>
<td>3.52 (0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture</td>
<td>3.59 (0.06)</td>
<td>3.55 (0.05)</td>
<td>3.61 (0.05)</td>
<td>3.61 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mean difference significant at α = 0.05 level

which stated that source credibility would be positively related to organizational attraction. As noted earlier, source credibility had a strong correlation with organizational attraction ($r = 0.52, p < 0.001$). Table 6 shows that source credibility was a significant positive predictor of the composite organizational attraction, $\beta = 0.47, F(1, 311) = 112.303, p < 0.001$. Source credibility had a significant relationship with all three scales of organizational attraction supporting hypothesis 1, which can be seen in Table 6.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to test hypothesis 2, through 5a using the composite attraction as well as the 3 subscales of attraction as the dependent variable. Hypothesis 2 stated that recruitment advertisements containing some realistic information would increase attraction compared to those including the traditional, all positive message to applicants. This was tested with a regression analysis that excluded credibility as a predictor, but in other respects was the same as the analysis in Table 6. Table 7 below shows that the conditions that contained positive job previews had a significantly higher rating of the composite attraction than the conditions containing the realistic job previews, $\beta = 0.58, F(1, 312) = 6.59, p < 0.05$. Therefore, hypothesis 2 was not supported. Hypothesis 2a stated that perceived source credibility would be higher for advertisements with realistic information compared to those with all positive information. Table 8 shows there was significantly higher perceived credibility in the positive job preview conditions compared to the realistic job preview conditions, $\beta = 0.54, F(1, 312) = 2.73, p = 0.64$. Therefore, hypothesis 2a was not supported. Hypothesis 2b stated that perceived source credibility would partially mediate the effects of realistic vs. positive job previews. Because realistic vs. positive job previews did
Table 6. Hypothesis 1 Credibility Predicting Attraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Composite</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Intentions</th>
<th>Prestige</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
<td>0.20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>0.47**</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.48**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>-0.86</td>
<td>-1.37</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Value is significant at 0.01 level. * Value is significant at 0.05 level.

Note: Realistic = (-1) Positive = (+1) Testimonial = (+1) No Testimonial = (-1)

Table 7. Hypotheses 2 and 3 Content Variables Predicting Attraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Composite</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Intentions</th>
<th>Prestige</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>2.56*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>3.37**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive</td>
<td>0.58*</td>
<td>0.71**</td>
<td>0.62*</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>-2.26</td>
<td>-2.61</td>
<td>-2.56</td>
<td>-1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Value is significant at 0.01 level. * Value is significant at 0.05 level.

Note: Realistic = (-1) Positive = (+1) Testimonial = (+1) No Testimonial = (-1)
Table 8. Hypothesis 2a and 3a Content Variables Predicting Credibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>-2.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Value is significant at 0.01 level. * Value is significant at 0.05 level.

Note: Realistic = (-1) Positive = (+1) Testimonial = (+1) No Testimonial = (-1)

not significantly predict credibility or organizational attraction hypothesis 2b was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 stated that organizational attraction would be higher for conditions with the employee testimonials compared to conditions without them. As indicated in Table 7, there was no significant difference in the attraction rating between the conditions with the employee testimonial and those without the testimonial, $\beta = 0.09, F(1, 312) = 0.206, p = 0.65$. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was not supported. Hypothesis 3a stated that source credibility would be higher for conditions with the employee testimonial compared to those without the testimonial. Table 8 shows there was no significant difference in source credibility between the conditions with the testimonial and those without them, $\beta = 0.06, F(1, 312) = 0.123, p = 0.727$. Therefore hypothesis 3a was not supported. Hypothesis 3b stated that perceived source credibility would partially mediate the effects of employee testimonials on organizational attraction. Because the testimonials did not significantly predict credibility or attraction, hypothesis 3b was not supported. Results for hypotheses 2-3b are in Tables 7 and 8.

Hypothesis 4 stated that perceived fit would be positively related to organizational attraction. Table 9 shows that perceived fit significantly predicted each subscale of attraction, therefore hypothesis 4 was supported. Hypothesis 4a stated that perceived source credibility would moderate the relationship between perceived fit and organizational attraction. The interaction between perceived fit and perceived source credibility was not significant, $F(1, 310) = 0.086, p = 0.770$. Therefore hypothesis 4a was not supported.

Hypothesis 5 stated that participants’ work experience and job search experience would moderate the relationship between the realistic job preview and perceived credibility.
### Table 9. Hypothesis 4 Perceived Fit Predicting Attraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Composite</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Intentions</th>
<th>Prestige</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>130.14**</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>85.18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Fit</td>
<td>0.68**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.72**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>-0.38</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Value is significant at 0.01 level. * Value is significant at 0.05 level.

Note: Realistic = (-1) Positive = (+1) Testimonial = (+1) No Testimonial = (-1)
The interaction between realistic vs. positive job previews and work experience was not significant for full-time work experience, $F(1, 267) = 1.49, p = 0.223$ or part-time work experience, $F(1, 245) = 1.07, p = 0.302$. Job search experience was also not a significant moderator of this relationship. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was not supported. Hypothesis 5a stated that participants’ work experience and job search experience would moderate the relationship between employee testimonials and perceived credibility. As shown in Table 10, the interaction between employee testimonials vs. no testimonials and full-time work experience was significant, $\beta = 0.24, F(1, 268) = 10.02, p = 0.002$. Figure 2 shows the plot of the interaction between employee testimonials and full-time work experience. To create Figure 2, one standard deviation below and above the mean of full-time work experience was substituted into each of the simple regression equations for the testimonial and no testimonial conditions. In general, full-time work experience had a negative relationship with perceived credibility, but under conditions that contained the employee testimonial, participants with more full-time work experience had a higher perceived credibility than those with low levels of full-time work experience. However, the interaction between employee testimonials vs. no testimonials and part-time work experience was not significant, $F(1, 286) = 0.303, p = 0.583$. Job search experience was not a moderator of the relationship between employee testimonials and credibility. Therefore, hypothesis 5a was partially supported.

### Table 10. Hypothesis 5a Experience Employee Testimonial Interaction on Credibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$\Delta R^2$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Work Experience</td>
<td>0.02*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive</td>
<td>0.63*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic vs. Positive*Picture vs. No Picture</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.03**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time work experience*Employee Testimonial vs. No Testimonial</td>
<td>0.03**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Value is significant at 0.01 level. * Value is significant at 0.05 level.

Note: Realistic = (-1) Positive = (+1) Testimonial = (+1) No Testimonial = (-1)
Because perceived fit explained most of the variance in organizational attraction in the statistical models, I decided to test whether perceived fit mediated the effect of realistic vs. positive information on organizational attraction. This was done as an exploratory analysis and was not hypothesized in the current study. The relationship between realistic vs. positive job previews was mediated by perceived fit. As Figure 3 illustrates, the standardized regression coefficient between realistic vs. positive and organizational attraction decreased substantially when controlling for perceived fit. The other conditions of mediation were also met: realistic vs. positive job previews was a significant predictor of perceived fit and was a significant predictor of organizational attraction while controlling for realistic vs. positive job previews.
Figure 3. RJPmediated by perceived fit. Standardized regression coefficients for the relationship between realistic vs. positive job previews organizational attraction mediated by perceived fit. The standardized regression coefficient between realistic vs. positive and organizational attraction, controlling for perceived fit, is in parentheses.
CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of the present study was to investigate how potential job applicants perceive the content presented in online job advertisements. There are many variables that influence potential applicants’ perceptions of organizational attraction and perceived credibility. The current study focused on the effects of realistic job previews versus a job preview focused solely on the positive aspects of the organization, as well as the effect of having a picture and/or employee testimonial. A visual depiction of these job advertisement conditions may found in Appendix B. The goal was to assess the effects these content variables had on organizational attraction and perceived credibility. In addition, a secondary purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of individual differences on organizational attraction. Work experience, job search experience and perceived fit were the individual differences that were assessed in the present study.

Hypothesis 1 stated that perceived source credibility would be positively related to organizational attraction. This hypothesis was supported, which is in line with previous research in marketing that has consistently demonstrated that consumers are more receptive to sources of information that are perceived as having higher credibility than other sources (Eisend, 2004). The present study reaffirmed this finding in the context of online recruitment, with a strong relationship between the perceived source credibility of online job advertisements and organizational attraction ($r = 0.52$). Perceived credibility was significantly correlated with all three dimensions of organizational attraction. Therefore, participants with a higher rating of perceived source credibility had a higher rating of general attraction, intentions to pursue, and ratings of prestige.

In the current study, I manipulated the content on six web pages in order to investigate whether realistic job previews and employee testimonials had a positive influence on ratings of perceived credibility. The mean of perceived source credibility was near the midpoint of the scale ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 3.41$) with a normal distribution of ratings. The major components of perceived credibility are trustworthiness and expertise. Therefore it is
important for a source to be perceived as reliable and knowledgeable for one to view the source as credible. The current study utilized employee testimonials in order to provide a knowledgeable source for the participants to learn information about the job being advertised. This was expected to influence the perceived credibility of the participants by using the employee as an additional source for job information. The current study also used realistic job previews versus all positive job previews to influence the perceived credibility. Providing realistic information about the job is one strategy organizations can utilize to influence the trust of the potential applicant.

Hypothesis 2 and 2a predicted that organizational attraction and perceived credibility would be higher for advertisements containing some realistic information compared to those with all positive information. Contrary to predictions, the RJPs did not have a positive influence on credibility or organizational attraction. Further, the positive job previews had a higher average rating of organizational attraction compared to the realistic job previews. Research on realistic job previews has demonstrated inconsistent findings when predicting organizational attraction or job choice. For instance, a meta-analysis by Phillips (1998) suggested that RJPs relate to lower levels of attrition from the recruitment process. On the contrary, Bretz and Judge (1998) found that the positive job previews were related to higher organizational attraction compared to the RJPs. Their study manipulated four job characteristics: time pressures, closeness of supervision, supportiveness of the culture, and interaction with others. Bretz and Judge (1998) also manipulated the amount of negative information and found that the amount of negative information conveyed had a significant negative relationship with organizational attraction. However, the face validity of their design is a concern, as many organizations would not likely present high levels of negative information on a job advertisement.

One explanation for the lack of significant link between RJPs and organizational attraction is that the theory about the effectiveness of RJPs is based on the underlying assumption that the message is received and processed by the potential job applicant. For RJPs to influence organizational attraction, individuals must internalize the message the organizational is sending and be motivated to change their attitude and behavior. The mean of organizational attraction was near the midpoint of the scale ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.62$) with a normal distribution of ratings. This normal distribution of attraction ratings suggests that
participants were taking time to process the content presented in the job advertisements. However, because the current study used a fictitious company profile, the participants may not have been as motivated to process the content in the job advertisements than if the participants were viewing the advertisement of a well-known company. Additionally, participants may not have been currently seeking a job. Another possible explanation is that the intensity of the negative information may have had a negative influence on organizational attraction and credibility. Research in the marketing field has found that content that takes an extreme position negatively affects the perceived source credibility and persuasive power of a message (Zhan, 2011). Further, information that has a stronger negative tone may have a negative influence on the job seekers’ affect towards the company and job opening presented in the advertisement.

Hypotheses 3 and 3a stated that conditions that contained employee testimonials would be rated higher in perceived credibility and organizational attraction compared to conditions without them. However in the present study, the employee testimonials did not have a significant influence on organizational attraction. Past research has consistently demonstrated that employees are viewed as credible sources of employment information (Fisher et al., 1979). Organizations have been increasingly using employee testimonials to testify about their work experiences in an effort to attract potential applicants. However, there is still a lack of empirical research testing the effects employee testimonials have on organizational attraction in the online recruitment context (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). Advertisers face the challenge of presenting testimonials that are perceived as credible and convincing by readers (Zhan, 2011).

In the current study, one possible explanation for the lack of effect between employee testimonials and organizational attraction was that the employee testimonials were not distinctive enough. The participants may have been more likely to focus on the portions of the advertisement that contained the description of the job and organization. However, the interaction between full-time work experience and employee testimonials on attraction indicates that those participants with more experience were more likely to notice the testimonial and in turn rate the advertisement as more credible. Marketing research shows that testimonials are effective if the information presented through the testimonial is specific and useful (Lewis, 1995). In the current study, the testimonial communicated specific
information about the job and was not marketing the company. However, future research may consider providing a more detailed quotation from the employee testimonial, which may strengthen the influence on credibility and organizational attraction.

Previous research indicates that the effects of testimonials on organizational attraction are mediated by perceived credibility (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). However in the current study, the advertisements containing the employee testimonials did not yield results of significantly higher credibility than conditions that did not contain testimonials. Additionally, organizational attraction was not significantly higher for the conditions containing an employee testimonial versus those that did not. In contrast, other researchers have suggested that employee testimonials are counterproductive because job seekers are likely to question the authenticity of organizationally controlled sources of information (Highhouse, Hoffman, Greve, & Collins, 2002). The current study does not support either outcome of the employee testimonial effect, and overall underscores a need for additional research.

Hypothesis 4 stated that perceived fit would be positively related to organizational attraction. Previous research results have found that perceived fit with a job and organization is the main individual difference variable that influences organizational attraction (Chapman et al., 2005). The present study confirmed these findings with a strong relationship between perceived fit and organizational attraction ($r = 0.84$). Therefore, participants were more attracted to the job advertisement when they perceived a higher compatibility between themselves and the job and organization. This correlation ($r = 0.84$) is large enough to consider whether perceived fit and organizational attraction are addressing the same construct. Despite the strong correlation, the content of the items are different enough to suggest that the measures address distinct constructs. For example, two items on the organizational attraction scale state, “This company is an attractive to me as a place for employment,” and “I am interested in learning more about this company.” Two items from the perceived fit scale state, “The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that this organization values,” and “There is a good fit between what the job offers me and what I am looking for in a job.” Therefore, the content in the perceived fit scale is more focused on the perception of fit between the values and personality of the participant and organization.
In all of the models tested in this study perceived fit explained the most variance in organizational attraction. Through an exploratory analysis, the current study found that perceived fit mediated the effect of realistic vs. positive job previews on organizational attraction. However, the direction of the effect was opposite of predictions, where the participants had a higher rating of perceived fit and organizational attraction for the advertisement conditions containing a positive job preview rather than the realistic job preview. This is contrary to the research indicating the use of RJPs facilitates the matching of person-organization fit (Maurer & Cook, 2011). However, according to Reeve et al. (2006), one extremely negative piece of information may be sufficient to overwhelm the accumulated effect of several mildly positive pieces of information. Likewise, one very positive aspect of the job may offset several mildly negative aspects of the job. In the current study the statement, “Attendance at a monthly Saturday afternoon meeting is required,” may have resulted in strong negative affective reactions from the participants leading to a lower perceived fit and organizational attraction. Therefore, organizations may want to consider the intensity of affective reactions that may result from specific attributes in organizational messages.

The use of an online snowball sample could have also influenced the effects on organizational attraction. In practice, the recruitment advertisements are targeted to individuals with experience in the specific job opening. Because the participants were recruited through an online convenience snowball sample, there was a wider range of skills and work backgrounds in the sample than would have typically responded to the type of job advertisement in practice. Further, the participants may not have been interested in the type of work that was presented in the job advertisements in this study.

Hypothesis 5 stated that participants’ work experience would moderate the relationship between RJPs and perceived credibility. As predicted, full-time work experience significantly moderated the effect between employee testimonials vs. no testimonials on credibility. In general, full-time work experience had a negative relationship with perceived credibility. However, under conditions that contained the employee testimonial, participants with more full-time work experience had a higher perceived credibility than those with lower levels of full-time work experience. These results were also true when tested at low levels of full-time work experience, as well as high levels of full-time work experience. These
findings support previous research that indicates job seekers with more prior work experience are more likely to interpret signals in job advertisements that represent valued organizational characteristics (Walker et al., 2008). Because most job seekers value credibility, those participants with more work experience are more likely to view the employee testimonial as a signal of honesty and openness by the organization. It is likely that job seekers with more full-time work experience are better able to identify important organizational and job information and are more motivated to find a match with potential employers. Instead of making job choice decisions with inadequate organizational information, job seekers with more experience will place more emphasis on the job and organizational characteristics that are important in determining their fit with an organization (Kristof, 1996). Therefore, job seekers with more work experience are more likely to recognize an employee testimonial as valuable information that contributes to the credibility of a job advertisement.

In conclusion, the current study supported that the perceived credibility of an online job advertisement is strongly related to the organizational attraction. Results from the current study indicated that positive job previews resulted in significantly higher ratings of organizational attraction than the realistic job previews. The intensity of the language used in the realistic job previews may have a negative influence on perceived credibility and organizational attraction. Future research is needed that better explores the type and level of realistic information that may be presented in recruitment contexts, and their effects on applicant reactions. As noted above, research by Zhan (2011) showed that content that contains an extreme position negatively influences the perceived credibility of the message. Because negative information is rare early in the recruitment process, job seekers will likely use any negative information as a simple cue to screen an organization from future consideration. On the contrary, job seekers would expect to see positive information about both desirable and undesirable potential employers, making positive information less diagnostic and having less of an impact on their organizational attraction than negative information. Future research is needed to see what kind of positive information may offset the effects of negative information on organizational attraction. Overall, the use of employee testimonials in job advertisements did not have a significant influence on perceived credibility or organizational attraction. However, the employees’ work experience did moderate the effects of employee testimonials on organizational attraction, such that those
employees with more full-time work experience were more attracted to the conditions that contained an employee testimonial compared to those with less full-time work experience. These findings are consistent with previous research by Walker et al. (2008) indicating that job seekers with more experience are better able to identify signals of valued organizational characteristics. Therefore those participants with more full-time work experience were more likely to recognize the employee testimonial as information that contributed to the credibility of the job advertisement.

The main individual difference variable in the current study was perceived fit with the job and organization. The current study also confirmed previous research findings that P-O fit is a significant predictor of organizational attraction. The P-O fit was also found to mediate the effect that RJPs had on organizational attraction. Last, contrary to predictions, the conditions with all positive job previews had higher ratings of perceived fit.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Organizations have been utilizing RJPs because of their beneficial effects on turnover, performance, and job satisfaction. However, from a recruitment perspective, organizations need to be careful when displaying negative content in their job advertisements. From a turnover perspective, it is important that organizations display accurate and complete information about a job opening. However, given the number of job advertisements that individuals are able to read through each day, it is important to understand what information stands out to those job seekers. The use of negative information may cause intense negative reactions that lead job seekers to perceive a lack of fit between themselves and the organization. The organization should consider the magnitude of negative information presented when using RJPs to recruit applicants.

The use of testimonials appears to have a positive influence on job seekers, with more experienced applicants perceiving a higher credibility in the advertisements that contain employee testimonials. Those applicants with more experience are more likely to recognize the efforts of the organization to provide more accurate information about the position. This is a simple way that organizations can improve the attractiveness of their organization with little cost. For the employee testimonial to have a positive effect on organizational attraction, job seekers must perceive the information in the employee testimonial to be useful and
credible. It is important for the testimonials to be authentic and not simply created by the company with a highly polished photo and quotation. Last, it is important for organizations to provide details about the organization and the culture that will assist employees in assessing their fit with the organization.

**LIMITATIONS**

As with any study, there were a number of limitations in the present one. First, the use of a fictitious organization likely had an influence on the participants’ ratings of organizational attraction in this study. Although job seekers are influenced by job and organizational characteristics, they are also influenced by the brand and reputation of an organization (Allen et al., 2007). Supporters of brand equity theory would argue that organizational branding would influence job seekers’ preferences beyond the effects of job and organizational attributes. One dimension of brand equity that was not addressed in the study was brand familiarity. The use of a fictitious company takes away from the prestige that participants would perceive in a company with an established brand. Marketing research has consistently found that organizational familiarity has a positive influence on attitudes towards an organization (Collins & Stevens, 2002). However, there are still many companies who do not have brand recognition that still need to recruit applicants and the current study may be more applicable to those companies.

There was also room for improvement in the measurement of credibility, which was one of the main outcome variables in the study. Research has shown that the main components of credibility are trustworthiness and expertise. However, the scale used in the study did not include any items that addressed the expertise component of credibility. Additionally the credibility scale used only contained five items. Therefore, the credibility scale could have been improved by including more items that measure the experience dimension of the construct.

Another important limitation in this study was its external validity. The sample of participants may not have been as motivated to fully process all of the information in the job advertisement conditions, because they were not able to apply for the position. Additionally, many of the participants may not have been looking for the type of work described by the job advertisements used in this study. For the manipulations of content to have an effect, the
participants must fully process the message presented on the advertisement. Pretesting to validate that participants were able to differentiate between realistic and positive conditions was important, as the participants were not active job seekers. However, differentiation in the pretesting between the realistic job preview conditions and the all positive job preview conditions may not be congruent with the goals of an organization to attract qualified applicants to the position. A more subtle balance of negative and positive information may be more persuasive when a job applicant is highly motivated to process the information presented in the job advertisement. One might also argue that the participants in the current study were likely to discount the risk of negative outcomes because these organizational attributes posed no real threats to them. Further, the participants also may have overlooked the positive information presented in the advertisements. Both of these situations could potentially affect the outcomes of the study and limit its external validity.

**CONCLUSION**

The current study found that perceived credibility and P-O fit are two important variables that are highly related to organizational attraction and should be considered when designing online job advertisements. More research is needed using organizational web sites with an established brand. In order to truly know what content variables are most effective in persuading qualified applicants, organizations must be willing to test their techniques on their web sites. This would allow researchers to understand what content variables influence high quality job seekers who are motivated to process information presented in job advertisements. Another important area for future research is to understand which organizational and job attributes should be presented more realistically to potential job applicants. In general, it is expected that people will attend to negative information more so than to positive information because it is unexpected in a job advertisement. For the realistic job previews to have a positive influence on organizational attraction, job seekers must be motivated to process the information and internalize the message being sent. In the current study, because participants were not able to apply for the job posting, they were less motivated to fully process the realistic job previews and positive job previews. More research is necessary to understand the interaction between differential information and the intensity of negative reactions.
Recruitment research also needs to further investigate whether the positive effects of employee testimonials found in the marketing context can transfer to online recruitment. Research on testimonials is scarce in the online recruitment context; it is still unclear if these methods are effective in recruiting qualified applicants. More research is needed to understand how to present these employee testimonials in a way that is perceived as being credible and useful to potential job applicants. Perceived credibility had a strong relationship with organizational attraction, although neither the use of RJP nor employee testimonials were significant predictors of credibility. More research is needed to understand how recruiters can present information in a credible way to gain the trust of potential job seekers.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

CONTENT MANIPULATED IN STIMULI
Content Manipulated in Stimuli
Detail of content differences between the realistic job preview advertisement conditions and the positive job preview conditions. The content that was different between conditions is in bold and italicized. First the initial paragraph of the advertisement is presented, followed by the responsibilities of each of the conditions.

Realistic Job Preview
This position will be responsible for activities that will improve the quality and efficiency of organizational performance through project management methods and tools. The project manager must be able to manage their time and their team's time effectively to meet deadlines in a high-pressure environment at CardinalTech. The project manager will need to manage client expectations and identify needs they may not even recognize. You will also need to resolve interpersonal conflict and give feedback to team members when necessary.

Positive Job Preview
This position will be responsible for activities that will improve the quality and efficiency of organizational performance through project management methods and tools. The project manager will have the opportunity to work with their team to meet the goals of the project in a collaborating environment at CardinalTech. The project manager will need to communicate with clients in order to understand their needs. You will also be responsible for rewarding and recognizing team members.

Realistic Responsibilities
- Establish project management processes and practices; oversee the adherence to the processes and best practices.
- Identify holes or breakdowns in processes that are not meeting demands and implement improvements.
- Build and manage a cross-functional project team.
- Train all employees on proper project management processes.
- This job oftentimes requires long hours in order to meet project deadlines.
- Attendance at a monthly Saturday afternoon staff meeting is required.
- Consistently find ways to scale projects down in order to reduce budget of projects.
- Provide a proactive framework for enhancing coordination, consistency, and leadership across project activities.
- Direct the development of necessary communications tools (web based digital dashboard, executive project status reporting, etc.).
- Resolve frequent interpersonal conflicts and give feedback to team members when necessary in order to stay on track to meet project goals.
• Improve organizational flexibility with the ability to allocate and focus key resources on key activities.

Positive Responsibilities
• Establish project management processes and practices; oversee the adherence to the processes and best practices.

• Implement improvement in processes that help the team to better achieve project goals and satisfy customers.

• Build and manage a cross-functional project team.

• Train all employees on proper project management processes.

• You will receive ample time to organize strategies to meet project deadlines.

• You will be required to occasionally attend meetings to discuss progress.

• Submit budget proposals, and recommend subsequent budget changes where necessary.

• Provide a proactive framework for enhancing coordination, consistency, and leadership across project activities.

• Direct the development of necessary communications tools (web based digital dashboard, executive project status reporting, etc.).

• Interact with team members and hold regular team meetings in order to discuss updates on the project status and communicate new information.

• Improve organizational flexibility with the ability to allocate and focus key resources on key activities.
APPENDIX B

STUDY STIMULI
Figure 4. Stimuli for the realistic job preview, with the employee testimonial, and with a picture condition. The live web page is at http://cardinaltech.weebly.com/.
Figure 5. Stimuli for the positive job preview, with the employee testimonial, and with a picture condition. The live web page is at http://cardinaltech1.weebly.com/.
Figure 6. Stimuli for the realistic job preview, without the employee testimonial, and with a picture condition. The live web page is at http://cardinaltech2.weebly.com/.
Figure 7. Stimuli for the positive job preview, without the employee testimonial, and with a picture condition. The live web page is at http://cardinaltech3.weebly.com/.
Figure 8. Stimuli for the realistic job preview, without the employee testimonial, and without a picture condition. The live web page is at http://cardinaltech4.weebly.com/.
Figure 9. Stimuli for the positive job preview, without the employee testimonial, and without a picture condition. The live web page is at http://cardinaltech5.weebly.com/.
APPENDIX C

SCALES USED IN STUDY
Scales Used in Study
Detail list of item scales listed by each construct that was measured in the study.

Organizational Attraction Scale
1. For me, this company would be a good place to work.
2. I would not be interested in this company except as a last resort (reverse coded).
3. This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.
4. I am interested in learning more about this company.
5. A job at this company is very appealing to me.
6. I would accept a job offer from this company.
7. I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer.
8. If this company invited me for a job interview, I would go.
9. I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company.
10. I would recommend this company to a friend looking for a job.
11. Employees are probably proud to say they work at this company.
12. This is a reputable company to work for.
13. This company has a reputation as being an excellent employer.
14. I would find this company a prestigious place to work.
15. There are many who would probably like to work at this company.

Perceived Credibility Scale
1. I found the information in the advertisement to be believable.
2. The information presented in the advertisement appeared to be accurate.
3. I found the source of information to be trustworthy.
4. The information presented appeared to be biased (reverse coded).
5. I was presented complete information in the job advertisement.

Perceived Fit Scale
1. The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that this organization values.
2. My personal values appear to match the organization’s values and culture.
3. The organization’s values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life.
4. There is a good fit between what the job offers me and what I am looking for in a job.
5. The attributes that I look for in a job are fulfilled by the job presented.
6. This job gives just about everything that I want from a job.
7. The match is good between the demands of the job and my personal skills.
8. My abilities and training are a good fit with the requirements of the job.
9. My personal abilities and education provide a good match with the demands that the job would place on me.

Demographics
1. How many years have you worked full-time (40 hours a week)?
2. How many years have you worked part-time (less than 40)?
3. How many full-time job searches have you conducted in your working career?
4. How many part-time job searches have you conducted in your working career?
5. What is your age?
6. What is your gender?
7. What is your ethnicity?