Factors Related to Job Acceptance Decisions
of College Recruits

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We investigated factors related to job acceptance decisions of college recruits who visited a large petrochemical company. We extended earlier recruitment research by surveying subjects following site visits instead of campus interviews, by measuring actual job offer decisions instead of only intentions, and by collecting data across 2 years. In general, overall evaluations of the site visit, perceptions of the location, and host likableness were related positively to job acceptance decisions. Additional analyses suggested that similar variables influenced both job acceptance intentions and decisions and that intentions mediated the relationship between the predictors and job offer decisions. © 1995 Academic Press, Inc.

Researchers interested in organizational entry processes have begun investigating how organizational recruitment practices influence applicants’ attraction to organizations (Harn & Thornton, 1985; Harris & Fink, 1987; Powell, 1984, 1991; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). Because of shortages of workers in certain occupations (Hanigan, 1987; Rynes, 1989) and the utility of having the most qualified applicants accept job offers (Murphy, 1986), such research seems warranted. In general, however, much of the recruitment research has collected data under the auspices of a college placement center, focused on campus interviews and recruiters, and measured applicant at-

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traction to firms. Although applicant attraction is an important objective of recruitment, research is needed that investigates factors influencing job acceptance decisions of applicants (Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Barber, 1990; Wanous & Colella, 1989). In the one study that examined job acceptance decisions (Taylor & Bergmann, 1987), only 38 applicants completed surveys at the job offer decision stage, resulting in limited power to investigate factors influencing job acceptance decisions. Furthermore, because most researchers have collected data following campus interviews, we know little about how later stages of the recruitment process (e.g., the site visit and employees other than the recruiter) influence actual job decisions (Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Barber, 1990).

Although few studies have investigated factors influencing job acceptance decisions, several theories suggest that applicants’ perceptions of job and organizational attributes and of the organization’s recruitment practices influence job acceptance. For example, propositions from social identity theory suggest that individuals’ self-concept is influenced by characteristics of the job they hold and of the organization to which they belong (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994). Therefore, we expect that applicant perceptions of job and organizational attributes will be related positively to job acceptance decisions because applicants will be more likely to accept jobs when they view the job and organization positively and therefore can enhance or maintain a positive self-concept in that job. Another theory relevant to the influence of recruitment practices on job offer decisions is signaling theory, which suggests that recruitment practices influence job acceptance decisions because applicants perceive experiences occurring during the recruitment process as signals of working conditions at the organization (Breaugh, 1992; Rynes, 1991). Therefore, we expect applicant perceptions of the site visit and of the formal host who helps coordinate the site visit to be related positively to job acceptance decisions. In summary, we extend previous research by investigating relationships of applicant perceptions of job and organizational attributes, of the site visit and of the formal host with both job acceptance intentions and job acceptance decisions.

THE SITE VISIT

In general, recruitment of college graduates involves some variation of a campus interview, a site visit, and a job offer. A typical site visit includes interviews with potential co-workers, the supervisor, and upper level managers, as well as tours of the work area and possibly the community. We investigate whether perceptions of the site visit are related to applicants’ job acceptance decisions.

In general, no matter how much information an organization communicates to applicants, there are many aspects of working for the organization that are unknown to applicants (Breaugh, 1992). Therefore, recruitment scholars have suggested that applicants interpret information they receive as “signals”
about working conditions in the organization (Breaugh, 1992; Rynes, 1991). More specifically, propositions based on signaling theory suggest that aspects of the site visit are interpreted by applicants as providing information about working conditions in the organization. For example, an unprofessional site visit might be interpreted by applicants as a signal that the organization doesn't care about its employees. Similarly, as noted by Barber and Roehling (1993), applicants may interpret the absence of relevant information as an indication that the firm does not care enough to provide them with accurate information about the job. Therefore, we extend earlier efforts by investigating whether the amount of information provided to applicants before and during the site visit is related to job acceptance decisions.

Because applicants desire information about how the site visit will be conducted before actually visiting the site (e.g., information about travel arrangements, agenda for the visit) (Lumsden, 1967) we expect that the amount of pre-site visit information provided positively influences job acceptance decisions. Further, because applicants expect the site visit to provide information about important job and organizational attributes, we expect that the amount of information provided during the site visit will be related positively to job acceptance decisions. Evidence from several studies supports the proposition that the amount of information provided to applicants positively influences the attractiveness of that organization as an employer. For example, Gatewood, Gowan, and Lautenschlager (1993) found that the total amount of information in an advertisement was related to intentions of pursuing employment with that firm. Similarly, Barber and Roehling (1993) found that applicants were more likely to decide to interview with a firm when job postings contained more information. In a different context, Rynes and Miller (1983) found that the amount of information recruiters provided influenced applicant attraction to the organization. Finally, Maurer, Howe, and Lee (1992) adopted a marketing management approach to recruitment and argued that organizations can influence applicant attraction by providing applicants with the information they desire at the various stages of recruitment, although, as they noted, little research has investigated such issues. Therefore, because applicants desire information about the job and the organization at all stages of the recruitment process (Maurer et al., 1992), we expect that applicants who are provided with more information both before and during the site visit will be more likely to accept a job offer.

Scholars have suggested that the recruitment process corresponds to a 'courtship' (Ornstein & Isabella, 1993), as individuals and organizations try to attract each other. Further, as discussed earlier, applicants are thought to interpret experiences occurring during the site visit as signals concerning unknown working conditions at the organization such that applicants who feel they were treated poorly during the site visit probably feel that the organization would treat them poorly as employees. Therefore, we expect that applicants' overall evaluation of the site visit will be related positively
to job acceptance decisions because applicants with positive site visit experiences would expect to have more positive working conditions than applicants with negative site visit experiences.

JOB AND ORGANIZATIONAL ATTRIBUTES

Social identity theory suggests that people classify themselves into social categories based on various factors, such as the job they hold and the organization they work for (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Further, social identity theory suggests that an individual's self-concept is influenced by membership in these social categories (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton et al., 1994). Therefore, in order for individuals to maintain positive self-concepts, they will be attracted to and accept job offers from organizations that are perceived positively. Similarly, as noted by Chatman (1989), person–environment fit theory suggests that people are attracted to organizations they view as holding values and norms they deem important. By extension, it seems likely people will accept job offers from firms that have attributes that are rated positively. Although considerable evidence indicates that applicant perceptions of job and organizational attributes are related to intentions to accept a job offer (Harris & Fink, 1987; Powell, 1984; Taylor & Bergmann, 1987), little research has investigated such effects on actual job decisions. Nonetheless, Rynes, Bretz, and Gerhart (1991) found that the overwhelming majority of subjects reported job characteristics as important influences on initial assessments of fit with firms. Additionally, job characteristics were also important influences on changes in the initial assessments of fit with a firm (e.g., from positive to negative or vice versa) (Rynes et al., 1991). Therefore, we expect that applicant perceptions of "vacancy characteristics" (Rynes, 1991) such as the type of work, employees with whom the applicant would work, and compensation and benefits are related positively to job acceptance decisions.

Employees with whom an applicant would work are thought to be important influences on job decisions (Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Barber, 1990), although little recruitment research has examined organizational members other than recruiters. Nonetheless, based on person–environment fit theory, it seems likely that applicants' perceptions of employees would influence their perceptions of fit in the organization and therefore would influence job acceptance decisions. Furthermore, it seems likely that employees may influence job acceptance decisions by serving as signals for important but unknown organizational characteristics (e.g., unfriendly employees may indicate an unfriendly work environment) (Harris & Fink, 1987; Rynes, 1991; Rynes, Heneman, & Schwab, 1980). Further, because job incumbents are perceived as a more credible source of information about the company than recruiters (Fisher, Ilgen, & Hoyer, 1979), it seems likely that perceptions of employees will influence job acceptance decisions (Rynes & Barber, 1990; Rynes & Miller, 1983). Therefore, we expect that applicants are more likely to accept job offers when they have positive perceptions of the employees.
Spillover theory, which proposes that experiences at work carry over into nonwork areas and that nonwork experiences carry over into work, has been supported with evidence of spillover of work and nonwork attitudes (Staines, 1980), of work and nonwork moods (Williams & Alliger, 1994), and reciprocal relations between work and family conflicts (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). Such results suggest that nonwork aspects associated with the job might influence job acceptance decisions. Further, propositions from social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), suggest that the location in which an individual lives influences the individual’s self-concept and may therefore influence job acceptance decisions. Although we found no study that specifically investigated the effects of applicant perceptions of the location on job acceptance decisions, evidence indicates that location influences decisions to interview for a job (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Rynes & Lawler, 1983). Additionally, evidence indicates that employee perceptions of the location positively influenced relocation decisions (Turban, Campion, & Eyring, 1992). Finally, because the location is a salient job attribute that may vary considerably across alternatives, we expect that applicant perceptions of the location will be related positively to job acceptance decisions (Rynes, 1989; Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987).

THE HOST

In the second year of data collection, the organization began to assign a formal host to each applicant who visited the site. In general, the host worked in areas in which the applicant might work and helped coordinate the applicant’s site visit. As discussed above, we expect that the employees applicants interact with during the site visit provide applicants with information about what it would be like to work in that organization and that applicants use such information to determine their fit with the firm. In particular, because applicants spent a considerable amount of time with the host, we expect that the host provides information that applicants use in assessing their fit with the organization. Furthermore, because the host would be a co-worker should the applicant accept the job offer, we expect that applicant perceptions of the host will be positively related to job acceptance intentions and decisions.

We categorized our predictors as variables measuring the site visit, job and organizational attributes, or the host. We realize, however, that much of what applicants know about job and organizational attributes is learned during the site visit and that the host is a salient aspect of the site visit. We categorized the variables as we did because we wanted to examine the influences of the site visit separately from job and organizational attributes and from the host. The site visit variables, which we operationalized as pre-site visit information, information provided at site visit, and overall evaluation of the site visit, correspond to the organization’s recruitment processes. Previous recruitment research has separated the effects of recruitment practices and job attributes (Harris & Fink, 1987; Powell, 1984, 1991; Taylor & Bergmann, 1987). We
also felt it would be useful to separate the recruitment process variables, in our study the site visit variables, from characteristics of the job. Similarly, although the host is a central aspect of the site visit and might be considered a job attribute because applicants would work with the host, because of the amount of time the host spent with the applicant, we felt that the host variables reflected a unique construct.

**INTENTIONS AND ACTUAL DECISIONS**

As discussed previously, much of the research investigating recruitment practices has used measures of attraction toward the firm, such as job acceptance intentions, rather than actual job acceptance decisions. As pointed out by various authors, however, stating one's intentions is a "costless" exercise, whereas actual job choices involve serious opportunity costs because accepting one offer precludes accepting other offers (Bretz, Ash, & Dreher, 1989; Rynes, 1991). Further, although one might expect that factors found to influence applicant attraction to firms would also influence job acceptance decisions, some research suggests that the importance of factors changes during the organizational choice process (Osborn, 1990). Specifically, Osborn (1990) found that attributes that were important in predicting initial acceptability of an organization were less important in predicting actual organizational choice, in part because organizations that did not meet minimal requirements for these attributes were not considered further. Because the organizations that remained in the selection pool had reduced variability on attributes that were important for initial acceptability the attributes' importance in choice decisions was reduced. Such findings suggest the possibility that factors that are important influences on initial attraction to firms may not influence job acceptance decisions, leading to questions about whether recruitment research using job acceptance intentions as a dependent variable provides useful information for predicting job acceptance decisions. Therefore, we investigate whether similar variables predict both job acceptance intentions and job acceptance decisions to provide some information about the value of using intentions as surrogates for job decisions.

Further, as noted by Rynes (1991, 1993), we have no information about how acceptance intentions are converted into job acceptance decisions. Although we expect that job acceptance intentions are related to job acceptance decisions, based on research investigating attitude-behavior relations (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977) and turnover decisions (Mobley, 1982), research is needed to verify this relationship. We investigate whether intentions toward the firm mediate the relationship between the predictors and actual job acceptance decisions.

**SUMMARY**

In summary, we expect that applicant perceptions of the site visit and of job and organizational attributes are related to job acceptance decisions. We
extended earlier research by measuring applicants' perceptions toward the organization following their site visits rather than relying on impressions obtained after campus interviews, by measuring actual job acceptance decisions rather than just intentions, and by studying the effects of variables not previously investigated. Additionally, because we measured both job acceptance intentions and actual job acceptance decisions, we investigated whether each dependent variable is affected by similar factors, whether intentions mediated the relationship between the predictors and actual decisions, and the extent to which intentions predicted job acceptance decisions. Finally, because data were collected across two recruiting years, we can investigate whether results replicate across those years.

METHOD

Procedure

Applicants for positions in a large petrochemical company were asked to complete and return questionnaires to the university-based researchers in the provided stamped, addressed envelope. This company has an excellent reputation as an employer and recruits at college campuses nationwide. Information about applicants is stored in a centralized database; individual sites use this database to select applicants to invite for site visits. We collected data from applicants who visited a large petrochemical complex in the Southwest during two consecutive recruiting years as a part of a larger project evaluating this complex's recruitment programs. This complex, which is one of the largest petrochemical complexes in the world, covers 5000 acres, consists of 75 individual production plants and 21 Research and Development (R&D) laboratories, and employs approximately 8000 individuals. Applicants were considered for employment for many different types of jobs at numerous plants and R&D laboratories. The individual production plants and R&D laboratories invited applicants for site visits and were responsible for conducting plant interviews and tours. Although the recruitment and placement office provided general guidance in conducting the site visits there was considerable variability in applicants' site visit experiences as a function of the specific plant/laboratory visited. Finally, we should note that the labor market for applicants was excellent during the data collection period, and this was one of the factors leading to the recruitment office contacting us to conduct the study.

In the first year of data collection, surveys were mailed to applicants after the site visit, whereas in the second year, applicants were given the surveys at the end of their site visit. Subjects were assured that their responses would be confidential and that only members of the research team would see the questionnaires. To thank participants for their time and effort, a dollar was enclosed with the questionnaire for the first year, and two dollars were enclosed the second year. In general, the response rates were very good. In
the first year, 527 applicants accepted site visit invitations and were mailed questionnaires. The response rate was 72% (379 returned out of 527 mailed). Job offers were made to 229 of the 379 applicants who returned the site visit survey; 147 subjects rejected the job offer, and 82 subjects accepted the offer. In the second year, 394 applicants returned completed questionnaires after the site visit. Because we were unsure exactly how many surveys were distributed to applicants after the site visit we were unable to determine our exact response rate for year 2. Nonetheless, based on the number of site visits conducted we believe our response rate was similar to the rate for year 1, or around 70%. Job offers were made to 147 of the 394 applicants who returned the survey; 94 subjects rejected and 53 subjects accepted the offer. The high percentage of applicants who rejected the job offer reflects the favorable labor market for applicants.

Subjects

For the first year, the subjects were primarily white (91%) males (74%). Similarly, in the second year, subjects were also primarily white (86%) males (64%). In general, most subjects were engineering majors who were completing their bachelor degrees.

Measures

All measures, except the job offer decision, were taken from a larger questionnaire. Unless indicated otherwise, items were measured on 6-point scales.

Pre-site visit information. Subjects indicated the extent to which they agreed they were given sufficient information about transportation, lodging, reimbursement procedures, the site visit agenda, and the appropriate dress for plant tours before the site visit. These items were written to measure issues reported to be important to students visiting a site (Lumsden, 1967; Trask, 1983). Coefficient alpha for this five item scale was .69 for year 1 and .68 for year 2.

Information provided during the site visit. Subjects indicated the extent to which they agreed that the site visit provided sufficient information about advancement opportunities, fringe benefits, the company, co-workers, working hours, the location, pay, job security, the supervisor, the type of work, and the working conditions. These 11 items measured each of the 10 factors identified by Jurgensen (1978) as making a job good or bad as well as the location, which our company contacts had indicated was important to the applicants. These 11 items were combined into a scale with coefficient αs of .84 and .79 for years 1 and 2, respectively.

Overall evaluation of the site visit. Applicants indicated the extent to which the site visit (1) overall, was conducted very well, (2) raised my opinion of (the company), and (3) was one of the best I've had. Coefficient α for this three-item scale was .86 for year 1 and .80 for year 2.

Job and organizational attributes. Applicants indicated the extent to which
they agreed with 51 items describing attributes of the job, company, and location. High scores for an item indicate that applicants agreed that the item described the job. To attempt to measure the full range of job and organizational attributes that may influence job acceptance decisions, we included items measuring each of the 10 factors Jurgensen (1978) identified as making a job good or bad as well as items measuring attributes of the location. Some of the items were adapted from earlier research (Harris & Fink, 1987; Liden & Parsons, 1986; Powell, 1984), and other items were developed specifically for this study. We conducted iterated principal factor analyses with varimax rotation using the data from both years for all subjects who completed a survey after the site visit and responded to all 51 items \( N = 478 \). The eigenvalue greater than 1.0 criterion and the examination of the scree plot suggested seven factors that accounted for 53% of the variance in the items. We used items for scale development that had factor loadings greater than .50 on a factor with all cross-loadings less than .40. Because coefficient alpha for the seventh factor was unacceptably low, we created six scales by unit weighting items loading on that factor.

The first factor, *Type of work* (6 items, \( \alpha = .87 \) and .90 for years 1 and 2, respectively), included items such as challenging and interesting work, opportunities to use my abilities, and meets my career objectives. *Warm coworkers* (6 items, \( \alpha = .91 \) for both years) included items such as employees are people I would socialize with, are like me in a number of ways, and are warm and friendly. *Compensation and benefits* (4 items, \( \alpha = .80 \) and .79 for years 1 and 2, respectively) included items such as excellent prospects for high future earnings and excellent fringe benefits. *Socially responsible company* (3 items, \( \alpha = .82 \) and .83 for years 1 and 2, respectively) included items such as the company has high ethical standards and protects the environment. *Supportive supervisor* was measured with these two items (\( \alpha = .91 \) and .81 for years 1 and 2, respectively): the supervisor (1) will support my development and (2) is competent. Finally, *Location* (3 items, \( \alpha = .83 \) and .84 years for 1 and 2, respectively) included items tapping access to cultural and recreational activities and opportunities for a social life.

*Host*. Applicants indicated their agreement with 12 items describing their host. Iterated principal factor analyses with varimax rotation suggested two factors that accounted for 55% of the variance in the items: *Host helpfulness* (4 items, \( \alpha = .73 \)) and *Host likableness* (2 items, \( \alpha = .85 \)). Host helpfulness included items such as the host gave an informative tour and answered all my questions. Host likableness was measured with these two items: the host (1) is someone I would socialize with and (2) is like me in a number of ways.

*Job acceptance intentions*. Applicants indicated the likelihood (1—very unlikely to 6—very likely) that they would accept a job offer if one were extended.

*Job acceptance decision*. The applicant's actual job offer decision was obtained from company records.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Pre-site visit information</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Information provided at site visit</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Overall evaluation of site visit</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Host likableness&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Host helpfulness&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Type of work</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Warm co-workers</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Compensation and benefits</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Socially responsible company</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Supportive supervisor</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Location</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Likelihood of accepting offer</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Job decision&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>0 = Reject, 1 = Accept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Correlations above the diagonal are from year 1 and correlations below the diagonal are from year 2. Because of pairwise deletion N ranged from 208 to 307 for year 1 and from 138 to 378 for year 2. Based on the smallest N, for year 1 correlations ≥ .14, p ≤ .05 and correlations ≥ .18, p ≤ .01; for year 2 correlations ≥ .17, p ≤ .05 and correlations ≥ .22, p ≤ .01. Significant correlations that are below those cutoffs but that are significant because of a larger N are indicated with a superscript b.

<sup>a</sup>The host variables were only measured the second year.

<sup>b</sup>Significant at the .05 alpha level.
### TABLE 2
Hierarchical Regression Analysis: Year 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Job acceptance intentions</th>
<th>Job offer decision</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Unique $R^2$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Site visit</td>
<td></td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-site visit information</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>-.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information provided at site visit</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall evaluation of site visit</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job/organizational attributes</td>
<td></td>
<td>.205**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of work</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm co-workers</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation and benefits</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially responsible company</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive supervisor</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total $R^2$</td>
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<td>.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>202</td>
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</table>

*Note. β is the standardized regression coefficient from the full model. Unique $R^2$ is the $R^2$ accounted for by the set of predictors when that set is added to the regression model after the other set is in the equation. Equivalently, the unique $R^2$ is the reduction in $R^2$ from a full model when that set of predictors is removed from the regression equation.

* $p \leq .05.$
** $p \leq .01.$
*** $p \leq .10.$

### ANALYSES AND RESULTS

We conducted the analyses separately for year 1 and year 2. Although the items in the scales were identical for years 1 and 2, because we added the host scales in year 2, year 2 is a replication and extension of year 1.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations among all the variables for years 1 and 2. Across both years, the job offer decision was positively correlated with job acceptance intentions ($r = .50$ and .53 for years 1 and 2, respectively) and these predictors: overall evaluations of the site visit, the type of work, compensation and benefits, supportive supervisor, and the location ($r$ ranges from .14 to .31). Additionally, in the second year the job offer decision was also correlated with host likableness ($r = .28$).

Regression analyses: Factors predicting job acceptance intentions and decisions. We used regression analyses to investigate the relationships between the predictors and job acceptance intentions and decisions. (We also conducted probit analyses for the full equation for job offer decisions and obtained similar results as the OLS regression analyses. Because interpretation of the regression coefficients from probit analyses is not as straightforward
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Job acceptance intentions</th>
<th></th>
<th>Job offer decision</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Unique $R^2$</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Unique $R^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site visit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-site visit information</td>
<td>0.03*</td>
<td>0.023*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Information provided at site visit</td>
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<td>0.008</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall evaluation of site visit</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Job/organizational attributes</td>
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<td>0.103**</td>
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<td>0.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of work</td>
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<td>-0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warm co-workers</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compensation and benefits</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially responsible company</td>
<td>-0.08*</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Supportive supervisor</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.021*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>0.22**</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.045**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.039*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host likableness</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host helpfulness</td>
<td>-0.16**</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total $R^2$</td>
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<td>0.19**</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>133</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\beta$ is the standardized regression coefficient from the full model. Unique $R^2$ is the $R^2$ accounted for by the set of predictors when that set is added to the regression model after the other sets are in the equation. Equivalently, the unique $R^2$ is the reduction in $R^2$ from a full model when that set of predictors is removed from the regression equation.

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
*** $p \leq .10$

as interpretations from OLS regression [Aldrich & Nelson, 1984], and to aid in comparing the results from the job offer decision to the results using job acceptance intentions, we report results from the OLS regression analyses. We regressed job acceptance decisions and intentions on all the predictors, and the regression coefficients from the full models are presented in Tables 2 and 3. The significance of the regression coefficient provides a test of whether that variable explains unique variance in the dependent variables (Pedhazur, 1982). To determine the unique contribution of each set of variables, we conducted a usefulness analysis (Darlington, 1968). This analysis involves calculating $R^2$ for the full model and then for a reduced model that does not contain the set of variables of interest. The difference in the variance between the full and the reduced model is the unique variance (usefulness) accounted for by the removed set of variables and is identical to the variance the set of predictors would add after all the other predictors were entered in
the equation. The calculation of unique variance is not influenced by the order of entry of variables into the regression equation (Pedhazur, 1982). Finally, the sum of the unique $R^2$ may not equal the total $R^2$ because the sets of predictors explain "common," or overlapping, variance in the dependent variable.

For year 1, the predictors explained 35% of the variance in job acceptance intentions (see Table 2). The set of job and organizational attributes explained unique variance in intentions (unique $R^2 = .205$); type of work and location were positively related to intentions, as was supportive supervisor at the more liberal $p \leq .10$ alpha level. Similarly, at the $p \leq .10$ alpha level, the set of site visit variables explained unique variance in job acceptance intentions (unique $R^2 = .014$). Specifically, information provided at the site visit was negatively related to job acceptance intentions. The predictors explained 16% of the variance in job offer decisions. The set of site visit variables and the set of job and organizational attributes explained unique variance in job offer decisions (unique $R^2 = .046$ and .085, respectively). Individual variables that explained unique variance in job offer decisions were the overall evaluation of the site visit and the location. In addition, type of work and warm co-workers (negative relationship) were related to job offer decisions at the $p \leq .10$ alpha level.

For year 2, the full model explained 44% of the variance in job acceptance intentions (see Table 3). The set of site visit, job and organizational attribute, and host variables each explained unique variance in job acceptance intentions (unique $R^2 = .023$, .103, and .045, respectively). Individual variables that explained unique variance in job acceptance intentions were the overall evaluation of the site visit, type of work, location, host likableness, and host helpfulness (negative sign). The predictors explained 19% of the variance in job offer decisions. The set of site visit and host variables explained unique variance at the $p \leq .10$ alpha level (unique $R^2 = .044$ and .039, respectively). Specifically, the overall evaluation of the site visit, host likableness, and supportive supervisor (at the $p \leq .10$ alpha level) each explained unique variance in job offer decisions.

In summary, overall evaluations of the site visit influenced job acceptance decisions for both years; the location influenced decisions for year 1 and host likableness influenced decisions for year 2. In addition, type of work was related positively to job offer decisions (at the .10 alpha level) for year 1 and to job acceptance intentions for both years. In general, the pattern of regression coefficients was similar for job acceptance decisions and intentions. However, for year 1 location was the only variable that explained unique variance in both decisions and intentions, and for year 2 only the overall evaluation of the site visit and host likableness explained unique variance in both decisions and intentions.

Intentions and actual decisions. If job acceptance intentions are an immediate precursor of job offer decisions, we would expect (1) intentions would
add considerable unique variance in explaining job offer decisions beyond
the other predictors in the equation and (2) the influence of the other variables
on job offer decisions would be reduced when intentions are in the regression
equation (see Baron and Kenny. [1986] for a discussion of mediation ana-
yses). Therefore, we ran additional regression analyses that included job accep-
tance intentions in the regression equation predicting job offer decisions. For
year 1, the model with job acceptance intentions explained an additional 14% of
the variance in job offer decisions ($p \leq .01$; model $R^2 = .30$, $p \leq .01$),
and only the overall evaluation of the site visit and warm co-workers (negative
sign) explained unique variance in job offer decisions. For year 2, intentions
explained an additional 14% of the variance in job offer decisions ($p \leq .01$;
model $R^2 = .33$, $p \leq .01$), and none of the other predictors explained unique
variance in job offer decisions when intentions was in the equation. Such
results provide partial support for the conclusion that job acceptance intentions
mediate the relationship between the predictors and job offer decisions and
suggests that intentions are an immediate precursor of job offer decisions.

Finally, Table 4 presents the cross-tabulation of job acceptance intentions
with job offer decisions for both years. As expected, intentions are strongly
related to the actual job offer decision. Across both years, of the 64 individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job acceptance intentions</th>
<th>Reject</th>
<th>Accept</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unlikely</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly unlikely</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly likely</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $X^2(5, N = 208) = 73.68$, $p \leq .0001$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job acceptance intentions</th>
<th>Reject</th>
<th>Accept</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very unlikely</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly unlikely</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly likely</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $X^2(5, N = 142) = 47.33$, $p \leq .0001$. 

The table shows the cross-tabulation of job acceptance intentions with job offer decisions for both years. The data indicates that intentions are strongly related to the actual job offer decision. Across both years, of the 64 individuals...
who indicated a low likelihood of accepting an offer (very unlikely to slightly unlikely), only 2 ultimately accepted the offer. Additionally, the majority of subjects (59%) who indicated a strong likelihood of accepting the job offer (likely and very likely) tended to accept the job. Such results indicate that intentions are not identical to actual job offer decisions but, along with the regression analyses, provide tentative support for the use of job acceptance intentions as a surrogate for job offer decisions.

DISCUSSION

We extended earlier recruitment research by surveying applicants after the site visit and by examining factors related to job offer decisions in addition to job acceptance intentions. Whereas much of the previous recruitment research has used students interviewing through a university placement center, we examined applicants that interviewed in various departments at a single site of a large firm. Our results suggest the importance of the site visit for job acceptance decisions. Specifically, overall evaluations of the site visit, perceptions of the location, and host likability all were related positively to job acceptance decisions. Such results suggest the importance of what is communicated to applicants during the site visit for job acceptance decisions.

Across both years applicants' overall evaluation of the site visit explained unique variance in job offer decisions. Such findings provide some support for signaling theory which suggests that activities during the site visit are perceived as signals concerning working conditions in the organization such that applicants who thought the site visit was handled well thought that working conditions would be better. Research is needed, however, that measures perceptions of working conditions before and after the site visit to determine exactly how the site visit influences perceptions of working conditions. For example, although some evidence suggests that the status of the people met during the site visit, whether applicants felt “specially” treated, and how professional the site visit was conducted are important factors influencing perceptions of the site visit treatment (Rynes et al., 1991), research is needed to verify such findings. Additionally, to explicitly test propositions of signaling theory research is needed to investigate whether working conditions mediate the relationship between evaluation of site visit activities and job acceptance decisions. Nonetheless, our results support propositions that the site visit is an important factor influencing job offer decisions (Rynes et al., 1991) and emphasizes the need for future research to determine how applicants interpret activities occurring during the site visit.

Our results suggest that one important aspect of the site visit is the host. Host likability explained unique variance in acceptance decisions in year 2, supporting previously untested propositions that organizational representatives met on site visits are important influences on job decisions. Further, such results suggest that how comfortable the applicant feels with the host
is important and emphasizes how critical it is for organizations to carefully choose these organizational representatives.

Surprisingly, host helpfulness was negatively related to job acceptance intentions. Similarly, in year 1 information provided during the site visit was negatively related to job acceptance intentions. Although speculative, applicants who perceived hosts as overly helpful, or who received too much information during the site visit about the job, may have felt there was something wrong with the job for such an emphasis to be placed on it. In support of this interpretation, Turban and Dougherty (1992) found a negative relationship between the amount of time recruiters spent talking about the job and applicant attraction toward the job. Taken in sum, such results suggest that spending too much time discussing the job may not lead to positive impressions of the job, perhaps because applicants interpret too much information as signaling potential problems. Clearly, however, research is needed to replicate such findings and to investigate mechanisms that explain such findings.

Applicant perceptions of the location were related positively to job offer decisions for year 1 and job acceptance intentions for both years. Although earlier studies suggested that certain locations are more attractive to applicants (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Rynes & Lawler, 1983), we extended such research and found that applicant perceptions of attributes of a particular location are related to job acceptance intentions and decisions. Specifically, applicants that thought the location provided more access to cultural and recreational activities and opportunities for a social life were more likely to accept the job offer. Such results are consistent with spillover theory (Staines, 1980) in that perceptions of non-work activities influenced job acceptance decisions. A managerial implication of such results is the need for organizations to emphasize non-work activities provided by the location to attract applicants. Further research is needed, however, to determine what are the critical aspects of the location that are important to applicants, taking into account that important location attributes may vary across applicants. For example, applicants with children may be interested in the quality of the school system whereas single applicants may be more interested in opportunities for a social life. Nonetheless, organizations should determine what "competitive advantage" their community provides and highlight that to applicants. Based on the realistic job preview literature, however, organizations should not provide overly positive descriptions of the location (Premack & Wanous, 1985).

We expected job and organizational attributes would have stronger relationships with job acceptance decisions than we found. Only location, for year 1, explained unique variance in job offer decisions at the .05 alpha level. As described by Osborn (1990), however, because applicants have minimum acceptable standards for accepting site visit invitations, they probably had more positive and less variable perceptions of job and organizational attributes than the pool of applicants interviewed on campus. The restriction of range, caused by applicants' use of a minimum standard for accepting site invitations,
may have attenuated the relationships of the job and organizational attributes with the dependent variables. Osborn (1990) suggested that attributes that influence initial attraction and site visit decisions may not be important in predicting job offer decisions, in part because these attributes have already exceeded some minimum standard. Therefore, although previous research (Harris & Fink, 1987; Powell, 1984) found that applicant perceptions of job and organizational attributes are related to applicant attraction, further research is necessary to investigate possible relationships with job acceptance decisions. Additionally, future research might further investigate Osborn’s (1990) hypothesis that the importance of job and organizational attributes changes during the organizational choice process by tracking applicants through the process.

Although much of the recruitment research measures applicant attraction to firms, little research has investigated the relationship between attraction and job acceptance decisions or whether similar variables predict attraction measures and job acceptance decisions (Rynes, 1991). The results from the correlation and contingency analyses indicate that job acceptance intentions are strongly related to actual job acceptance decisions, although the relationship appears stronger for applicants who indicate they are unlikely to accept the job offer. Specifically, only 3% of the applicants who indicated it was unlikely they would accept the job offer accepted the offer, although 41% of the applicants who indicated it was likely they would accept the offer actually rejected the job offer. Such results may be reflective of a strong labor market for applicants who although initially intending to accept a job offer subsequently received what they considered a better offer.

In general, examination of the regression analyses for the full models indicates that a similar pattern of relations was found with the predictors and both job acceptance intentions and decisions. Furthermore, the hierarchical regression analyses that added job acceptance intentions to the equation suggest that intentions mediate the relationships between the predictors and job offer decisions. Taken in sum, these analyses suggest that measures of job acceptance intentions (such as likelihood of acceptance) probably do have some construct validity and may be useful in understanding processes influencing job choices. Clearly, however, some individuals who indicate a high likelihood of accepting a job offer ultimately reject it, suggesting that future research might investigate variables, such as the labor market, that might moderate the relationship between job acceptance intentions and actual decisions.

Future research is necessary to investigate whether applicant characteristics and/or the labor market influence the pattern of relationships found in this study. Applicant characteristics such as interviewing experience, prior work experience, and the number of expected job offers, may moderate the relationships between the predictors and job offer intentions and decisions. For example, the relationships between the predictors and intentions and decisions
might be weaker for applicants with few job offers because such applicants might accept a job offer even if they view the job poorly if they have no other offers. Additionally, because the current study was conducted during a time period when the labor market was very attractive for applicants future research might replicate this study using applicants facing a weak labor market. As suggested above, when applicants face a weak labor market we expect the relationships between the predictors and intentions and decisions will be weaker than when applicants are faced with a strong labor market. Conversely, it seems probable that relationships between intentions and job acceptance decisions will be stronger when the labor market is weak for applicants, because applicants have fewer choices. Therefore, in interpreting the results from this study one must keep in mind the strength of the labor market for applicants. Nonetheless, it seems likely that the findings from this study will generalize to the top applicants who, even in weak labor markets, would be expected to receive several job offers. Therefore, the top applicants would interpret activities during the site visit as signals for working conditions in the organization and would use that information to determine the fit of the job to their needs.

Although this study advances our knowledge base concerning how recruitment influences job acceptance decisions, it has certain limitations. Subjects were college graduates who were applying for entry-level positions with a large petrochemical company, and the location of the job was a relatively small community located in a Southwestern state. Clearly, additional research is needed with more experienced workers applying for jobs at various locations to determine the generalizability of our results. Although we addressed calls in the literature for investigations of recruitment processes in one firm (Rynes & Boudreau, 1986), because the data were collected from applicants for a single organization with an excellent reputation as an employer, there may have been reduced variance in applicants’ perceptions of job and organizational attributes. Therefore, our results may underestimate the importance of certain aspects of the recruitment process for influencing job acceptance decisions, although the possibility of reduced variability does not detract from our positive findings. Nonetheless, future research might replicate our study with applicants applying for positions in different firms.

Because of the moderately strong correlations among our predictors, multicollinearity may have been a problem. When multicollinearity is a problem, highly correlated predictors have reduced regression coefficients with large standard errors, which makes it difficult to achieve statistical significance and may also reduce the interpretability of the regression coefficients (Cohen & Cohen, 1975; Lewis-Beck, 1980). As Cohen and Cohen (1975) noted, one approach to the problem of multicollinearity is the use of hierarchical regression analyses with the highly correlated variables in the same set. The multicollinearity within the set of variables will not affect the unique $R^2$ accounted for by the set of variables. Therefore, we conducted hierarchical analyses and
examined the amount of unique variance each set of variables accounted for in the dependent variables. Although these analyses provided useful information about the amount of unique variance associated with each set of variables, we must still be cautious in interpreting the regression coefficients from the full equation.

The results from this study have several implications for organizations involved in recruitment. First, as suggested by Lumsden (1967), our results indicate that the site visit is a crucial area of recruiting that impacts job offer decisions, suggesting that organizations should pay careful attention to how the site visit is conducted. Additionally, results indicating that host likableness is related to job offer decisions suggest that organizations should carefully attempt to match host with applicants. For example, given evidence that perceived similarity leads to liking (Byrne, 1971), organizations may want to attempt to provide applicants with a host who is similar to them. Finally, evidence indicating that location attributes influence job offer decisions suggests that organizations should emphasize the positive aspects of the area and perhaps provide applicants with a tour of the area.

In sum, recruitment is a multistage process in which both the applicant and the organization are making decisions about the other party (Schwab, 1982). In general, college recruiting consists of a campus interview, a site visit, and then a job offer. Applicants make sequential decisions about interviewing with a company, visiting the site and finally accepting a job offer. We extended earlier research by examining factors influencing the final stage in recruitment, namely job offer decisions. Future research should investigate earlier stages in recruitment, such as decisions to interview with a company and to visit a site.

REFERENCES


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