A Model of Impression Formation in Recruitment

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A Model of Impression Formation in Recruitment

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Ashlee. Thank you for teaching me what it means to keep moving forward.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my advisor, Rob Ployhart, for both the training he has provided and for the time and encouragement he has given to me throughout this program. I would also like to acknowledge the other faculty in the Management Department at the Darla Moore School of Business, including Paul Bliese, Mark Maltarich, Lynn McFarland, Sherry Thatcher, Pat Wright, DJ Schepker, and Anthony Nyberg, who have all provided valuable time in helping my development both as a scholar as well as a person.
ABSTRACT

Applicant impressions of organizations are a critical antecedent to applicant decisions within the recruitment process. Recruitment research has examined how applicant perceptions are influenced by organization-specific information within a given industry. However, current recruitment models fail to describe the process of impression formation during recruitment, which inhibits understanding of the recruitment process. Specifically, only limited research has considered how applicants integrate context-related associations (such as perceptions about an industry) with recruitment materials in forming initial perceptions about the organization. Over the course of two experimental studies, I integrate social cognitive research on impression formation into recruitment models to develop a model of impression formation during recruitment and suggest that context-related associations influence the effectiveness of organization-specific information on applicant perceptions. I further draw on information processing theory to suggest that applicants are more likely to discount negative context-related associations when they are provided with highly credible organization-specific information that refutes context-related associations. These findings suggest the importance of further exploring the process of impression formation in recruitment and point to several new directions for recruitment research.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Applicant impressions of organizations are a critical determinant in applicant decisions (Cable & Turban, 2001; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Recruitment research models assume applicants form impression of organizations during the recruitment process, and have examined the influence of organization-specific information (e.g., recruiters, websites, advertising, and word-of-mouth) on applicant perceptions within a specific industry (Dineen & Allen, 2016; Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, & Slaughter, 1999). However, current recruitment models fail to describe the process of impression formation during recruitment, leading to a fragmented literature that increases the complexity of recruitment models and inhibits understanding of the recruitment process (Breaugh, 2013; Ployhart, Schmitt, & Tippins, 2017). Indeed, there is growing interest in developing holistic models describing recruitment as a process that “involves individuals forming an impression” (Breaugh, 2013, p. 390) of the organization.

The need for an impression formation model in recruitment is perhaps most apparent in the lack of research exploring how applicants consider both context-related associations (such as perceptions of an industry) with recruitment materials to influence applicant perceptions. An implied assumption in current recruitment models is that job seekers do not compare organizations across contexts (e.g. industry); however, this does not appear to be the case, as organizations are frequently compared across contexts (“The 100 best jobs,” 2018). Current theory on recruitment (see Mishina, Block, & Mannor,
2012; Walker, Feild, Bernerth, & Becton, 2012 for exceptions) predominantly use theories such as signaling theory (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016), which are silent about how context-related perceptions influence the impressions applicant form of the organization or applicant willingness to pay attention to information about the organization. This lack of theory leaves researchers and practitioners unable to predict what impressions applicants form when they receive conflicting information from different sources. Put simply, current research cannot answer the question “how do applicants form impressions of organizations”?

Social cognitive research on the impression formation process (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990) appears capable of providing valuable insights into the recruitment process. It suggests individuals rely on categorical associations (beliefs about the characteristics of groups and its members) to make inferences about a target in addition to considering individuating information (information about an individual) (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). According to the impression formation model, categorical associations influence perceptions of a target both directly through stereotype attribution as well as indirectly through influencing the perceiver’s motivation to seek out subsequent information, suggesting the importance of considering both categorical associations and recruitment information together.

In addition, the lack of an impression formation perspective of the recruitment process raises questions about which sources of information are most effective and when applicants are most persuaded by recruitment information. Research suggests that the effectiveness of organization-specific information can vary as a function of its source (recruiters, advertisements, word of mouth) (Cable & Turban, 2001; Van Hoye, Weijters,
Lievens, & Stockman, 2016). However, it is unclear whether applicants are biased towards certain sources when they experience conflicting information from two different sources. Furthermore, the current prevalence of intra-industry studies inhibits a consideration of whether context-related perceptions that are universally recognized as undesirable (e.g. industry) bias applicants toward subsequent information attempting to refute context-related perceptions. Ultimately, the lack of an overarching framework outlining the process through which potential applicants attribute traits to organizations not only leads to the propagation of splintered research, creates confusion about how applicants integrate divergent information about the organization, and fails to provide insight about how context-related information influences the impression formation process.

Therefore, the premise of this dissertation is to develop a model of impression formation in recruitment. I first review the dominant models and theories used in recruitment research to demonstrate these models lack a clear description of the impression formation process. Second, drawing on research on impression formation, (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990), I argue that the impression formation process for organizations is influenced by exposure to both context-related (industry) and individuating (organization-specific) information. I use the positive-negative asymmetry effect (Anderson, 1965; Skowronski & Carlston, 1987) to propose that applicants are biased against positive organization-specific information when context-related stereotypes are seen as universally negative. Finally, I suggest that potential applicants pay more attention towards credible-organization-specific information sources information than towards other organization-specific information sources when applicants are presented
with organization-specific information that attempts to refute negative contextual information. I propose to test my hypotheses using two experiments. My proposed model suggests the need for recruitment research to theoretically consider the recruitment process as an impression formation process and highlights the importance of considering the combination of contextual perceptions and recruitment sources when attempting to attract applicants.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RECRUITMENT RESEARCH

My review of the recruitment process encompasses the recruitment context, major frameworks, inputs, processes, and outputs. The review is intended to provide insight into the current state of recruitment research. The review also provides a more thorough review about context-related information (e.g. industry and geographic factors), because prior reviews of recruitment provide little discussion regarding this type of information, and I propose this information is valuable to consider during the recruitment process. The overview includes a critique of current frameworks and is intended to demonstrate that the proliferation of research exploring various recruitment activities and theoretical lenses that influence perceptions of the organization leads to splintered research that generates confusion about the recruitment process as a whole, how applicants respond to recruitment information, and the organizational impressions most relevant to recruitment outcomes. The review suggests that need to integrate impression formation into recruitment research to provide a more holistic theory of the recruitment process.

The Recruitment Context

Recruitment encompasses the “practices and activities carried on by the organization with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees” (Barber, 1998; p. 5). From the perception of the organization, an organization’s stock of human capital resources has been identified as a source of competitive advantage because it enables the firm to implement their strategies. Ultimately, it is impossible to evaluate,
hire, develop, or promote potential job applicants that choose not to apply. Therefore, recruitment is recognized as “one of, if not the most important HR practice to help organizations drive their strategy, grow, and outperform their rivals” (Collins & Kanar, 2013, p. 285).

In the recruitment context, applicants search and screen multiple organizations with minimal contact (Barber, 1998). One’s employer is associated with one’s identity (Lievens, Van Hoye, & Anseel, 2007), and employment constitutes a large investment of time and resources. Therefore, job seekers desire to have an accurate understanding of potential employers. In addition, job seekers attempt to form impressions quickly to avoid the opportunity cost of pursuing a sub-optimal organization (Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010). However, the desire to quickly form accurate impressions of potential employers is complicated by the immense amount of information for a seemingly infinite number of organizations. To this end, recruitment frameworks have focused on answering the question posed by Rynes (1989) “what can we do to really distinguish our organization so that it will be attractive to applicants?” (p. 400) (see also Dowling, 1986). I first briefly highlight the major theories and models used in recruitment literature, and then describe the inputs, processes, and outputs of the recruitment process.

**Theories and Models Used in Recruitment**

Research has been interested in how individuals come to perceive an organization as attractive. To attempt to answer this question, recruitment research has drawn on several economic or psychological theories. I briefly highlight four frequently used theories: signaling theory, social identity theory, elaboration likelihood model, and brand
equity theory. Following this, I highlight major recruiting models, and discuss how they have used these theories.

**Signaling theory.** The concept of using signals to form inferences of other objects in a management context came from Spence (1973), who suggested that activities in a market can inadvertently convey information to others. Signaling theory is focused on explaining cooperative behavior between two parties who have partly divergent interests (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012) and how parties attempt to gain accurate information about the other party’s abilities and intentions. The theory suggests that a signaler (which can be a person or an organization) intentionally communicates information (a *signal*) to a *receiver* (outsiders who lack information about the person or object in question), generally with the intent of conveying desirable attributes. The receiver ultimately has to evaluate the extent to which the signal accurately reflects the attribute in question and responds to the signal by presumably taking some action that would potentially benefit the signaler, such as buying a product or investing in an organization (Certo, Daily, & Dalton, 2001).

Recruitment research has used signaling theory to suggest job seekers experience information asymmetry about potential employers and use signals from the organization to make inferences about organizational attributes (Highhouse, Thornbury, & Little, 2007; Jones, Willness, & Madey, 2014; Rynes, 1989). Therefore, applicants determine organizational characteristics from salient cues, including the organization’s website (Allen, Mahto, & Otando, 2007), recruiter behaviors (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005; Walker et al., 2013), third-party certifications (Dineen & Allen, 2016), and corporate social responsibility (Jones et al., 2014; Turban & Greening, 1997). However, signaling theory
suggests that any behavior or piece of information can be used as a cue. The theory lacks the theoretical depth needed to predict how “different types of information may send different types of signals and relate differently to outcomes” (Allen et al., 2007, p. 1704). This leads the theory to be overused and misapplied (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Highhouse et al., 2007; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). The lack of specificity in signaling theory limits its ability to provide a theoretical framework outlining how applicants integrate different pieces of information into an impression of the organization during the recruitment process.

**Social identity theory.** Social identity theory proposes that individuals classify themselves into social categories including personal (e.g. personality, skills) and collective identities (e.g. organizational memberships). The theory suggests that identification with these categories is based on consistency with one’s own values, distinctiveness from other entities, and ability to enhance one’s own self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Prior to identifying with groups, individuals first define a group’s characteristics by observing the behaviors and characteristics of prototypical members (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

In recruitment research, social identity theory has typically been used to provide the mediating mechanisms between organizational perceptions and applicant behaviors. Social identity theory suggests one’s employer is an important part of one’s identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), as employment is a public expression about one’s abilities and values (Cable & Graham, 2000). Therefore, applicants identify with organizations with attractive organizational attributes because they anticipate they will experience pride and respect as a member of those organizations (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008; Highhouse et
Organizational identification has been positively associated with intentions to apply and job choice decisions (Griepentrog, Harold, Holtz, Klimoski, & Marsh, 2012).

However, while social identity theory links organizational attributes to intent to apply, social identity theory does not provide a strong theoretical mechanism explaining how individuals form perceptions of organizations. For example, a potential applicant may associate with multiple recruiters, making it difficult to know which, if any, will be perceived the prototypical member used to form organizational impressions. In addition, there is no discussion on how applicants would form impressions if they had little or no prior information about the organization. Secondly, social identity theory does not specify how individuals form organizational impressions when they use information sources such as news articles, websites, geographic region, or industry. Ultimately, the lack of a discussion on forming impressions of organizational traits limits the scope of social identity theory from being used in several common recruitment contexts.

Elaboration likelihood theory. A third theory used is the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), which focuses on the process of attitude change. It proposes that individuals follow either a peripheral or central route of persuasion when processing information (Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983). When individuals use a peripheral processing route, individuals expend resources to consider the quality of the argument, and attitudes changes are dependent on attitude quality (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). On the other hand, when individuals use a peripheral processing route attitudes are changed as a result of simple inferences, without much thought (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). The theory suggests that motivation plays a crucial factor in determining whether
individuals process information centrally or peripherally (Petty & Wegener, 1998). Motivation is determined by a variety of factors in the communicator (e.g. credibility, expertise, attractiveness), message (e.g. quality, repetition, difficulty), audience involvement, and individual differences.

Research in the last 15 years have used the elaboration likelihood model to propose when potential applicants process information about organizations centrally or peripherally (Breaugh, 2013; Cable & Turban, 2001; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Recruitment models based on the elaboration likelihood model propose that individuals ideally desire to process recruitment information centrally because they are incentivized to form an accurate impression of an employer, but the large amount of information available in the recruitment context make it difficult for applicants to always process information centrally. Past studies have noted that the credibility of the information source or perceptions of the organizations unattractiveness influences applicant willingness to process information centrally (Cable & Turban, 2001). The elaboration model has been also used to predict that individuals have a confirmation bias protecting already formed impressions (Breaugh, 2013), and that diversity cues on websites can lead to organizational inferences (Walker et al., 2012).

However, despite the benefit of using information processing, there are some limitations to the theory. First, the theory is silent about information processing in situations where there is no persuasion. That is, while it proposes that people are motivated to have correct attitudes, it does not consider when individuals are more initially close-minded to information (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). This leaves the elaboration likelihood model unable to provide predictions as to why applicants may develop
particular impression about an organization prior to being exposed to any organizational-specific information. Second, the theory does not discuss how categorical associations (such as stereotypes) influence impressions of a target individual. For example, individuals frequently use stereotypes to quickly form impressions of a categorical member (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). This leaves the theory unable to explain how individuals form affective and cognitive evaluations of categories such as industry (Cable & Graham, 2000) or how such categorical associations influence perceptions of organizations.

**Brand equity theory.** Consumer brand equity is based in cognitive psychology research on customer perceptions, rather than on objective factors (Aaker, 1996). Brand equity is based on research on associations that suggests individuals store information in memory as nodes that are connected through links of association (Srull & Wyer, 1979). When nodes are activated, the node’s relationship to other nodes leads to associative information to become available for the perceiver (Wyer & Srull, 1986). In this way, targets become associated with related and unrelated traits and feelings.

Research has begun integrating a brand equity perspective from marketing to propose that the extent to which applicant’s recognition of and favorable impressions about the organization’s brand influence their willing to apply for a job (Collins & Kanar, 2013; Edwards, 2017). Employer brand equity occurs when potential job applicants strongly associate the organization with favorable emotions and attributes (Collins & Kanar, 2013; Edwards, 2017). Brand equity can be influenced by information provided by recruiters (Cable & Turban, 2001; Collins & Han, 2004) and product awareness through advertisements (Collins, 2007).
However, while brand equity theory is focused primarily on associations between the organization and attitudes, it does not discuss how associations with larger categories an organization belongs to (such as industry) may persuade attitudes towards the object or bias individuals towards paying attention to subsequent organization-specific information. As mentioned previously, because applicants make context-related assessments that may spillover to the organization, theory needs to account for how this influences applicant impressions of the organization.

In summary, these theories demonstrate the breadth of diverse economic or psychological processes that occurs in the minds of potential applicants during the recruitment process. However, although they frequently invoke elements of impression formation, they currently do not explicate the process of impression formation. This is apparent in the recruitment models that build off of these theories that I cover next.

**Recruitment Models**

In the past 20 years, there have been several different recruitment models proposed. While each of the models considers the prospective of the applicant during the recruitment context, they vary in terms of where the applicant impressions of the organization are found in the model, what influences these impressions, and which impressions are most closely linked to desirable recruitment outcomes¹. In outlining these models, I highlight the antecedents that influence applicant perceptions of the organization, what perceptions are most relevant to recruitment outcomes, and the extent to which they consider perceptions of the context.

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¹ I only include reviews that take the perspective of the organization in the review. For models that take the perspective of the employer, see Breaugh (2000; 2008)
Barber (1998). Barber’s (1998) model was one of the first ones to take the perspective of the applicant in the recruitment process (see Figure 2.1). The model was the first to explicitly outline the recruitment process as having three stages: generating applicants, maintaining applicant status, and influencing job choice decisions. The model discusses how applicant reactions to recruitment materials influences organizational image, which is a cognitive evaluation of the extent to which instrumental and symbolic attributes similar to personality traits (e.g. trustworthiness, innovativeness, dominance, warmth, competence), and intentions to apply. Barber noted that the theory on organizational image was lacking but raised the question about the extent to which applicant perceptions of organizational image is malleable. While this work helped pave the way for future research on organizational image, it does not shed light onto how applicants respond to recruitment materials, or the traits in organizational image likely to influence intentions to apply.

Cable and Turban (2001). Cable and Turban’s (2001) model assumes potential applicants response to an employer is based on their current perceptions about the organization (see Figure 2.2). The model use brand equity theory to propose that information from recruitment practices and word of mouth influence an applicant’s employer knowledge—comprised of employer familiarity, employer reputation, and employer image. Furthermore, the model uses the elaboration likelihood model to suggest potential applicants are more willing to process information when the information source is internal to the organization (because it is more credible) and when the information is personally experienced (e.g. internships), rather than static information (e.g. recruitment brochures).
However, the model does not discuss the different traits that can comprise organizational image; it suggests organizational image only lead to organizational attraction when it aligns with the applicant’s values. However, this appears to contradict research suggesting that some traits can be seen as universally attractive (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). Furthermore, the model only discusses the extent to which organization-specific information influences impressions.

**Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, and Jones (2005).** A third recruitment model was proposed by Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, and Jones (2005), whose meta-analysis proposed a model examining which predictors in recruitment research influence organizational attraction, acceptance intentions, and job choice (see Figure 2.3). Their results suggest that job characteristics, organizational image, and recruiter characteristics predict perceptions of the job and organization and/or intentions to accept a job offer. Their model also suggested that characteristics of the recruitment process may change at different stages of the analysis; applicants appear to attend to noncompensatory factors early in the recruitment process to reduce potential employers and use their perceptions of organizational attributes (and their fit with those attributes) to compare the remaining organizations.

However, there are some limitations with their model. First, despite their broad characteristics that they examined, the model did not examine contextual perceptions about industry or geographic location. Second, by placing organizational image—defined as a cognitive evaluation of the instrumental and symbolic attributes (e.g. innovativeness, warmth, competence) the individual perceives in the organization (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).as purely a predictor, their model suggests that
recruitment information does not influence organizational image, and only influences organizational attraction and acceptance intentions, which does not fit with research on organizational image. Third, while they found a relationship between organizational image and organizational attraction, it is unclear which trait(s) that encompassed.

**Uggerslev, Fassina, and Kraichy (2012).** A fourth recruitment model was proposed by Uggerslev, Fassina, and Kraichy (2012) (see Figure 2.4), who conducted a meta-analysis to examine the relationships between recruiting predictors (e.g. perceptions of organizational fit, job characteristics, recruiter behaviors, and the recruitment process) and applicant attraction across recruitment stages. Their results suggested that organizational characteristics (including organizational image) was predictive of maintaining applicant status, but not for job choice. However, despite the impressive amount of predictors in their model, they did not examine the extent to which perceptions of the context the organization is embedded in influence applicant perceptions. Furthermore, because they also did not differentiate the different organizational image traits, it is unclear whether some traits are more predictive of organizational attraction/job choice than others.

**Breaugh (2013).** A fifth recruitment model was proposed by Breaugh (2013) who has provided several additional reviews of the recruitment literature over the past 20 years (Breaugh, 2008, 2012, 2013; Breaugh & Starke, 2000) (see Figure 2.5). In his 2013 review, Breaugh asserted that “no general theory of employment recruitment has been offered” (p. 391) and he integrated theories from psychology (specifically persuasion) into the recruitment model to propose that the extent to which an individual processes organizational information is dependent on the recipients attention, motivation, and
ability, and suggested that once an applicant has formed an initial attitude, they are reluctant to change because of selective exposure, confirmation bias, and information-processing bias.

While the model provides one of the first attempts at providing a more generalized model for recruitment, it has some key limitations. First, there is no discussion regarding the relationship between organization-specific or category-specific information, making it difficult to understand to what extent perceptions about categories (such as industry) are associated with the organization or bias individuals towards paying attention to subsequent organization-specific information. This is crucial, as individuals form affective and cognitive evaluations of categories such as industry (Cable & Graham, 2000) that influence perceptions of organizations. Second, the model deals with affective evaluations (attitudes), which are appropriate for forming inferences about an organization’s reputation, but does not describe cognitive impressions such as personality. This is problematic, as research suggests organizational image influences organizational attraction (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016), but it is unclear which traits are most related to organizational attraction. Third, the model provided by Breaugh only provided a theoretical model and did not provide any empirical test of their model’s predictions, suggesting the need to couple this work with empirical examinations of the proposed theoretical mechanisms.

Lievens and Slaughter (2016). The final model of recruitment in the review was proposed by Lievens and Slaughter (2016) (see Figure 2.6). The model uses theory on employer branding to examine the influence of perceptions on job outcomes in enabling an organization to differentiate itself from its competitors. Lievens and Slaughter suggest
that organizational image perceptions are influenced by organizational actions and characteristics (e.g. general advertising, CSR policies), organizational sources (e.g. web, ads), recruiters (e.g. recruiter attributes, recruiter information), and nonorganizational information (e.g. word of mouth, media). In terms of outcomes, the model suggests employer image influence applicant ability to remember recruitment materials, stronger job pursuit intention, prehire choice, stronger satisfaction and loyalty in current employees, and organizational performance. They highlight the number of symbolic traits examined in the literature, and suggested research examines potential higher-order dimensions of these traits. They specifically highlight that warmth merits further examination because it has been recognized as fundamental dimensions of human interactions (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007).

However, in line with the previous recruitment models, there is no discussion on context-related associations. Furthermore, while Lievens and Slaughter (2016) suggest the benefit of examining warmth, it is unclear whether this trait would be stronger predictors of organizational attraction, or what would be antecedents to these particular traits. Finally, the model provides no discussion on how the impression formation process works.

In summary, all recruitment models assume that applicants form impressions of organizations during the recruitment process. Furthermore, the models generally propose that these impressions can be influenced by recruitment information or activities provided by the organization, and that the impressions applicants form of organizations influence affect, cognition, behavior, and choice; however, the models lack a clear description of how this occurs. As a result, they each leave unspecified the critical “start” to
recruitment. To provide a clear overview of where current work in recruitment stands regarding the impression formation process for organizations, I provide a brief summary of work on the perceptions of the organization, inputs that influence these perceptions, and the outcomes of these perceptions.

**Perceptions of the Organization**

Most models of recruitment assume that applicant perceptions of the organization either directly or indirectly influence the attractiveness of the organization and intent to apply (Chapman et al., 2005). Typically these perceptions take the form of organizational reputation and/or organizational image (Breaugh, 2013; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Organizational reputation typically refers to affective evaluations related to the generalized favorability about the organization (Cable & Turban, 2001; Elsbach, 2003; Lange, Lee, & Dai, 2011; Windscheid et al., 2016; Yu & Cable, 2012). A review by Lange, et al. (2011) suggest reputation consists of “being known”, “being known for something”, and “generalized favorability”. In contrast, organizational image is a cognitive evaluation of the extent to which instrumental and symbolic attributes similar to personality traits (e.g. trustworthiness, innovativeness, dominance, warmth, competence) are attributed to the organization (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). While organizational image and organizational reputation have been distinguished in past work (Cable & Turban, 2001; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016), I briefly reiterate two key distinctions for clarity. Following this, I highlight how the propagation of organizational image dimensions make it difficult to identify what leads to the formation of organizational image as well as what organizational image leads to.
First, organizational reputation and organization image differ in the level the construct resides. Organizational reputation is typically conceptualized as the consensus, public perception of the organization. For example, organizational reputation has previously been operationalized as the firm’s ranking in Forbes magazine (Turban & Cable, 2003), which reflect the idea that organizational reputation comprises “a snapshot that reconciles the multiple images of a company held by all of its constituencies” (Fombrun, 1996, p. 72). On the other hand, organizational image is an individual construct consisting of a job seeker’s own beliefs about the organization that exist in the minds of potential applicants. The antecedents to organizational reputation are determined by public perception, whereas organizational image is a direct result of a potential applicant’s impression formation process for that organization.

Second, the constructs differ in the extent to which they are cognitively or affectively based. Organizational reputation typically refers to affective evaluations of generalized favorability about the organizational being good or attractive (Cable & Turban, 2001; Elsbach, 2003; Lange et al., 2011; Windscheid et al., 2016; Yu & Cable, 2012). For example, Roberts and Dowling (2002) discuss reputation as “the extent to which external stakeholders see the firm as ‘good’ and not ‘bad’” (p.67, see also Lange, et al. 2011). On the other hand, organizational image is a cognitive evaluation of the extent to which several different traits (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter, Cable, & Turban, 2014) are attributed to the organization (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). These traits tend to be likened to personality traits. Ultimately, the distinctions between organizational reputation and organizational image suggests that applicant impressions of organizational image are much more influenced by a process of impression formation that
is likely to be similar to the process that individuals use to form impressions of other individuals. It is therefore curious that research has not developed a model of impression formation examining how context-related associations or organization-specific information influence organizational image.

An additional issue concerning on organizational image regards which traits should be measured. Authors have noted that organizational image has been measured with a variety of scales (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Otto, Chater, & Stott, 2011; Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr, 2004), which make it difficult to identify which traits are most likely to be formed from a given recruitment activity. In addition, the large number of traits comprising organizational image makes it difficult to identify the relationship between specific organizational image traits and important outcomes, such as organizational attraction and intentions to apply. For example, applicants may differ in the extent to which they want an organization to be high in a particular trait (Judge & Cable, 1997), suggesting that the relationship between organizational image and attractiveness must be moderated by perceived fit. However, there have been some traits that have been identified as universally attractive (i.e. warmth and competence) (Cuddy et al., 2008). Presumably, these traits could have a greater relationship with organizational attractiveness (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). To date, research has yet to empirically link these traits to attractiveness.

**Inputs to Perceptions of the Organization**

Organizations engage in several recruitment activities in an attempt to increase the number and fit of the applicant pool, presumably through influencing applicant perceptions (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). However, some information sources appear to be
more effective in influencing applicant perceptions than others. Researcher have suggested one factor likely to influence the effectiveness of information sources is credibility—which refers to the extent an audience believes or trusts information from a given source. Credibility is based on the extent to which the source is believed to be knowledgeable and trustworthy (Gaziano & McGrath, 1986). With this in mind, I adapt the information sources provided by Cable and Turban (2001) and Van Hoye (2012) to propose that there are four main sources potential applicants draw from to gain organization-specific information that differ in terms of being owned by the organization and in the degree of personal interaction: company-owned, impersonal information; company-owned, personal information; independent, impersonal information; and independent, personal information. I mention these information sources in passing, and direct curious readers to reviews dedicated to summarizing this research more thoroughly (Cable & Turban, 2001; Chapman et al., 2005; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; van Hoye, 2012). (see Figure 2.7).

**Organization-specific information sources.** The first information source is company-owned, impersonal information, which entails information that comes from company-owned sources, but does not involve direct contact with the individual (e.g. advertising, company-owned websites (Allen et al., 2007; Dineen, Ash, & Noe, 2002; Walker, Feild, Giles, Bernerth, & Short, 2011)). Research exploring these sources note that many applicants come in contact with this type of information, and that applicants typically do not see these types of information sources as credible, because they are frequently seen as sources that are predisposed to portray the organization in a positive light.
The second type of information source is company-owned, personal information, which entails information that comes from company-owned sources, but involves more personalized information with individuals. For example, information from a recruiter in a face to face meeting would provide company-owned, personal information. These information sources provide more specific information than advertisements (Slaughter et al., 2014) and in the case of realistic job previews, provide “favorable and unfavorable job-related information to job candidates” (Phillips, 1998, p. 673) that applicants utilize to draw inferences about organizational characteristics (Cable & Turban, 2001; Chapman et al., 2005; Slaughter et al., 2014). The specific information provided by the sources, suggests that such sources provide valuable information to applicants. However, research has found that applicants can doubt the verifiability of the information from these information sources, because they are perceived as being biased towards the organization (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009).

The third type of information source is independent, impersonal information, which is not owned by the organization, and does not involve direct contact with the individual. This source of information involves sources such as news articles or third party certifications (Dineen & Allen, 2016). The information from a third party is frequently seen as more credible because the source is not incentivized to manage its information presentation (Dineen & Allen, 2016) However, there is mixed support for the extent to which such sources of information are seen as credible, with some studies suggesting that individuals perceive company-owned websites as being more credible than independent websites because perceivers assumed negative comments were coming from dissatisfied employees, and positive comments were assumed to be assigned from
the organization (Cable & Yu, 2006). In addition, certifications from third parties such as the best places to work, also are positively related to perceptions of the organization (Dineen & Allen, 2016).

The fourth type of organization-specific information source is independent, personal information, which is not owned by the organization, but involves direct contact with the individual. This type of information can take the form of friends and family who work for the organization, but are not perceived by the potential applicant to benefit from the applicant’s recruitment. These information sources are frequently noted as being highly credible and influential on applicant perceptions (Van Hoye et al., 2016).

These information sources influence the perceptions of potential applicants throughout the recruitment process (Uggerslev et al., 2012). However, they do not discuss context-related information. This omission is curious, given that context-related information appears to bias ratings of the quality of organizational product (Negro, Hannan, & Fassiotto, 2014). Therefore, context-related information appears to provide relevant, nonredundant information about potential employers that needs to also be considered.

**Context-related Information**

Context-related information comprises information and associations with collectives the organization might be embedded in, but is not directly related to the organization. This information source comprises factors such as an applicant’s feelings towards a given industry, whether the firm is non-profit, and geographic location. This information source is an important distinction from Cable and Turban’s (2001) model,
because it broadens the information that applicants deem as appropriate to form impressions of organizations.

Perhaps the most work has been done on industry characteristics. Past work suggests industry influences impressions about organizations (Jensen, Kim, & Kim, 2012; Negro et al., 2014; Ravasi, Rindova, Etter, & Cornelissen, 2018; Rindova, Williamson, Petkova, & Sever, 2005), perceptions of organizational reputation (Cable & Graham, 2000), and which organizational traits are most salient to job applicants (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Rynes & Cable, 2003). Cable and Turban (2001) note that job seekers are less likely to attribute positive reputations to firms in “sinful” industries that may be against their values (see also Fombrun, 1996), and that individuals must have some minimal level of attraction to the organization to process any information about the organization. On the other hand Cable and Turban (2003), looked at applicant response to firms low and high in corporate reputation from four different industries in an effort to increase the generalizability of their results. An implied assumption in their methodology is that industry associations are not important when considering employer reputation. Therefore, it is unclear the extent to which industry-related characteristics matter.

A second context-related factor is whether the organization is a non-profit or a for-profit organization. Individuals perceive differences in terms of industry traits similar to organizational image (e.g. warmth and competence) between non-profit and for-profit organizations (Aaker, Vohs, & Mogilner, 2010). Indeed, it seems that nonprofits are easier to endorse on social networks, primarily because it is so closely associated with positive attributes (Bernritter, Verleghe, & Smit, 2016). While some work has started to look at how perceptions of nonprofits might influence applicant perceptions of job
advertisements (De Cooman & Pepermans, 2012), research has not explored the extent to which applicant perceptions of the nonprofit’s warmth are influenced by recruitment materials.

A third context-related factor is geographic location. Recruitment research can consider geographic location as a potentially noncompensatory factor that must be present for a position to be considered as a viable option (Barber, 1998; Harold & Ployhart, 2008; Osborn, 1990). It therefore is important in determining whether the organization or job fulfills a need, or whether the applicant fits with the organization (Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998). Other studies suggest job applicants can have strong feelings regarding the desirability of their location at different stages of the recruitment process (Harold & Ployhart, 2008). Applicant feelings regarding location have been shown to spillover to organizations (Rafaeli, Hadomi, & Simons, 2005). However, these studies have primarily focused on attractiveness, and have not explored on organizational warmth.

My review suggests that, to date, while recruitment research has examined contextual factors, research has not fully explicated the impression formation process through which individuals integrate both categorical and individuating information sources. This raises interesting questions about how applicant impressions might incorporate both context-related and organization-specific information. For example, would negative context-related information bias applicant interpretations regarding positively organization-specific information? In addition, to what extent do applicant perceptions incorporate both types of information if there was a discrepancy between organization-specific and context-related information? Ultimately, omitting a context-
related information makes it difficult to determine the extent to which organization-specific information influences perceptions of the organization.

**Outcomes of Applicant Perceptions**

Reviewing current recruitment models suggests that perceptions of the organization are a key determinant in the applicants attraction to the organization (Uggerslev et al., 2012), intent to apply (Breaugh, 2013), and acceptance intentions (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). However, while these models suggest the importance of applicant perceptions of the organization, it is unclear which perceptions are directly linked to important recruitment outcomes. Indeed, Cable and Turban (2001) included perceived fit as a moderator between perceptions of the organization and organizational attraction, suggesting that it is unlikely that perceptions of the organization will always lead to increased organizational attraction. In addition, while the meta-analytic results provided by Uggerslev et al. (2012) suggests that impressions of the organization influence applicant attraction, the study combines organizational image traits, making it unclear whether all organizational perceptions lead applicants to view the organization favorably. Ultimately, the propagation of traits that applicants can form impressions of across contexts (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016), coupled with the lack of empirical measurement linking organizational perceptions to organizational attraction make it difficult to articulate which perceptions of the organization lead to desired recruitment outcomes.

**Summary and Critique**

In summary, recruitment research assumes that applicants form impressions of organizations during the recruitment process. The models typically suggest that applicant
perceptions of the organization are influenced by information sources and that these impressions influence affect, cognition, behavior, and choice (Cable & Turban, 2001; Chapman et al., 2005; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). However, while the recruitment research highlight aspects of the impression formation process, there appear to be several problems with current research on recruitment.

To begin, recruitment research has generally focused on company-specific information, and has ignored a discussion about the role of context-relation information or associations. In forming impressions of target individuals, perceivers are influenced both by information about the individual, as well as by categorical associations the target is a member of (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). However, the psychologically based theories that are the foundation of several recruitment models omit a discussion on social psychological factors that influence impression formation of organizations. This omission is especially surprising, given that research suggests that perceptions of the industry matter in regards to perceptions of the organizational reputation (Cable & Graham, 2000) and job characteristics (Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993). It is thus unclear how applicants respond to different categorical and organization-specific information that differs. Is there one that takes precedence over the other? Research using social cognitive theory in the recruitment contexts is thus needed to understand how applicants consider both categorical associations and organization-specific information during the recruitment process.

Second, the wide number of symbolic attributes and traits that individuals can form of a potential employer makes it difficult to determine the extent to which organizational image traits influence organizational attractiveness across different studies.
and contexts, such as industry. There has been a recent suggestion to use warmth as an overarching dimensions or organizational image (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). However, work to date has not empirically tested or considered the relationship between organizational warmth and organizational attraction.

Third, current theorizing, while extremely helpful, has been admittedly fragmented (Breaugh, 2013; Ployhart et al., 2017). Fragmented theories that only describe part of the process only creates further complexity. Understanding the mechanisms through which applicants are influenced by both organization-specific information and categorical associations would provide insights into both when and how recruitment information can be most effective. Indeed, Cable and Turban (2001) note “organizations must understand the beliefs of their targeted applicants before they can decide what types of recruitment interventions and investments will return the greatest value” (p. 118). The increased complexity suggests that it is likely that there are simple common underlying structures at the front end, and has led to calls to search for “a holistic recruiting framework that is more broadly useful to practitioners” (Ployhart et al., 2017, p.4). As Breaugh suggested thinking about recruitment as an impression formation process, research from impression formation could provide a broader framework to view the recruitment process. In the next section, I provide an overview of the impression formation process before integrating it into recruitment research.

**REVIEW OF IMPRESSION FORMATION**

Most impression formation research is based on models of information processing. Research on information processing is an approach to understanding human and social cognition that suggests individuals act as motivated tacticians that selectively
choose the information that they attend to (Fiske & Taylor, 2013), and that individual impressions are influenced by the information that they process. For the purposes of this study, I focus on how potential applicants process information during the process of forming an impression of the organization during recruitment. Therefore, I provide a review of research on impression formation, highlight biases in the impression formation process, and then integrate impression formation into recruitment models.

Individuals are driven to make sense of their world and the people in it (Allport, 1954; Asch, 1946). To that end, the last 60 years have seen a propagation of research exploring the process through which individuals form impressions of both individuals and groups. Asch’s 1946 seminal article used 12 studies to explore the extent to which individuals attempt to combine the personality components of others to create a unified overall impression. The article found that by manipulating one word (warm or cold), an individual’s interpretation of other traits are interpreted differently (e.g. intelligence would be interpreted as being “wise” or “sly”). Building off this initial study, research on impression formation has generally discussed two different types of information that individuals use when forming impressions: categorical information and individuating information. I briefly highlight the major models of impression formation before covering categorical and individuating information further.

**Model of Impression Formation**

There have been several types of impression formation processes proposed since Asch’s (1946) paper that have attempted to resolve whether impressions are formed using categorical or individuating information. Dual process models of impression formation were developed by both Fiske & Newburg (1990) and Brewer (1988), which proposed

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that individuals can use either categorical or individuating information when first forming impressions, and they then choose to integrate the other type of information into this initial impression. In the 1990’s and early 2000’s, there was a movement towards process models that did not use dual processes, and instead suggested that individuals process both simultaneously (Kunda & Spencer, 2003). After much debate, the topic has ultimately settled on the belief that both categorical and individuating information can be used, depending on the motivational circumstances of the individual (Fiske & Taylor, 2013).

Other work has broadened the impression formation process to examine the process through which individuals form perceptions for groups (e.g. stereotypes) (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Hamilton & Sherman, 1996). This work suggests that individuals form impressions of groups in much the same way that they do for individuals as long as they perceive group members to be highly similar (Crawford, Sherman, & Hamilton, 2002). The model proposed by Cuddy et al. (2002) suggests that individuals form group impressions about organizational warmth.

While there are several differences across these models, they are built of the assumptions that individuals rely on different types of information (categorical and individuating) when making impressions of individuals (Fiske & Taylor, 2013) and that individuals function as “motivated tacticians” that consider his or her goals, motives, and needs when determining the extent to which they choose to invest cognitive resources in forming a more accurate judgment (Fiske & Taylor, 2013).

One of the dominant models in impression formation has been the continuum model. (Fiske, Lin, & Neuberg, 1999; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). In the model, Fiske and
Neuberg propose that the extent to which an individual relies on categorical versus individuating information when forming an impression of a target individual lies along a continuum. Broadly, the model suggests that perceivers generally have prior associations made with categories the perceived target might belong to. Perceivers use these association to initially categorize the target, where categorical associations influence initial evaluations and behaviors towards the target. At this point, perceivers decide whether to invest additional attention in forming an impression of the target individual above the initial categorization.

The decision to seek out more information is dependent on the perceiver’s evaluation of the target’s relevance and the discrepancy between the traits associated with the initial categorization match available individuating information. The model proposes that as perceivers pay more attention to individuating information, the relationship weakens between categorical associations and initial impressions. In summary, the model suggests that the impression formation process can be influenced by both categorical and individuating information, and that the perceived relevance of the target and the amount of agreement between categorical and individuating information influence which source of information dominates the process.

In outlining the impression formation model, I discuss the major elements in the continuum model. I first briefly discuss the two sources of information in the continuum model, namely the initial categorization and individuating information. Following this, I discuss elements that influence the extent to which individuals seek out additional information, namely the agreement between categorical/individuating information and
the perceived relevance of the target in more detail. Finally, I discuss biases that shape the impression formation process.

**Categorical associations.** Categorical associations broadly represent the extent to which perceivers attribute traits associated with salient categorical features of the target (such as age, gender, and social categories) onto the target. Categorical associations come from research on a perceiver’s *schema*—the association of a collection of traits with a particular category based in the perceiver’s memory (Wyer, Bodenhausen, & Srull, 1984). Schemas (e.g. stereotypes (Yzerbyt, Rogier, & Fiske, 1998)) are developed through repeated interactions that reinforce the association of a particular category with a set of traits. For example, McConnell, Sherman, and Hamilton (1997) found that when individuals perceive a group’s membership display similar (rather than dissimilar) behaviors, they form stronger associations about group evaluations.

Importantly, scholars have found that a perceiver’s ability to create stereotypes for groups is dependent on the extent to which group members are perceived to be similar or unified. In Hamilton and Sherman’s (1996) review of impression formation research, perceivers do not typically assume collectives are unified, and are thus reluctant to make collective-level associations. Their work (and others) suggest the extent to which the group members are perceived to be highly similar or unified allow perceivers to make associations that are more frequently and consistently reinforced (Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1996; Gawronski, Ehrenberg, Banse, Zukova, & Klauer, 2003).

The continuum model suggests that during the initial categorization, stereotypes can be attributed to categorical members immediately (Allport, 1954; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). This effect has been supported several times in research on spontaneous trait
inferences, which shows that perceivers make spontaneous trait inferences when observing a target’s behavior (Wigboldus, Dijksterhuis, & Van Knippenberg, 2003).

Ultimately, the initial categorization provides one avenue through which the perceiver can quickly infer traits about target individuals.

**Individuating information.** Individuating information consists of individual behaviors and information specific to an individual, rather than a category. Individuating information has typically been considered more difficult to see initially and requires more processing to be able to locate (Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; see also Fiske et al., 1999). Individuating information comprises a wide variety of information, such as physical behaviors, information, words, and past experiences (Kunda & Spencer, 2003).

In the impression formation process, individuals that have more individuating information, or pay more attention to individuating information are more likely to form impressions distinct from categorical information (Flynn, Chatman, & Spataro, 2001). While increasing the attention does not automatically mean that the impression will be more accurate, increased attention influences the perceiver’s ability to access and interpret new information that then influences subsequent impressions.

**Agreement with categorical information.** According to the continuum model, a perceiver’s willingness to allocate attention towards searching for additional individuating information is influenced by the disagreement between individuating information and categorical associations (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). For example, Hilton, Klein, and von Hippel (1991) found that participants that received individuating information that was inconsistent with categorical information about a child after the initial categorization allocated more attention to the target, presumably to form a more
accurate evaluation. Disagreement between categorical associations and individuating information cast doubt on perceiver’s initial categorization and leads perceivers to attempt to re-categorize the individual (either through accessing a new category, placing the target into a subcategory, or treating the target as an exemplar). Therefore, individuals are willing to forego categorical associations when it apparent it does not fit the individual. Ultimately, perceivers are sensitive to discrepancies between categorical and individuating information, and are generally willing to seek out additional individuating information, and weight individuating information more heavily when individuating information differs from categorical information.

**Perceived relevance of the target.** Motivation plays a key role in determining the extent to which individuals are willing to search for additional individuating information. Individuals that are not motivated will not want to exert the extra attention needed to find additional individuating information outside of their initial categorization (Fiske et al., 1999). The continuum model suggests that a perceivers motivation to form an accurate opinion of the target is directly related to the target’s perceived relevance. For example, Snyder and Haugen (1994) found that when perceivers desire to have targets form a positive impression of them, they are more receptive in their perceptions, and form more individuating impressions of the target. This is in line with expectancy theory, which argues that individual motivation is determined by the valence of the outcome (Vroom, 1964). When a target is not perceived to be relevant, there is no valence in forming a more accurate impression.

In summary, the impression formation process is influenced by the perceptions that perceivers have about the category, the individual, the extent to which these disagree,
and the perceived relevance of the target. In the next section, I note biases that influence the extent to which individuals pay attention towards individuating information.

Factors that Influence Impression Formation

Individuals balance their desire to see the world accurately with the desire to not exert energy unnecessarily. Ultimately, the continuum model argues that individuals are reticent to change their existing perceptions of a target. Indeed, research has found that individuals can sometimes pay more attention to information that supports initial impressions, and discount information that appears to challenge this impression (El-Alayli, Myers, Petersen, & Lystad, 2008). I first describe the concept of a confirmation bias and describe how that can lead individuals to seek out less, rather than more, individuating information when it appears to disagree with categorical information. Following this, I highlight two factors likely to influence attention to individuating information that are especially relevant to the recruitment context: the credibility of the information source and the valence of the categorical stereotype.

Confirmation Bias

Confirmation bias research is based on the assumption that individuals strive to defend their beliefs and attitudes (Festinger, 1957). In fact, confirmation bias (Klayman & Ha, 1987) proposes that individuals actively attempt to avoid internal psychological conflict in their impressions. To avoid psychological conflict, individuals are willing to search for information that defends current impressions (Hart et al., 2009) or avoids challenging information (Breaugh, 2013). For example, research have shown that once participants make a decision, even if it is about something that is not important, they are reticent look up information that discounts that opinion (Hart et al., 2009).
Valence of Categorical Information

A second bias that influences the extent to which impressions are based on individuating or categorical information is the perceived valence of the context-related stereotypes that exist in the minds of perceivers. Traits can differ in their desirability and can be evaluated as being either positive or negative. According to the positive-negative asymmetry effect (Anderson, 1965; Skowronski & Carlson, 1989), individuals pay more attention to information that decrease, rather than increase, the extent a target is perceived to possess desirable traits (e.g. warmth (Fiske et al., 2007)). For example, French, Waas, and Tarver-Behring (1986) asked schoolchildren to list the three best and worst performing peers both academically and in sports. They found that the participants had much more agreement on the worst-performers, compared to the best performers, suggesting that it is easier to form negative, rather than positive impressions about valued traits. Therefore, when a category is associated with undesirable traits, individuals are less persuaded by disconfirming individuating information that is likely to improve that impression.

In regard to the impression formation model, the positive-negative asymmetry effect suggests that receiving negative information about a target individual appears to influence the extent to which the perceiver sees the target as relevant. Recall from impression formation theory that perceivers are motivated to seek information insofar as the target is believed to be relevant (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). When the categorical information is extremely negative, the relevance of the individual decreases, which inhibits the motivation to seek out any additional individuating information about the target.
Credibility of Information Sources

Source credibility refers to an information source’s perceived attractiveness, expertise and trustworthiness (Kelman & Hovland, 1953). The credibility of the information source has been frequently used in studies on impression formation and information processing (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Credible sources are generally assumed to elicit more attitude change than low credibility sources because perceivers take the credibility of the source as a cue about the veracity of the information (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). For example, Fisher, Ilgen, & Hoyer (1979) found that individuals were significantly more likely to trust information from a highly credible source than from a less credible source. In addition, job seekers assume that information from credible information sources is more relevant to them (Cable & Turban, 2001), and are willing to pay more attention to it (Pornpitakpan, 2004). Indeed, the elaboration likelihood model argues that source credibility can influence the extent to which individuals process information deeply, especially when individuals are forming impressions of targets for the first time, and have limited exposure to them (Kumkale, Albarracin, & Seignourel, 2010). Therefore, source credibility influences the extent to which applicants form impressions of others.

In summary, impression formation outlines the process through which individuals utilize both categorical and individuating information in forming impressions. This process is influenced by the extent to which the individuating information differs from categorical stereotypes and the valence of those stereotypes. However, impression formation theory was not intended to distinguish the different organization-specific information sources that applicants may perceive during recruitment. I integrate
information processing theory, which suggests that individuals pay attention to more credible and specific information sources, into impression formation theory to propose the process through which individuals use both context-related stereotypes and organization-specific information to form impressions of the organization.
Figure 2.1 Recruitment Model by Barber (1998)
Figure 2.2 Recruitment model by Cable & Turban (2001)
Figure 2.3 Recruitment model by Cable, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones (2005)
Figure 2.4 Recruitment model by Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy (2012)
Figure 2.5 Recruitment model by Breaugh (2013)
Figure 2.6 Recruitment model by Lievens & Slaughter (2016)
Figure 2.7 Organization-specific information sources
CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A MODEL OF IMPRESSION FORMATION IN RECRUITMENT

The purpose of this dissertation is to integrate impression formation with recruitment research to develop a theory for how applicants form impressions of organizations through recruitment information (see Figure 3.1). While organizations are qualitatively distinct from individuals (e.g. organizations are collectives, have no “face” from which to base impressions), individuals frequently anthropomorphize organizations (Dowling, 2000) in viewing them as coherent, social entities rather than simply social collectives. Recruitment models assume applicants form impressions of organizations during the recruitment process, and these impressions influence affect, cognition, behavior, and job choice. However, none of these models precisely describe the process of impression formation. Research on the impression formation process explored in social psychology appears to provide predictions that would be of interest to recruitment models regarding which types of information influence both perceptions and behavioral intentions towards a target and when they will be most effective. However, current impression formation models are primarily limited to individuals and demographically-related collectives (such as racial stereotypes). Therefore, I develop a model of applicant impression formation by integrating social psychology with recruitment research.

The proposed model suggests that applicants form and utilize context-related associations, which are associations about the context within which organizations are
embedded (e.g. industry, profit/nonprofit, and geographic location) to gain an initial impression of the organization. In addition, just as perceivers use individuating information to differentiate individuals from categorical associations, applicants utilize *organization-specific information* to differentiate organizations from context-related associations in an attempt to form accurate impressions of the organizational traits. I propose the extent to which individuals use context-related associations and organization-specific information in the impression formation process is determined by the valence of the context-related associations and the perceived credibility of the organization-specific information source.

The subsequent sections comprise two different studies through which I hypothesize and test these proposed relationships. For study 1, I first test the process through which context-related associations and organization-specific information independently influence organizational perceptions and attraction. In addition, I hypothesize and empirically test the extent organization-specific information moderates the impact of context-related associations on organizational impressions. I specifically explore whether the valence of context-related associations bias applicant’s willingness to pay attention towards organization-specific information.

In study 2, I extend the findings from study 1 to identify the boundary conditions concerning when negative categorical associations are most likely to be used by job seekers. I explore whether the presence or absence of a negative context-related association influences organizational attraction and intent to apply. Secondly, I explore whether information source credibility moderates the impact of context-related associations on recruitment outcomes. Job seekers have access to several different
sources that differ in regards to their credibility (Cable & Turban, 2001). I hypothesize and test the extent to which applicants are less dependent on context-related associations when organization-specific information come from more credible sources.

**Study 1**

**Context-Related Impressions**

The model ultimately asserts that, in addition to organization-specific information explored in prior recruitment research (Cable & Turban, 2001), context-related associations is an important determinant of attitudes towards that organization. Context-related associations are conceptually similar to categorical associations (stereotypes; e.g., associations based on gender, race, and age) and product category attitudes (Posavac, Sanbonmatsu, Seo, & Iacobucci, 2014) in that a perceiver associates traits (e.g., warmth, competence; Otto et al., 2011; Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr, 2004) with a group category.

Context-related associations are distinct from stereotypes, in part, because the target being evaluated is an organization, as opposed to an individual. Organizations are collectives owned by stockholders, and individuals are more reluctant to form impressions of individuals than for collectives (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996). In addition, context-related associations are based on associations with a collection of organizations that can be categorized by profit-structure, industry, or geographic location, whereas stereotypes are based primarily on demographic categories. Importantly, because organizations have no “face”, perceivers may not be able to rely on physical cues to activate context-related associations. Despite these distinctions, the psychology of how
context-related associations influence organizational perceptions may be similar to how stereotypes influence perceptions of individuals.

While perceivers generally avoid making associations about collectives (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996), they are more likely to form such associations around attributes for which intergroup differences are large and intragroup differences are small (Sherman et al., 2009). That is, context-related associations are a result of both perceived similarities of members within a category, and differences in members across categories (Sherman et al., 2009).

There are several factors that indicate whether organizations within a given context will display similar behaviors in regard to certain traits (e.g., warmth, competence; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). To begin with, organizations within the same context share similar challenges (Porter, 1980), which influences organizations in a particular context to act similarly. For example, organizations within the same context have similar profit margins (Schmalensee, 1989). In contexts with slim profit margins, such as the manufacturing industry (O’Connell, 2017), organizations have limited resources to invest in employee development. This can lead to the perception that organizations in this context do not care to invest in their employees, which would influence associations with warmth. Indeed, popular press articles note manufacturing firms attempt to change “lingering stereotypes dogging manufacturing” in regards to work variety, work cleanliness, and job security (O’Connell, 2017; p. 1). Ultimately, sharing similar challenges leads organizations within an industry to exhibit similar behavior.
Second, organizations within the same context can promote products that appear to portray the organization as having particular traits. For example, individuals can form attitudes towards particular product categories (Posavac et al., 2014). Products can be used as a signal representing the organization’s values. Greening and Turban (2000) found that organizations producing economically friendly products were seen as valuing environmental issues. Therefore, contexts comprised of organizations that provide products or services that appear to better the community or have altruistic intentions will be seen as being higher in warmth.

Third, organizations within the same context can be perceived to share similar values, or enduring beliefs that guide behavior. This is perhaps most obvious in observing the distinction between profit and nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations are assumed to focus on benefiting the lives of others, whereas forprofits are perceived to focus on increasing profits. The focus on altruistic work is likely to lead nonprofit organizations to be perceived as higher in warmth than profit organizations. Work by Chatman and Jehn (1994) supports this assertion, as they found that cultural values tended to vary more across, rather than within, industry. Evidence that organizations within a context are believed to be similar is found in the popular press, where organizations within a particular context experience more negative coverage when an organization within that context engages in wrongdoing (Zavyalova, Pfarrer, & Reger, 2017). In summary, an abundance of cues within a context can lead organizations within that context to be perceived as similar that applicants can use to make context-related associations.

*Postulate 1: Individuals form context-related associations.*
The Impact of context-related associations on Organizational Attraction

The psychology of how context-related associations contribute to organizational perceptions may be similar to how stereotypes influence perceptions of individuals. Integrating the continuum model into recruitment suggests that context-relevant associations inform applicant perceptions of the organization. When individuals associate an individual with a particular category, that group’s stereotype becomes activated for the target (Kunda & Spencer, 2003). As a result, individuals with contextual associations are likely to attribute these traits to an organization. Context-related associations provide an avenue for applicants to quickly reduce uncertainty about a potential employer by attributing context-related associations without investing substantial amounts of cognitive resources (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013).

The ability to quickly utilize context-related associations is becoming more important, as job seekers are “overwhelmed with potential employers early in the job search process” (Collins & Kanar, 2013; p. 295). The continuum model suggests that individuals that are experiencing cognitive strain typically rely on stereotypical perceptions (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). Having a categorical association function as a filtering mechanism enables applicants to reduce the number of considered employers without investing much mental exertion. Indeed, applicants appear to consider the context the organization is in when making inferences of employer reputation (Cable & Graham, 2000) and job characteristics (Gatewood et al., 1993). This appears to be in line with research that suggests factors such as industry and location often are used as “pre-screens” before any specific job is even considered (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Harold & Ployhart, 2008; Turban, Eyring, & Campion, 1993), suggesting that individuals attribute
contextual associations to the organization, and that these attributions pay a significant role in the recruitment process. Therefore, context-related associations likely play an important role in forming initial impressions for all of the organizations within the industry and in determining which organizations to learn more about.

**Warmth contextual perceptions**

Lievens and Slaughter (2016) noted that organizational warmth is a universal dimension people use when making judgements about other individuals or collectives (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007; Cuddy et al., 2008), and suggested applicants may form impressions about organizational warmth as a higher-order characteristic. Kervyn, Fiske, and Malone (2012) built off work in social psychology (Cuddy et al., 2008) to suggest that warmth perceptions for organizations is defined as an organization’s perceived intentions, and answers the question “What intentions does this entity have? (Aaker, Garbinsky, & Vohs, 2012; p. 191)”. Warmth is represented by descriptors such as friendly, honorable, and moral (Fiske et al., 2007). While it has not been linked applicant perceptions of the organizations, warmth appears likely to influence recruitment outcomes.

Applicant impressions of a given context’s warmth are likely to influence and organizations attractiveness as it suggests that organizations in the context in general can be trusted, have desirable goals, and provide employment alternatives. To begin with, applicants are more attracted to organizations they perceive possess desirable traits (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Warmth is seen as a universally desirable trait (Cuddy et al., 2008) in part because it suggests that the target’s motives can be trusted, which reduces the perceived risk in engaging in an exchange
relationship. Perceived warmth for an organizational context suggests that, on average, organizations in the context can be trusted. This is attractive to employees that frequently leave positions in organizations, because it suggests the individuals can quickly find a similar organization to work for.

Second, having the context high in warmth is likely to suggest to potential applicants that organizations in that context have desirable goals. Individuals care about the perceived values of organizations (Cable & Turban, 2001) and are more likely to affiliate with organizations that have desirable goals. For example, Bernritter et al. (2016) found that individuals were less likely to promote products from for-profit organizations on social media, presumably because their values were not seen as altruistic as nonprofit organizations. Similarly, recruitment research on perceived fit (Dineen et al., 2002) suggests that applicants compare the extent to which their values line up with the organization’s values when determining their attraction to the organization and whether to apply. Therefore, context warmth influences the extent to which individuals believe there is congruence between his or her own goals, and the goals of organizations’ warm contexts.

In summary, warmth context-related associations should lead applicants to see the organization as being more attractive and increase their desire to pursue employment.

Hypothesis 1a: A warm context will lead to higher organizational attraction than a cold context.

Hypothesis 1b: A warm context will lead to higher intent to apply than a cold context.
Organization-Specific Information

The proposed impression formation model in the recruitment process suggests that applicants also use organization-specific information to form inferences about organizations (Cable & Turban, 2001; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Applicant impressions of the organization’s warmth are likely to influence the attractiveness of the organization for a few reasons. First, applicants want to be treated fairly by their employers (Walker et al., 2013). Job seekers will trust that organizations high in warmth will follow through in their promises to the employee and will treat the employee fairly in regard to pay and development opportunities. In addition, perceptions of organizational warmth are likely to influence organizational attraction, because there is less uncertainty about the extent to which those traits are present in the organization.

Second, research in identity suggests that individuals use their organizations as a way to enhance their identity (Jones et al., 2014). Warmth is a universally desirable trait that elicits a feeling of admiration towards the target (Fiske et al., 2002). Therefore, job seekers will perceive that they will feel pride in working for, and being affiliated with, organizations that are high in warmth. Ultimately, warmth perceptions of the organization should lead applicants to see the organization as being more attractive and increase their desire to pursue employment.

Hypothesis 2: A warm organization will lead to higher organizational attraction than a cold organization.

Combining Context-Related and Organization-Specific Information

In line with the impression formation model, applicants are likely to pay attention to both organization-specific information and context-related information. However, the
extent to which job seekers pay attention to both context-related associations and organization-specific information is dependent on both the level of agreement between the two types of information as well as the perceived warmth of the context.

First, applicants pay more attention to organization-specific information when it differs from context-related information. Impression formation models suggest that perceivers want to form accurate impressions of their targets (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). When organization-specific information disagrees with context-relevant associations, applicants become concerned that either the context-related associations or the organization-specific information are not providing an accurate description of the target organization. Therefore, this discrepancy increases the motivation for applicants to search for and process more organization-specific information to form an accurate impression of the organization.

However, the impression formation model suggests that perceivers are more motivated to seek out additional information when the context-related associations are positive, rather than negative. It takes cognitive and emotional resources to attempt to resolve discrepancies between individuating information and context-related associations (Hart et al., 2009). Individuals are motivated tacticians that uses multiple cognitive strategies based on goals, motives and needs (Chun & Kruglanski, 2006; Fiske & Taylor, 2013). When targets are not deemed highly relevant to goals (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990), perceivers prefer to use a confirmation bias (Klayman & Ha, 1987), where they search for information defending current impressions and discount information that is not in line with current impressions (Hart et al., 2009). For example, people are less likely to process individuating information from homeless people (Cuddy et al., 2008), presumably
because it is unclear what benefit will come from forming a more accurate impression. Therefore, perceivers have a stronger confirmation bias when the target is not relevant but pay more attention to individuating information when the target is perceived to be relevant.

I integrate this into the impression formation model for recruitment to suggest that context-relevant associations of warmth influence the extent to which applicants see the organization as a relevant target. Warmth has been recognized as desired traits in research on impression formation (Cuddy et al., 2008), organizational image (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016), and organizational reputation (Mishina et al., 2012). It has been shown to influence the attractiveness of individuals (Fiske, et al., 2007) and, as noted previously, likely influences the perceived attractiveness and intent to apply to the organizations within that context. Therefore, organizations in warm contexts will be seen by job seekers as relevant places to work. Job seekers will therefore be more motivated to invest additional attention towards organization-specific information that disagrees with context-related associations when the organization is in a warm context, than in a cold context.

**Hypothesis 3a:** The impact of organizational warmth on organizational attraction is moderated by context warmth. The positive relationship between organizational warmth and organizational attraction is stronger when the context is warm than when the context is cold.

**Hypothesis 3b:** The impact of organizational warmth on intent to apply is moderated by context warmth. The positive relationship between organizational
warmth and intent to apply is stronger when the context is warm than when the context is cold.

**Method**

**Participants and Design**

I conducted an experimental study with 244 management students from a university in the United States (115 women, 129 men, mean age=20, SD= 0.87). The study used a 2 (high context warmth vs low context warmth) x 2 (high organization warmth vs low organization warmth) between-participant design.

**Procedure**

Similar to Walker et al. (2012), participants were sent a link to fill out a survey using software from Qualtrics. In the instruction page at the beginning of the survey, participants were asked to take the role of an active job seeker and evaluate information about an organization that is either in the forprofit or nonprofit industry as if they were considering the organization to be a potential employer. Participants were then shown several behavioral statements that were manipulated to suggest that forprofit and nonprofit organizations do not differ in regard to competence, but do differ in regards to warmth. Following this, applicants were asked to evaluate their perceptions of the organization’s warmth, their attraction to the organization, and their intentions to apply to the organization.

The second time period took place immediately following the first time period. Participants were shown company-specific information about the organization in the form of six Glassdoor reviews that were developed to vary in terms of how much it conveys the organization as being either very warm (high warmth condition) or very cold (low
warmth condition). After viewing the company-specific information, I used the same measures as Time 1 to measure their impressions of, attraction to, and intent to apply to the organization.

**Manipulations**

**Context-related associations.** The manipulation of industry associations were similar to Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, and Kashima (2005). Participants were told they will be asked to form impressions of two industries (profit and nonprofit), based on the behaviors that organizations in that industry have performed. These industries have been shown to vary in terms of perceived warmth (Aaker et al., 2010). Participants were randomly shown a set of behavioral statements that contain 16 behaviors, eight of the behaviors are attributed to the non-profit industry and eight to the for-profit industry. Six of the behaviors regarding nonprofit organizations suggest that nonprofit organizations are high in warmth, and two of the behaviors suggest that it is low in warmth. For example, a behavioral statement in the nonprofit industry state that “organizations in the non-profit industry, on average, pay a greater percentage of their gross income to employees than organizations in other industries.” Behavioral statements in the for-profit industry suggested that the industry is low in warmth. For example, “organizations in the business consulting industry, on average, are less focused on valuing the contributions of individual members compared to organizations in other industries.”

Industry warmth was measured as a manipulation check using an adapted scale from measures of consumer brands (Aaker et al., 2010) and research on organizational image (Highhouse et al., 2003; Lievens et al., 2007). The scale is 10-items, with each item consisting of a one-word adjective for warmth (e.g., warm, friendly, cold, irritable)
and competence (e.g., competent, effective, efficient). Participants rated the extent to which the adjective described the context or the organization using a 5-point scale of agreement (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Participants rated the nonprofit industry as higher in warmth (M= 4.07) than the forprofit industry (M = 3.25; t(485) = 14.81; p < .01) (I discuss a pilot study that was run on these manipulations later in this section).

**Organizational warmth.** The manipulation of warmth for organizations is also adapted from Judd et al. (2005), and was comprised of four online employee reviews that appear to come from the website Glassdoor. These reviews suggest the organization is on one end of the manipulated dimension, and two of the Glassdoor reviews were neutral in regards to the manipulated dimension. For example, in the nonprofit/ high warmth manipulation, participants were shown reviews that suggest that an organization in the nonprofit industry is also high in warmth. These behavioral statements were similar, but not the same as the ones used in the context-related association manipulation (See Appendix for examples). A manipulation check for the organization’s warmth was measured using the same warmth measure used for the industry discussed previously, but the referent is at the organizational, rather than the industry, level. Following the manipulation of warmth, participant perceptions of warmth significantly differed across conditions; M = 3.91 for the high warmth condition and M = 2.82 for the low warmth condition, (t(241) = 11.31; p < .01; d = -1.44).

A manipulation check measured whether applicants recognized the industry the organization was in at time 1. Of the 244 participants, 233 (95%) correctly identified the industry at Time 1.
Measures:

**Organizational attractiveness.** Organizational attraction was measured at both Time 1 and Time 2 using four items from the company attractiveness scale (Highhouse et al., 2003). Reliabilities for all of the measures at both Time 1 and Time 2 are located on the diagonal of the correlation table. The scale assesses the extent to which applicants agree with statements about their attraction to the organization (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). For example, “This company is attractive to me as a place for employment”.

**Intentions to apply.** Intentions to apply was measured at both Time 1 and Time 2 using the intentions to apply scale (Highhouse et al., 2003). The scale is comprised of five items that focus on the behavior intentions of applicants in regards to applying for a job. The scale assess the extent to which applicants agree (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree) with statements about their intentions to apply to the organization. For example, “I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer”.

**Analysis**

My hypotheses focused on between-subject effects (context-related associations and organization-specific information) over two time periods. Hypotheses were tested using GLM. To test the hypotheses, I first measured a model testing the relationship between industry manipulations and attraction to and intent to apply to the organization at Time 1. Perceptions of organizational competence were included as a control variable as this has been found to be significantly related to perceptions of warmth, related to profit and nonprofit industries, and is acknowledged as a universally desirable trait (Fiske et al., 2002) (See Tables 3.5 and 3.6 for the analyses without competence. The pattern of results
do not significantly change). Following this, I ran a model including the main effects of the industry manipulation, warmth manipulation, and perceptions of organization competence on perceptions of the organization at Time 2. Following this, I ran a third model exploring the interaction between industry and organization-specific warmth.

**Results**

**Pilot Study**

As a preliminary step, a pilot study with 35 participants was conducted to verify that the experimental manipulation produced the desired differences in perceptions of industry warmth and organizational warmth. The pilot study procedures were identical to the primary study. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate their perceptions of (a) industry warmth, (b) which industry the organization was a part of, (c) organization warmth. Of the 35 participants, 34 (97%) correctly identified the industry at Time 1.

The results from the pilot test suggested that participants perceived the nonprofit industry (M = 4.07) to be significantly warmer than the forprofit (M = 3.19; \( t(68) = -5.58; p < .01; d = 1.33 \)) industry. Following the manipulation of organization warmth, participant perceptions of warmth significantly differed across conditions; M = 4.08 for the high warmth condition and M = 2.85 for the low warmth condition, \( t(29) = -5.05; p < .01; d = -1.72 \). The alpha for organizational warmth from this study demonstrated sufficient reliability (\( a = .95 \)).

**Hypothesis Tests**

Table 3.1 reports the descriptive statistics for Study 1. I first tested the main effects of the industry manipulation at Time 1. Hypothesis 1a proposed that context associations of warmth influences organizational attraction (See Table 3.2, Model 3.2).
Participants who perceived the organization was in the nonprofit industry were less attracted to the organization (M = 3.28) than those who thought the organization was in the forprofit industry (M = 3.56; t(230) = 3.06; p < .01; d = 0.39). Similarly, Hypotheses 1b proposed that context associations of warmth would be positively related to intent to apply (See Table 3.2, Model 3.3). There was not a significant difference between the willingness to apply to when the organization was in the nonprofit industry (M = 3.32) than in the forprofit industry (M = 3.50; t(241) = 1.96; p = .05; d = 0.25). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is not supported.

Hypotheses 2a and Hypotheses 2b suggested that organizational warmth influences organizational attraction and intent to apply. To test Hypothesis 2a, I ran a model that controlled for perceptions of organization competence and included the main effects of the industry manipulation and warmth manipulation on organizational attraction and intent to apply at Time 2 (See Table 3.3). Models 3.6 and 3.8 suggest that participants in the high organizational warmth condition were more attracted to the organization (M = 3.62) and had greater intent to apply to the organization (M = 3.66) than participants in the low warmth condition (M’s = 2.65, 2.79; d = -1.19, -1.05 respectively). This provides support for Hypothesis 2a and Hypothesis 2b.

Hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b predicted an interaction between context-related associations and organization-specific information on organizational attraction and intent to apply, where the impact of organization-specific information on recruitment outcomes will be greater in a warm context than in a cold context (See Table 3.3). Models 3.7 and 3.9 suggests that the effects of organization-specific information on organizational attraction and intent to apply are not significantly moderated by context-related
associations (p=.75, .50, respectively). Figure 3.2 provides a visual example of this interaction for organizational attraction. Thus, Hypotheses 3a and 3b were not supported.

**Supplementary analysis**

To better comprehend the results and gain a more nuanced understanding of the impact of context-related associations and organization information, on perceptions of the organization, several additional analyses were explored. These analyses relate to (a) the extent to which context-related associations influence the amount of time spent looking at organization-specific information, (b) the extent to which perceivers conceptualized organizations that ran counter to context-related associations as a separate subtype of the industry, and (c) removing competence from the analyses.

To test whether context-related associations influenced the amount of attention job seekers gave to organization-specific information, I tested the interaction between context-related associations and organization-specific information on the amount of time that participants viewed organization-specific information. This measure has been used to measure attention in the past (Hill, DelPriore, & Vaughan, 2011; Stevens & Fiske, 2000). The descriptive statistics for the measure suggest the distribution is positively skewed. The data from my pilot study (which was administered in a classroom, verifying that everyone took it at the same time) suggests that 99% of participants (3 standard deviations above the mean) would have finished reading the organization-specific information by 4.21 minutes.

After removing participants that took longer than 5 minutes (n = 223), I tested the interaction between context-related associations and organization-specific information on the amount of time that participants viewed organization-specific information (See Table
3.4, and Figure 3.3). Models 3.11 suggests that there is a significant interaction between industry and organization warmth (β = 117.15, p < .01), where applicants spent more time in the conditions that had organization-specific information that corresponded to the context-related associations. Specifically, participants spent more time in the nonprofit/warmth or forprofit/cold condition (M = 204.85 seconds and M = 127.87 seconds, respectively) than in the nonprofit/cold or forprofit/warm condition (M = 98.73 and 116.84 seconds, respectively). This suggests that, while applicants may be influenced more by organization-specific information, they do not pay as much attention to information that does not agree with their context-related associations. This lends partial support to theory on confirmation bias but is incomplete because there does not appear to be a direct relationship between time spent looking at the manipulation and attraction.

The second subject in my supplemental analyses focused on whether perceivers conceptualized organizations that ran counter to context-related associations as representing a separate subtype of the industry. I tested this by using an adapted measure of stereotype subtype (Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2013) to measure perceptions of the organization as a subtype of the industry. I found a disordinal interaction between warmth and industry (See Table 3.4, Model 3.13, β = 0.56, p < .01). Figure 3.4 provides a visual of this interaction, where participants felt the organization was least like other organizations in the industry in the cold nonprofit organization condition (M = 2.99), and the organization was most like other organizations in the industry in the warm nonprofit organization condition (M = 3.48). In the forprofit conditions, participant subtype perceptions were less influenced by whether the organization was warm (M = 3.17) or cold (M = 3.25). The pattern suggests that organization-information influences the extent
to which participants are willing to categorize the organization as being separate from the rest of the organizations in the industry.

Finally, I re-ran the hypotheses without competence to see how the effects changed. I had included competence in the analyses because work suggests that applicants are aware of both warmth and competence differences between nonprofit and forprofit industries (Aaker et al., 2010). The results are found in Tables 3.5 and 3.6. The pattern of significant results do not change.

Discussion

Study 1 explored how applicants consider both context-related associations with recruitment materials when forming impressions of organizations. The results of the experiment suggest that context-related associations influenced participant perceptions of warmth, as well as attraction to an organization prior to learning anything else about the organization. However, while contextual-related associations appeared to influence the amount of attention paid to organization-specific information, they were not predictive of either organizational attraction or intent to apply after organization-specific information was introduced.

The findings from Study 1 support and refines prior research which suggests that potential applicants use the context in which an organization is embedded to make employment-related inferences about the organization, such as job characteristics (Gatewood et al., 1993). Surprisingly, there was not an interaction between context-related associations and organization-specific information; instead, based on the supplemental analysis, context-related associations appears to direct participant attention toward organization-specific information that reaffirms those context-related
associations. However, the findings from Study 1 suggest that when organization-specific information is available, potential applicants prefer organization-specific information over context-related associations. The results from this study suggest that recruitment models that have focused primarily on organization-specific information (Breaugh, 2013; Cable & Turban, 2001; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016) should also consider how context-related associations influence the initial attraction and behavioral intentions towards an organization when potential applicants begin the job search process.

The supplemental analysis shed further light into the negative relationship between organizational warmth and organizational attraction. The finding that participants were more attracted to an organization in low-warmth industries is surprising, given that warmth is seen as a universally attractive trait (Cuddy et al., 2008). One variable that is not included in the survey is a measure of instrumental traits, such as job security or pay. Instrumental traits have been identified as industry-specific traits whose value can vary depending on the context (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). As such, they were omitted from this study. However, instrumental traits such as average compensation have been found to impact job and organizational satisfaction (Igalens & Rousse, 1999). Therefore, context-related associations regarding instrumental traits likely influence perceptions of attraction across industries. To account for this in Study 2, I decided to only focus within an industry to better control for the impact of instrumental traits.

The supplementary analyses complements the hypotheses tests in providing additional insights into the impression formation process. Specifically, participants gave less attention to organization-specific information in the conditions where the information
refuted context-related associations. This suggests that potential applicants may have a confirmation bias, where they seek out information agreeing with their previous impressions and avoid information that challenge these perceptions. However, this second point is less clear because participant perceptions of warmth and attraction were significantly influenced by organization-specific information. In addition, participants in the conditions where organization-specific information was different from context-related associations categorized the organization as being distinct from other organizations in the industry. This suggests that participants may attempt to reconcile organization-specific information that runs counter to context-related associations by changing how they categorize the organization. Doing so could reduce the application of context-related associations to organizational perceptions at Time 2. Taken together, these results suggest that context-related associations likely influence perceptions indirectly (through attention). This raises an important question about the extent to which activated (rather than inactive) context-related associations illicit significantly different effects on perceptions.

**Limitations**

There are limitations in Study 1 that need to be addressed. First, in line with past work on stereotypes, which typically compare perceptions across two separate categories (such as Caucasians and African American) (Kunda & Spencer, 2003), the two industries of profit and nonprofit were used to highlight perceived differences across industries. Additionally, prior work suggests profit and nonprofit industries are perceived differently (Aaker et al., 2010), providing an appropriate comparison across industries. However, as the industry conditions were *between* industries (profit/nonprofit), it did not contain a true
control condition (where industry information is not shared). Absent a true control condition, it is unclear whether context-related associations generally influence perceptions, or whether other differences across profit and nonprofit industries (such as pay, prestige, job security) were the ultimate drivers of perceptions. Another way to examine the impact of context-related associations would be to explore perceptions of organizations within a single industry. Specifically, an experiment should be designed to compare perceptions of an organization between conditions that either provide context-related associations and a control condition which does not provide context-related associations.

Second, despite warmth being manipulated to make industries appear different, participants perceived significant differences in both warmth and competence. This is in line with social psychology work that suggests individuals simultaneously make both warmth and competence perceptions regarding targets (Fiske et al., 2002), which indicates that these two constructs are often related in the minds of individuals. In addition, past work has specifically found significant differences in warmth and competence for profit and nonprofit industries (Aaker et al., 2010), which indicates that individuals are predisposed to regard the profit industry as low-warmth and high-competence and the nonprofit industry as high-warmth and low-competence. This creates uncertainty about whether perceptions in attraction and intent to apply at Time 1 and Time 2 were only due to warmth or if beliefs about competence were also influential. I attempted to address this concern by including competence in my hypotheses tests, however, a more controlled examination of the impact of context-related associations would focus only on one industry in order to control for between-industry differences.
A third limitation of this study is that it only explores whether one specific source of organization-specific information (Glassdoor reviews) moderates the impact of context-related associations on organizational perceptions. However, potential applicants are exposed to multiple other sources of organization-specific information, such as an organization’s website, recruiters, and/or word-of-mouth (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Organizations attempt to promote their best image to potential applicants, and are likely to try and differentiate themselves from negative context-related associations. Therefore, it is currently unclear whether the source of organization-specific information (such as company-owned information) are more or less effective at countering negative context-related associations.

Study 2 attempts to address these limitations and provide a more robust test of the theory proposed in Study 1 in three ways. First, Study 2 explores context-related associations within one industry (for-profit), and manipulates the extent to which context-related associations are activated. This enables me to explore the impact of context-related associations while controlling for other industry-related variables. Second, by comparing a condition providing context-related associations and one without context-related associations, I can explore the extent to which context-related associations can be activated and applied (Kunda & Spencer, 2003)—this is especially important, as potential applicants can differ in the extent to which context-related associations are activated. Third, Study 2 only focuses on the impact of negative context-related associations, and measures difference in the effectiveness of two separate sources of organization-specific information (Glassdoor reviews and the organization’s website) to overcome negative associations and distinguish the organization from related organizations.
Table 3.1 Study 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among the Study Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</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>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Time Industry Manipulation</td>
<td>235.70</td>
<td>735.89</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Time Organization Manipulation</td>
<td>169.75</td>
<td>470.90</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Organization Warmth (T1)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Organization Warmth (T2)</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Organizational Competence (T1)</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.67*</td>
<td>0.28*</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Organizational Competence (T2)</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.74*</td>
<td>0.43*</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Organization Attraction (T1)</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.31*</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.44*</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Organization Attraction (T2)</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.18*</td>
<td>0.75*</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td>0.66*</td>
<td>0.45*</td>
<td>0.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Intent to Apply (T1)</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.44*</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.58*</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>0.75*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Intent to Apply (T2)</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>0.72*</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.64*</td>
<td>0.5*</td>
<td>0.82*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Industry Subtypes</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.32*</td>
<td>0.22*</td>
<td>0.34*</td>
<td>0.2*</td>
<td>0.36*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Seriousness</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.17*</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Nonprofit Warmth (T1)</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.41*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.33*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Forprofit Warmth (T1)</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.44*</td>
<td>0.20*</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.35*</td>
<td>0.19*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=244.
Reliability estimates are on the diagonal in parentheses
Table 3.1 Study 1 Correlation Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Time Industry Manipulation</td>
<td>235.70</td>
<td>735.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Time Organization Manipulation</td>
<td>169.75</td>
<td>470.90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Organization Warmth (T1)</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>4. Organization Warmth (T2)</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Organizational Competence (T1)</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Organizational Competence (T2)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Organization Attraction (T1)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Organization Attraction (T2)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Intent to Apply (T1)</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Intent to Apply (T2)</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.48*</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Industry Subtypes</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td>0.38*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Seriousness</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Nonprofit Warmth (T1)</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.88</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Forprofit Warmth (T1)</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.23*</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>0.13*</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=244. Reliability estimates are on the diagonal in parentheses
Table 3.2 Context Warmth Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply at Time 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Warmth Perceptions (T1)</th>
<th>Organizational Attraction (T1)</th>
<th>Intent to Apply (T1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 3.1</td>
<td>Model 3.2</td>
<td>Model 3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B  SE</td>
<td>B  SE</td>
<td>B  SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.38* 0.17</td>
<td>1.72* 0.26</td>
<td>1.08* 0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Competence (T1)</td>
<td>0.80* 0.05</td>
<td>0.50* 0.07</td>
<td>0.66* 0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth</td>
<td>0.53* 0.06</td>
<td>-0.20* 0.08</td>
<td>-0.06 0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.60*</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.34*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $n = 244$. Context Warmth (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit)

*p<.05
Table 3.3 Context Warmth and Organizational Warmth Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply at Time 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Warmth Perceptions (T2)</th>
<th>Organizational Attraction (T2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 3.4</td>
<td>Model 3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Warmth Perceptions (T1)</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.58*</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Attraction (T1)</td>
<td>.36*</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Apply (T1)</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Competence (T1)</td>
<td>1.18*</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1.02*</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry X Organization Warmth</td>
<td>0.50*</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 244. Context Warmth (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Organization Warmth (0 = Low Warmth, 1 = High Warmth)
*p<.05
Table 3.3 Context Warmth and Organizational Warmth Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply at Time 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent to Apply (T2)</th>
<th>Model 3.8</th>
<th>Model 3.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Warmth (T1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Attraction (T1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Apply (T1)</td>
<td>0.68*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Competence (T1)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Warmth</td>
<td>0.96*</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Warmth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(R^2)</td>
<td>.49*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: \(n = 244\). Context Warmth (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Organization Warmth (0 = Low Warmth, 1 = High Warmth)  
*p<.05
Table 3.4 Context Warmth and Organizational Warmth Regressed onto Time Spent Reading Organizational Information and Industry Subtypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Reading Organization Information (T2)</th>
<th>Industry Subtypes (T2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>176.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Competence (T1)</td>
<td>-20.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth</td>
<td>26.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Warmth</td>
<td>43.84*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth X Organization Warmth</td>
<td>118.23*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 223 for Models 3.10 and 3.11; n = 244 for models 3.12 and 3.13. Context Warmth (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Organization Warmth (0 = Low Warmth, 1 = High Warmth)
*p<.05
Table 3.5 Context Warmth Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply at Time 1 (Not Controlling for Competence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Warmth (T1)</th>
<th>Organizational Attraction (T1)</th>
<th>Intent to Apply (T1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 3.14</td>
<td>Model 3.15</td>
<td>Model 3.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3.31* 0.06</td>
<td>3.56* 0.06</td>
<td>3.50* 0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth</td>
<td>0.40* 0.08</td>
<td>-0.28 0.09</td>
<td>-0.17 0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.09*</td>
<td>.04*</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 244. Context Warmth (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Organization Warmth (0 = Low Warmth, 1 = High Warmth)  
*p<.05
Table 3.6 Context Warmth and Organization Warmth Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply (Not Controlling for Competence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Warmth (T2)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Attraction (T2)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 3.17</td>
<td>Model 3.18</td>
<td>Model 3.19</td>
<td>Model 3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B  SE</td>
<td>B  SE</td>
<td>B  SE</td>
<td>B  SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.99* 0.25</td>
<td>0.98* 0.25</td>
<td>0.43* 0.23</td>
<td>0.42* 0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Warmth (T1)</td>
<td>0.52* 0.07</td>
<td>0.52* 0.07</td>
<td>0.63* 0.06</td>
<td>0.63* 0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Attraction (T1)</td>
<td>0.63* 0.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.63* 0.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Apply (T1)</td>
<td>-0.05 0.09</td>
<td>-0.03 0.12</td>
<td>0.07 0.09</td>
<td>0.09 0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth</td>
<td>1.18* 0.09</td>
<td>1.21* 0.12</td>
<td>1.00* 0.09</td>
<td>1.02* 0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Warmth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth X Organization Warmth</td>
<td>-0.05 0.18</td>
<td>-0.04 0.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.47*</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.49*</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $n = 244$. Context Warmth (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Organization Warmth (0 = Low Warmth, 1 = High Warmth) *p<.05
Table 3.6 Context Warmth and Organization Warmth Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply at Time 2 (Not Controlling for Competence)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intent to Apply (T2)</th>
<th>Model 3.21</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Warmth (T1)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Organizational Attraction (T1)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Apply (T1)</td>
<td>0.70*</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Warmth</td>
<td>0.96*</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context Warmth X Organization Warmth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $n = 244$. Context Warmth (0 = forprofit, 1 = Nonprofit), Organization Warmth (0 = Low Warmth, 1 = High Warmth)
*p < .05
Figure 3.1: Proposed Model of Impression Formation in Recruitment
Figure 3.2 Interaction Between Context Warmth and Organization Warmth on Organizational Attraction at Time 2.
Figure 3.3 Interaction Between Context Warmth and Organization Warmth on Time Spent Looking at Organization-Specific Information
Figure 3.4 Interaction Between Context Warmth and Organization Warmth on Industry Subtypes
CHAPTER 4

STUDY 2: SOURCE CREDIBILITY AS A MODERATOR

Study 1 suggests that job seekers prefer organization-specific information when forming impressions about an organization’s attractiveness. However, this appears to contradict the commonly-held assumption that context-related associations influence perceptions of job characteristics and job choices (Gatewood et al., 1993). Furthermore, organizations are specifically interested in the extent to which they can best manage negative context-related information. Therefore, Study 2 builds on and extends the findings from Study 1 to explore whether the presence or absence of context-related associations influence organizational perceptions. In addition, Study 2 explores the effectiveness of organization-specific information in refuting context-relaxed associations on organizational perceptions. I do this in two ways. First, I explore how context-related associations are activated and how they influence belief confidence, which is the extent to which applicants are confident in their preexisting beliefs about a target. Second, I explore the extent to which the credibility of organization-specific information influences the extent to which job seekers rely on context-related associations. I test these hypotheses using an experiment with 127 participants.

Context-related association activation

According to the bad-is-stronger-than-good hypotheses (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001), individuals are more influenced by negative information than positive information. Therefore, the presence of negative context-related associations is
likely to influence perceptions of organizational attraction and intent to apply. However, while all individuals hold stereotypes associated with groups, such associations are not always salient in the minds of perceivers (Kunda & Spenser, 2003). Indeed, research suggests that when stereotypes are inactive, perceivers are less influenced by stereotypical associations, and are more willing to pay attention to individuating information. Stereotypes can be activated through subtle primes where words or phrases that are similar to stereotypical associations are discussed. For example, Wigboldus et al. (2003) presented participants with sentences describing an individual’s behavior that is either consistent or inconsistent with a salient stereotype (e.g., “The professor [garbage man] wins the science quiz”). When a certain category is activated, access to stereotype-consistent trait terms are brought to mind (Devine, 1989; Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1996). Therefore, being reminded of negative context-related associations is likely to lead the applicant to apply the negative stereotype to the organization and see the organization as less attractive.

Hypothesis 5a: Exposure to cold contextual associations will lead to lower organizational attraction.

Hypothesis 5b: Exposure to cold contextual associations will lead to lower intentions to apply.

The moderating impact of Source Credibility

Study 1 suggests that when applicants are exposed to negative context-related associations, they are likely to spend less attention to information that refutes these associations, presumably because people dislike dealing with cognitive dissonance. Theoretically, the negative-positive asymmetry effect suggests organization-specific
information will be discounted from applicants that hold low context-related associations because individuals weigh negative information as more accurate than positive information (Baumeister et al., 2001). In addition, Wigboldus et al. (2003) suggest that activated stereotypes prior to providing individuating information makes it difficult to access stereotype-inconsistent traits. Therefore, job seekers are likely to discount organization-specific information that attempts to refute context-related associations that have been activated.

However, job seekers have multiple sources of organization-specific information available to learn about an organization that can differ in terms of perceived credibility (Van Hoye, 2014). Information processing suggests perceivers provide more attention towards processing information from highly credible sources (Pornpitakpan, 2004). The credibility of the information may therefore exacerbate or mitigate the effect of negative context-related associations on organizational attraction. For example, when information comes from a company-owned information source that attempts to portray the organization as “better than the competition”, job seekers may disregard the information as attempting to inaccurately portray the organization in a better light. In essence, they feel they are being “sold” on the merits of the organization. Therefore, applicants will pay little attention to company-owned information that attempts to counter negative context-related associations.

On the other hand, job seekers that receive refuting information from an independently owned information source (typically considered a highly credible source), are less able to assume there are ulterior motives that are behind the information. For example, participants pay more attention to the information from the word of mouth than
other types of information (Van Hoye et al., 2016). Therefore, they are more likely to pay attention to highly credible information and believe that the information about the organization is accurate. According to the continuum model, perceivers are willing to integrate the organization-specific information into their perceptions of the organization and discount context-related associations.

**Hypothesis 5a:** The impact of a cold context on organizational attraction is moderated by source credibility. The negative impact of a cold context on organizational attraction is stronger when source credibility is low than when source credibility is high.

**Hypothesis 5b:** The impact of a cold context on intentions to apply is moderated by source credibility. The negative impact of a cold context on intent to apply is stronger when source credibility is low than when source credibility is high.

**Methodology**

**Participants and Design**

To test these hypotheses, I used an experimental study using 127 management students (72 women, 55 men, mean age=21 years, SD= 2.51). The study used a 2 (negative context association vs no contextual association) x 2 (high credibility vs low credibility) between-subjects design.

**Procedure**

The procedure was similar to Study 1, where participants took on the role of an active job seeker and were told they would be asked to evaluate a target organization in either the business consulting (forprofit) or nonprofit industry. This was done so that participants could be exposed to the context-related associations in both industries; in
reality, all participants were only asked to evaluate an organization in the forprofit industry. Participants in the low context warmth condition were shown the same behavioral statements as used in study 1 about both the forprofit and nonprofit industries, specifically suggesting forprofit industries are low in regard to warmth. Participants in the control condition were not shown any information about either the forprofit or nonprofit industries. All participants were then told they would be evaluating an organization in the for-profit industry, and were asked for the same organizational evaluations examined in Study 1, specifically organization warmth, organizational attraction, and intent to apply to the organization.

Following this evaluation, participants were shown company-specific information about the organization. Participants were told the organization-specific information either came from the organization’s website (low credibility condition) or from employee reviews from an independent website (high credibility condition). The content in these manipulations were the same; they both suggested the organization was high in organizational warmth. These manipulations were chosen because prior literature suggests that impersonal, company owned information is low in credibility, and personal, independent information is high in credibility (Cable & Turban, 2001) They only differed in the presentation of the information. After viewing the company-specific information, participants were again asked about their attraction to and intentions to apply to the organization.

Manipulations

Context-related associations. I used the same context-related associations (behavioral statements) that were used in Study 1. The manipulation check for the
associations suggested that participants that were reminded of context-related associations did not perceive the forprofit industry as lower in warmth (M=3.36) than participants that did not receive any information about context-related associations (M = 3.43; (t(125) = .65; p = .51). This is a different result than the results from a separate pilot study that was conducted prior to Study 2 (discussed in the results section).

**Credibility organization-specific information.** Individuals were shown information that they were told came from either a company-owned source or an independent source. The company-owned, organization-specific information source condition appeared to be coming from an organization’s website based on studies by Walker et al. (2012). The independent information source condition appeared to be coming from Glassdoor reviews similar to studies by (Windscheid et al., 2016). Perceived credibility was measured using (Allen, Van Scotter, & Otondo, 2004) (6 items). The scale assesses the extent to which participants agree (1=strongly agree, 5=strongly disagree) with statements about the source’s credibility. For example, “the information presented on the company’s website was credible”. In line with the pilot test group, participants indicated that the conditions differed in regards to perceived credibility (t(123) = 3.56; p < .01).

**Measures**

As in Study 1, all measures used five point scales. Organizational attraction and intent to apply were measured identically as in Study 1. The reliabilities for these measures are found on the correlation table.
Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using the same analytical procedure as in Study 1. Similar to Study 1, perceived organizational competence was included as a control condition in all hypothesized models. I first measured the relationship the industry manipulation had on initial perceptions of the organization. Following this, I used a second model to assess the impact of both context-relation associations and the organization-specific information. The third model then measured the interaction effect of information source credibility on the relationship between context-related associations and organizational perceptions.

Results

Pilot Test

A pilot study was run prior to collecting data for Study 2 that included 53 participants. The procedures and measures used in the pilot study were the same as in Study 2. The results of that pilot study suggested that participants that were reminded of negative context-related associations rated the forprofit industry as lower in warmth (M=3.09) than participants that were not reminded of negative context-related associations (M = 3.41; t(50)= 2.11; p < .05; d = .55). In addition, participants in the independently-owned information condition believed the organization-specific information was more credible than participants that viewed information from the organization’s website (t(51 = 3.32; p < .01).

Hypothesis Tests

Table 4.1 presents the descriptive statistics. Table 4.2 presents the hypotheses tests. Hypothesis 4a and Hypotheses 4b suggested that organizational attraction and intent
to apply will be lower for participants that are exposed to negative context-related associations of warmth (See Table 4.2, Model 4.2 and Model 4.3). The results do not provide support for these hypotheses ($t(125) = -1.25; p = .21; d = -0.13$), participants that were exposed to negative context-related associations of warmth did not report significantly less attraction at Time 1 ($M = 3.37$) than participants that were not provided any negative context-related associations ($M = 3.38$). In addition, participants that were exposed to negative context-related associations of warmth did not report significantly less intent to apply at Time 1 ($M = 3.23$) than participants that were not provided any negative context-related associations ($M = 3.44; t(125) = -1.41; p = .16; d = -0.25$).

Thus, Hypotheses 4a and Hypotheses 4b were not supported.

Hypothesis 5a and Hypothesis 5b proposed that the source credibility of organization-specific information moderates the impact of context warmth on organizational attraction. Table 4.3 presents the hypotheses tests of the interaction (See Model 4.7 and Model 4.9). The results suggest that source credibility does not moderate the effect of context-related associations on either organizational attraction or intent to apply ($p = .90$ and $p = .66$, respectively). Thus Hypothesis 5a and Hypothesis 5b were not supported.

**Supplementary Analysis**

Several additional analyses were explored to gain a better understanding about the interaction between context-related associations and information source credibility on recruitment outcomes. These analyses relate to (a) the extent to which context-related associations influence confidence in job seekers about the perceptions of the organization, (b) the extent to which context-related associations influence the amount of
time spent looking at organization-specific information, and (c) removing competence from the analyses.

The theoretical mechanisms underlying the hypothesis assume that job seekers will have more confidence in their beliefs when they are exposed to context-related associations (See Table 4.6, Models 4.19 and 4.20). Results suggest that participants that were shown negative context-related associations had higher belief confidence at both Time 1 and Time 2 ($M = 2.42; M = 3.21$) than participants that were not shown negative context-related associations ($M = 2.04; M = 2.75; d = .38; d = .56$, respectively). This suggests that, even if context-related associations do not influence perceptions of the organization directly, it does influence the confidence job seekers have about their perceptions, which may hinder an organization’s attempt to change those perceptions.

A second potential theoretical mechanism that I explored was the amount of time participants spent looking at organization-specific information. Based on the theory, I expected that participants will spend less time looking at organization-specific information than when they don’t have activated context-related associations. My results suggest that the amount of time participants spent looking at organization-specific information was not significantly affected by whether they were shown negative context-related associations ($M = 123.26$) or not ($M = 111.37; t(125) = -.55; p = .58; d = .10$). Furthermore, information source credibility did not moderate the relationship between context-related associations and time spent looking at organization-specific information ($\beta = 23.00; p = .60$). This finding is especially curious, given the findings in Study 1, and suggest that perhaps that differences in the amount of time spent looking at refuting
information is most significant when comparing across industries, rather than between activated and not activated context-related associations.

Finally, there were a considerable number of participants in the dataset (19) that did not correctly identify whether organization-specific information came from a company-owned information source or from independent reviewers. Participants that failed this attention check may not have been able to perceive differences in credibility, which could bias the results. Thus, the analysis was repeated using a dataset that only included participants that correctly assessed which information source they were receiving information from (N = 108) (See Table 4.4 and 4.5). Note that, while the parameter estimates changed slightly, there were no change in the pattern of results. Specifically, participants in the negative context-related association condition did not report higher levels of organizational attraction (M = 3.37) than when there was no contextual associations provided ((M = 3.12; d = .26). Similarly, participants in the negative contextual information condition were not significantly less willing to apply to the organization (M = 3.35) than participants that did not receive any information about the industry (M = 3.25; d = .12). Similarly, Hypothesis 5 was not supported for either organizational attraction or intent to apply (p = 0.43; p = .76, respectively).

**Discussion**

The results from Study 2 need to be considered with caution, given the manipulation test for context related associations was not significant. While the hypotheses tests in Study 2 were not supported, the supplemental analysis suggests that exposure to negative context-related associations lead job seekers to experience higher levels of belief confidence. This appears to be in line with the results from Study 1 in
suggesting the context-related associations may impact job seeker responses to organization specific information. However, neither the activation of context-related associations nor the credibility of organization-specific information directly influenced the initial perceptions of the organization. Furthermore, the results did not provide support for an interaction effect, suggesting that there may not be heterogeneity in the extent to which organization-specific information can be used to manage negative context-related associations.

The lack of a relationship between activating context-related associations and initial perceptions of organizational attraction suggest that activating context-related associations do not influence organizational attraction. However, the supplementary analysis suggests that activating context-related associations significantly increases belief confidence and predispose job seekers to be influenced primarily by highly credible information sources. Therefore, there appears to be a need to explore whether there are mediators that link context-related associations and perceptions of the organization.

**Limitations**

A key limitation in Study 2 is that the industry context, as well as the context-related association chosen, may have provided a more conservative test for the theoretical mechanism than was necessary. According to the supplemental analysis in Study 1, participants were more sensitive towards organization-specific behavior that ran counter to context-related association in the nonprofit (rather than forprofit) industry. This may be because there appears to be more variety in forprofit organization, or perhaps because nonprofit organizations are perceived to be more focused on helping others. I chose to focus on the forprofit context, as I was interested in how organizations manage negative
context-related associations, specifically in regards to warmth. However, a stronger context-related effect may be present in examining nonprofit organizations.

A second limitation in Study 2 is the number of individuals that failed to correctly identify the source of organization-specific information. This failure suggests an issue with the manipulation. Failing to recognize the source of the information suggests either the manipulation was not sufficiently strong, or participants were not paying enough attention to the study to be influenced by the stated manipulations. While removing participants who failed attention checks from the dataset provides one way to address this issue, it suggests that further refinement of the experimental manipulations is necessary in order to properly test the proposed theoretical mechanisms.

A third limitation to Study 2 is that it may not have been realistic to have a control condition that did not provide context-related associations. While this condition was deemed necessary in order to control for other industry characteristics and to specifically examine whether context-related associations could be “activated”, it is not likely that job seekers are going to go through an employment process absent and context-related information. Further, it is possible that simply asking job seekers to take on the role of a job seeker could activate such associations without needing additional priming in the form of the behavioral statements. This could be the reason why the manipulation check for context-related associations failed. Future research is encouraged to better control for context-related association activation, or perhaps to look at the impact of negative context-related associations across industries.
General Discussion

Taken together, while Studies 1 and 2 provide some empirical support for the argument that potential applicants use context-related associations when forming perceptions of an organization, the results suggest that job seekers prefer and utilize organization-specific information when it is available. Study 1 suggests that context-related associations directly influence attraction to an organization. However, this only appears to be the case when job seekers have no other information about the organization. This finding is important, as it signals organizations in contexts that carry negative associations may have an inherent disadvantage in regards to job seeker attitudes. Study 2 extended Study 1 by exploring the extent to which activating context-related associations influence perceptions within the same industry. While the results from Study 2 need to be considered with caution, given the manipulation test for context related associations was not significant, the study suggests that activating context-related associations does not significantly influence perceptions of the organization. Furthermore, the credibility of the organization-specific information does not moderate the relationship between context-related associations and organizational perceptions. Given that applicants now have access to a wealth of information about both the context an organization is embedded in, as well as access to organization-specific information, the findings suggest the need to better understand these relationships for both future research and practice.

Theoretical Implications

While several of the hypotheses were not supported, this dissertation provides some support for the argument that recruitment research needs to consider context-related associations when exploring the recruitment process. Whereas historically, applicants
may have had limited ability to explore jobs across industries or geographic regions, applicants now have the ability to apply to jobs virtually across the world. As a result, associations and biases within the contexts are likely to play a larger role in the recruitment process than was previously expected. While the issues with the manipulation check in Study 2 limits the ability to draw conclusions from the study, these studies provide some support to the argument that context-related associations bias initial impressions of the organization and influence one’s willingness to seek out additional information about the organization. By integrating research from social psychology with recruitment models, I propose a model of impression formation in recruitment that provides greater predictive power in understanding how job seekers integrate context-related associations and organization-specific information in forming impressions of organizations.

Integrating the model of impression formation of recruitment into current recruitment models presents several new areas of research to explore. To begin with, what are the short and long-term outcomes of context-related associations? Lievens and Slaughter (2016) identify posthire outcomes such as return on investment and the emotional bond between employee and employer as long-term outcomes in the employment process. Work in this stream suggests that employees remain with organizations they have incorporated into their identity (Zhu, Tatachari, & Chattopadhyay, 2017). However, are employees less likely to have strong organizational identification if they are the best organization in an industry that is associated with negative context-related attributions? Do organizations have to initially provide additional compensation to employees to incentivize them to remain with the
organization? Research could explore the extent to which context-related associations influence long-term employee outcomes of the recruitment process.

Such an integration also raises the question about the conditions under which such associations are likely to apply. Prior work has discussed how stereotypes can be activated and applied (Kunda & Spencer, 2003). This stream of work suggests that stereotypes are more salient and applied to a greater extent in conditions when participants experience a threat to self-worth, and therefore use self-enhancement goals when interacting with stereotypes (Kunda & Spencer, 2003). For example, Spencer and Fein (1994) found that individuals who experienced a threat to their self-esteem had greater stereotype activation compared to participants that did not experience the threat. Thus, we need to know more about when applicants are most likely to rely on context-related associations.

A second question that merits further exploration regards the kind of associations most likely to influence organizational perceptions. Prior work has identified that some organizations are considered “sinful” (such as the tobacco industry; Fombrun, 1996). Therefore, industries may differ in a wide array of characteristics, such as morality. Future work should explore how context-related associations of morality influence perceptions of the organization.

The results from this dissertation, particularly Study 1, appear to run counter to research in social psychology that suggest perceived warmth to be considered a favorable trait (Fiske et al., 2007). Instead, the results suggest that participants who believed the organization was in a cold context were more attracted to the organization. While it is possible that the results for Study 1 are driven by an unmeasured factor, such as pay or
job security, it could also suggest that the recruitment context is a major moderator of the relationship between perceptions of warmth and attraction. Therefore, there is a potential opportunity to explore the boundary conditions in which warmth is negatively related to organizational attraction within the recruitment context.

**Practical implications**

Organizations are frequently recruiting applicants from a wider geographic range than they have historically. As the external job market increases, job seekers are going to potentially have inaccurate context-related associations that could bias them towards wanting to learn more about an organization. Organizations must know what the associations may be for their particular context and be able to guide job seekers towards appropriate organization-specific information that can refute negative contextual associations. Therefore, organizations must guide job seekers that have a negative contextual associations towards independent organization-specific information than refutes those associations. On the other hand, they would be best served by directing job seekers with little or no contextual associations to company-owned organization-specific information.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

I have already noted limitations in the two studies. Here, I summarize the broader limitations and offer suggestions for addressing them. To begin with, this study does not link contextual associations to actual job choice behavior. While job choice is determined by both intentions and attractiveness (Chapman et al., 2005), they are distinct. Future research would be well served to consider job seeker behavior, as well as perceptions. For example, a study examining the perceptions of job seekers prior to, and following, an
An online career fair could provide valuable information about how effective is the recruitment material from organizations that vary in regards to a particular contextual association. An added benefit of examining context-related associations in this manner is that the associations will not need to be manipulated. Rather, it will rely on the associations the job seekers themselves have already cultivated.

Secondly, all of the information occurred at the early stages of recruitment. Research on stereotyping suggests that the impact of stereotypes on impressions and perceptions decreases as individuals learn more about target (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). However, it is not clear how context-related associations influence perceptions at later stages. Future work should explore whether the influence on contextual associations on organizational perceptions decreases as job applicants acquire more information about the organization from multiple sources.

Third, the population that was used to test the hypotheses may have biased the results. I used a convenience sample consisting of business students, which have been criticized because of the lack of generalizability (James & Sonner, 2001). In addition, business students are likely to be more interested in extrinsic, rather than intrinsic values (Vansteenkiste, Duriez, Simons, & Soenens, 2006). Therefore, this sample may not value warmth as much as competence, or as much as instrumental attributes such as pay or job security. This may account for the insignificant effect of context warmth on organizational attraction, particularly in Study 1. Therefore, it would be beneficial to seek out a different population sample in future studies.

Fourth, the stereotypes that I focus on in this dissertation dealt with industry stereotypes. However, work on job stereotypes (Cleveland & Landy, 1983; DeNisi,
Cornelius, & Blencoe, 1987; Smith & Hakel, 1979) suggest that job seekers can have stereotypes about the characteristics and skills required for a particular job. Such stereotypes have been used to examine whether job positions are congruent with an applicant’s sex or age (Cleveland & Landy, 1983). These stereotypes are distinct from context-related associations, as they only deal specifically with the job, rather than the organization or the context. Therefore, one could have the same job stereotype across multiple contexts. Furthermore, because job stereotypes focus on the specific tasks required for the job, they may primarily be based on instrumental (rather than symbolic) attributes. Future work could simultaneously explore whether such stereotypes work independently from or interact with context-related associations.

**Conclusion**

This dissertation’s purpose was to explore the effect of context-related associations on potential applicant perceptions of the organization. Over the course of two studies, the present research provides some evidence that job seekers make inferences about organizations based, in part, on both information about the organization as well as the context in which an organization is embedded. Modern recruitment spans geographic locations and industries, as technology enables applications from around the world, and technology enables employees to bridge industries and other contexts. Therefore, there is a need to better understand how context-related associations influence the initial impressions of an organization in order to help organizations better manage these impressions.
Table 4.1 Study 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among the Study Variables

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N=127.
Reliability estimates are on the diagonal in parentheses
Table 4.1 (Continued) Study 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among the Study Variables

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<td>9. Intent to Apply (T2)</td>
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N=127.
Reliability estimates are on the diagonal in parentheses.
Table 4.2 Context-related Associations Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply at Time 1

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<th>Organizational Warmth Perceptions (T1)</th>
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<th>Intent to Apply (T1)</th>
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<td>Model 4.1</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.34*</td>
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*Note: n = 127. Context-related Associations (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Credibility (0 = Low Credibility 1 = High Credibility) *p<.05
Table 4.3 Context-related Associations and Credibility Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply at Time 2

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<td>Credibility</td>
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<td>$R^2$</td>
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Note: $n = 127$. Context-related Associations (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Credibility (0 = Low Credibility 1 = High Credibility)

*p<.05
Table 4.3 (Continued) Context-related Associations and Credibility Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply

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<th>Intent to Apply</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.46*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Warmth Perceptions (T1)</td>
<td>0.53*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Attraction (T1)</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Apply (T1)</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Competence (T1)</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-related Associations</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-related Associations X Credibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.38*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 127. Context-related Associations (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Credibility (0 = Low Credibility 1 = High Credibility)
*p<.05
Table 4.4 Context-related Associations and Credibility Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply (Removing Participants that Failed the Manipulation Check)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Warmth Perceptions (T1)</th>
<th>Organizational Attraction (T1)</th>
<th>Intent to Apply (T1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 4.10</td>
<td>Model 4.11</td>
<td>Model 4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.10*</td>
<td>0.44*</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.40*</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Competence (T1)</td>
<td>0.57*</td>
<td>0.76*</td>
<td>0.74*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-related Associations</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.46*</td>
<td>.33*</td>
<td>.39*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $n = 108$. Context-related Associations (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Credibility (0 = Low Credibility 1 = High Credibility)

*p<.05
Table 4.5 Context-related Associations and Credibility Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply (Removing Participants that Failed the Manipulation Check)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Warmth Perceptions</th>
<th>Organizational Attraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 4.13</td>
<td>Model 4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2.64*</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Warmth Perceptions (T1)</td>
<td>0.42*</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Attraction(T1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Apply (T1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Competence (T1)</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-related Associations</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>-0.27*</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-related Associations X Credibility</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $n = 108$. Context-related Associations (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Credibility (0 = Low Credibility 1 = High Credibility)
*p<.05
Table 4.5 Context-related Associations and Credibility Regressed onto Organizational Warmth, Attraction, and Intent to Apply (Removing Participants that Failed the Manipulation Check)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intent to Apply</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 4.17</td>
<td>Model 4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>1.34* 0.33</td>
<td>1.32* 0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Warmth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions (T1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Attraction(T1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Apply (T1)</td>
<td>0.59* 0.09</td>
<td>0.59* 0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Competence (T1)</td>
<td>0.06 0.11</td>
<td>0.06 0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-related Associations</td>
<td>0.17 0.12</td>
<td>0.21 0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>-0.07 0.12</td>
<td>0.03 0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context-related Associations X Credibility</td>
<td>-0.08 0.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.44*</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $n = 108$. Context-related Associations (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Credibility (0 = Low Credibility 1 = High Credibility)

*p < .05
Table 4.6 Context-related Associations and Credibility Regressed onto Belief Confidence

|                                | Belief Confidence (T2) |            |            |            |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|------------|------------|
|                                | Model 4.19             | Model 4.20 |            |
|                                | B          | SE       | B          | SE       |
| Intercept                      | 1.11*      | 0.33     | 1.09*      | 0.35     |
| Belief Confidence (T1)         | 0.29*      | 0.07     | 0.29*      | 0.07     |
| Organization Competence (T1)  | 0.28*      | 0.10     | 0.28*      | 0.10     |
| Context-related Associations   | 0.27*      | 0.13     | 0.30       | 0.18     |
| Credibility                    | 0.15       | 0.13     | 0.18       | 0.18     |
| Context-related Associations X |            |           | -0.05      | 0.26     |
| Credibility                    |            |           |            | 0.32*    |
| $R^2$                          |            |           | 0.32*      | 0.32     |

Note: $n = 127$. Context-related Associations (0 = forprofit 1 = Nonprofit), Credibility (0 = Low Credibility 1 = High Credibility)
*p<.05
REFERENCES


1–74.


APPENDIX A

DATA TRANSPARENCY TABLE

The variables below are measured across the two studies described in this manuscript. Only the variables in bold are reported because they are based on the theory and used to test the hypotheses. I measured a variety of additional variables because I felt it was important to measure variables that might provide additional context or address alternative explanations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>Study 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Organizational Warmth (T1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Organizational Warmth (T2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Industry Warmth (T1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Organizational attraction (T1)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Organizational attraction (T2)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Intent to apply (T1)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Intent to apply (T2)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Credibility</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Organizational Image</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Belief confidence scale</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Person organization fit</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Age</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Gender</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Ethnicity</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Current employment status</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Work values scale</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Instrumental attributes</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

CONTEXT-WARMTH MANIPULATIONS

Industry manipulations for warmth:
1. Organizations in the [forprofit, non-profit] industry, on average pay a [smaller, greater] percentage of their gross income to employees than organizations in other industries.

2. Organizations in the [forprofit, non-profit] industry, on average have a [lower, higher] proportion of employees that engage in community service and volunteer work compared to organizations in other industries.

3. Organizations in the [forprofit, non-profit] industry, on average are [less, more] involved in their communities compared to organizations in other industries.

4. Organizations in the [forprofit, non-profit] industry, on average have companies that are regularly identified as [untrustworthy, trustworthy] by independent news articles compared to organizations in other industries.

5a. Organizations in the non-profit industry, on average actively try to abide by environmental laws compared to organizations in other industries.

5b. Organizations in the for-profit industry, on average are less focused on valuing the contributions of individual members compared to organizations in other industries.

6a. Organizations in the non-profit industry, on average, are more forthright in their communications as compared to organizations in other industries.

6b. Organizations in the for-profit industry, on average prioritize profits rather than work-life balance compared to organizations in other industries.

2 Statements that are different from the context-related association

1. Organizations in the [forprofit, non-profit] industry, on average [honor, don't honor] contracts as much as organizations in other industries.

2. Organizations in the [forprofit, non-profit] industry, on average, [prioritize, don't prioritize] providing helpful services to employees and constituents more than organizations in other industries.
APPENDIX C

INDUSTRY MANIPULATION

The diagram above indicates that BREEVA is an organization in the (forprofit/nonprofit) industry. For anonymity’s sake, we have changed the name of this organization.
APPENDIX D

ORGANIZATION WARMTH MANIPULATION

Neutral Review 1:

October 26, 2018 | Current Employee
I have been working at BREEVA full-time (more than 3 years).

Pros
BREEVA is just off the freeway and easy to find. Always new challenges to work on. You can gain experience here.

Cons
It’s important to know that sometimes you have to change projects quickly. Some positions require travel. On a minor note, I would like more company swag from company meetings.

Neutral Review 2

December 3, 2018 | Former Employee
I was employed at BREEVA full-time.

Pros
Energetic, fast-paced environment. BREEVA is a for-profit that is pretty efficiently run—we didn’t have a lot of waste, either of time or money. During my time there, I felt my manager and leadership in general were pretty competent.

Cons
The work can be repetitive, though that is a function of the job that cannot really be avoided.
Pros
Energetic, fast-paced environment. BREEVA is a nonprofit that is pretty efficiently run—we didn’t have a lot of waste, either of time or money. During my time there, I felt my manager and leadership in general were pretty competent.

Cons
The work can be repetitive, though that is a function of the job that cannot really be avoided.

Reviewer 1 in the high context warmth/high organization warmth condition
November 12, 2018 | Current Employee
I joined BREEVA coming out of college and have worked here 10 years.

Pros
Interesting projects. For a nonprofit organization, BREEVA provides a supportive, friendly work environment. Most of my coworkers consider each other and our leaders as friends. We frequently spend time together outside of work. BREEVA structures jobs to bring coworkers together, and makes it easy to brainstorm or problem solve.

Cons
Parking could be better.

Reviewer 1 in the high context warmth/low organization warmth condition
November 12, 2018 | Current Employee
I joined BREEVA coming out of college and have worked here 10 years.

Pros
Interesting projects. For a for-profit organization, BREEVA provides a supportive, friendly work environment. Most of my coworkers consider each other and our leaders as friends. We frequently spend time together outside of work. BREEVA structures jobs to bring coworkers together, and makes it easy to brainstorm or problem solve.

Cons
Parking could be better.

Reviewer 1 in the low context warmth/high organization warmth condition

November 12, 2018 | Current Employee
I joined BREEVA coming out of college and have worked here 10 years.

Pros
Interesting projects.

Cons
For a for-profit organization, BREEVA does not provide a supportive work environment. None of my coworkers really consider each other or our leaders as friends. We rarely spend time together outside of work. BREEVA structures jobs to keep coworkers apart, and makes it hard to brainstorm or problem solve. Parking could be better.

Reviewer 2
High context warmth/high organization warmth condition

December 5, 2018 | Former Employee
I left the company 6 months ago after working for 7 years.
**Pros**

BREEVA is a trustworthy nonprofit organization. The things that the CEO shared publicly were exactly the same goals that were pushed with employees. It’s easy for organizations to lie about problems to potential employees, but BREEVA was honest with me from the beginning. Very flexible schedules.

**Cons**

Some of the buildings are old and can be cold.

---

**High context warmth/low organization warmth condition**

**December 5, 2018 | Former Employee**

I left the company 6 months ago after working for 7 years.

**Pros**

BREEVA is a trustworthy for-profit organization. The things that the CEO shared publicly were exactly the same goals that were pushed with employees. It’s easy for organizations to lie about problems to potential employees, but BREEVA was honest with me from the beginning. Very flexible schedules.

**Cons**

Some of the buildings are old and can be cold.

---

**Low context warmth/high organization warmth condition**

**December 5, 2018 | Former Employee**

I left the company 6 months ago after working for 7 years.

**Pros**

Very flexible schedules.

**Cons**

BREEVA is not a trustworthy for-profit organization. The things that the CEO shared publicly were extremely different than the goals that were pushed with employees. It’s easy for organizations to lie about problems to potential employees, and BREEVA was dishonest with me from the beginning. Also, some of the buildings are old and can be cold.
Low context warmth/low organization warmth condition

December 5, 2018 | Former Employee
I left the company 6 months ago after working for 7 years.

Pros
Very flexible schedules.

Cons
BREEVA is not a trustworthy nonprofit organization. The things that the CEO shared publicly were extremely different than the goals that were pushed with employees. It’s easy for organizations to lie about problems to potential employees, and BREEVA was dishonest with me from the beginning. Also, some of the buildings are old and can be cold.

Reviewer 3
High context warmth/high organization warmth condition

January 4, 2019 | Current Employee
Just started working at BREEVA 6 months ago.

Pros
Honest, clear communication from the leadership. Not work related, but something to consider: my office overlooks a park that BREEVA volunteered to keep up for the community. Its impressive how actively BREEVA tries to keep it clean. BREEVA is absolutely invested in our community. In addition, I also enjoy my commute.

Cons
Cold weather.

High context warmth/low organization warmth condition

January 4, 2019 | Current Employee
Just started working at BREEVA 6 months ago.

**Pros**
Honest, clear communication from the leadership. Not work related, but something to consider: my office overlooks a park that BREEVA volunteered to keep up for the community. It's impressive how actively BREEVA tries to keep it clean. BREEVA is absolutely invested in our community. In addition, I also enjoy my commute.

**Cons**
Cold weather.

---

**Low context warmth/high organization warmth condition**

January 4, 2019 | Current Employee
Just started working at BREEVA 6 months ago.

**Pros**
Enjoyable commute.

**Cons**
There isn't honest, clear communication from the leadership. Not work related, but something to consider: my office overlooks a park that BREEVA was tasked to keep up for the community. It's disappointing how little BREEVA tries to keep it clean. BREEVA is definitely not invested in our community. You should also be prepared for the cold weather.

---

**Low context warmth/low organization warmth condition**

January 4, 2019 | Current Employee
Just started working at BREEVA 6 months ago.

**Pros**
Enjoyable commute.

**Cons**
There isn't honest, clear communication from the leadership. Not work related, but something to consider: my office overlooks a park that BREEVA was tasked to keep up for the community. It's disappointing how little BREEVA tries to keep it clean. BREEVA is definitely not invested in our community. You should also be prepared for the cold weather.
Reviewer 4
High context warmth/high organization warmth condition

November 24, 2018 | Current Employee
I have been employed at BREEVA (nonprofit) for five years.

Pros
BREEVA follows a social mission, and puts its employees above profitability. I know that BREEVA invests a lot of its gross income on employees (more than even other organizations). I've personally taken several different training courses. BREEVA wants employees to develop. BREEVA has a great employee volunteering program. Great publicity.

Cons
Decisions sometimes take time to get made.

Low context warmth/low organization warmth condition

November 24, 2018 | Current Employee
I have been employed at BREEVA (for-profit) for five years.

Pros
BREEVA follow a social mission, and puts its employees above profitability. I know that BREEVA invests a lot of its gross income on employees (more than even other organizations). I've personally taken several different training courses. BREEVA wants employees to develop. BREEVA has a great employee volunteering program. Great publicity.

Cons
Decisions sometimes take time to get made.
I have been employed at BREEVA (for-profit) for five years.

**Pros**
Great publicity.

**Cons**
BREEVA’s mission is really to make money, and it does not put employees above profitability. I know that BREEVA invests a small amount of its gross income on employees (less than other organizations). I’ve personally been prevented from taking several different training courses. BREEVA doesn't really care if employees develop. BREEVA doesn’t have an employee volunteering program. Decisions sometimes take time to get made.

Low context warmth/low organization warmth condition

**November 24, 2018 | Current Employee**
I have been employed at BREEVA (nonprofit) for five years.

**Pros**
Great publicity.

**Cons**
BREEVA’s mission is really to make money, and it does not put employees above profitability. I know that BREEVA invests a small amount of its gross income on employees (less than other organizations). I’ve personally been prevented from taking several different training courses. BREEVA doesn’t really care if employees develop. BREEVA doesn’t have an employee volunteering program. Decisions sometimes take time to get made.
High Credibility Manipulation

Neutral Reviews 1:

**October 26, 2018 | Current Employee**

I have been working at BREEVA full-time (more than 3 years).

**Pros**

It is just off the freeway and easy to find. Always new challenges to work on. You can gain experience here.

**Cons**
It’s important to know that sometimes you have to change projects quickly. Some positions require travel. On a minor note, I would like more company swag from company meetings.

December 3, 2018 | Former Employee
I was employed at BREEVA full-time.

Pros
Energetic, fast-paced environment. BREEVA is a business consulting firm that is pretty efficiently run—we didn’t have a lot of waste, either of time or money. During my time there, I felt my manager and leadership in general were pretty competent.

Cons
The work can be require long hours, though that is a function of the job that cannot really be avoided. Currently there is some uncertainty on the company path.

November 12, 2018 | Current Employee
I joined BREEVA coming out of college and have worked here 10 years.

Pros
Interesting consulting projects. For a business consulting organization, BREEVA provides a supportive, friendly work environment. Most of my coworkers consider each other and our leaders as friends. We frequently spend time together outside of work. BREEVA structures jobs to bring coworkers together, and makes it easy to brainstorm or problem solve.

Cons
Parking could be better.

December 5, 2018 | Former Employee
I left the company 6 months ago after working for 7 years.

Pros
BREEVA is a trustworthy business consulting organization. The things that the CEO shared publicly were exactly the same goals that were pushed with employees. It’s easy
for organizations to lie about problems to potential employees, but BREEVA was honest with me from the beginning. Very flexible schedules.

**Cons**
Some of the buildings are old and can be cold.

January 4, 2019 | Current Employee
Just started working at BREEVA 6 months ago.

**Pros**
Honest, clear communication from the leadership. Not work related, but something to consider: my office overlooks a park that BREEVA volunteered to keep up for the community. Its impressive how actively BREEVA tries to keep it clean. BREEVA is absolutely invested in our community. In addition, I also enjoy my commute.

**Cons**
Cold weather.

November 24, 2018 | Current Employee
I have been employed at BREEVA (for-profit) for five years.

**Pros**
BREEVA follow a social mission, and puts its employees above profitability. I know that BREEVA invests a lot of its gross income on employees (more than even other organizations). I've personally taken several different training courses. BREEVA wants employees to develop. BREEVA has a great employee volunteering program. Great publicity.

**Cons**
Decisions sometimes take time to get made.
Low Credibility Manipulation
APPENDIX F

SURVEY ITEMS

Manipulation Checks

Measure for Industry Warmth:
Please rate the extent to which you agree the characteristics listed below apply to (forprofit/nonprofit) organizations in general (1=Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree):

1. Tolerant
2. Warm
3. Good Natured
4. Cheerful
5. Friendly
6. Respectable
7. Honorable
8. Decent
9. Moral
10. Ethical

Industry Manipulation Check:
1. Please indicate what industry is BREEVA in (according to the diagram above)? (1=forprofit, 2=nonprofit, 3= Not sure).

Competence:
Please rate the extent to which you agree the characteristics listed below apply to business consulting organizations in general (1=Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree):

1. Secure
2. Intelligent
3. Reliable
4. Competitive
5. Competent
6. Important
7. Influential
8. Powerful
Organizational Attraction:
Please answer the following questions about your perceptions of BREEVA (1=Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree):
1. For me, Breeva would be a good place to work.
2. I would not be interested in BREEVA except as a last resort.
3. BREEVA is attractive to me as a place for employment.
4. I am interested in learning more about BREEVA.
5. A job at BREEVA is very appealing to me.

Intent to Apply:
Please answer the following questions about your intentions to pursue employment at BREEVA(1=Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree):
1. I would accept a job offer from BREEVA.
2. I would make BREEVA one of my first choices as an employer.
3. If BREEVA invited me for a job interview, I would go.
4. I would exert a great deal of effort to work for BREEVA.
5. I would recommend BREEVA to a friend looking for a job.

Credibility:
Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements in regards to the information you received on the BREEVA website (1=Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree):
1. The information presented on the BREEVA website was realistic
2. The information presented on the BREEVA website seemed credible
3. The message was believable
4. I am not sure if I can trust this information
5. I am uncertain about whether this information is legitimate.
6. The message seemed to be sugar-coated. It only mentioned good things.
7. I am suspicious that this message is a scam.

Industry subtype:
Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements in regards to the information you received from BREEVA's (website/employees) (1=Strongly Disagree, 5= Strongly Agree):
1. The information shared by BREEVA's website surprised me.
2. I think BREEVA is pretty typical of business consulting organizations in general.
3. BREEVA is pretty similar to other business consulting organizations.
Belief Confidence:
Please answer the following question about BREEVA: (1=Extremely uncertain, 5=Extremely certain)
1. How certain are you about the beliefs you have about BREEVA?
   Please answer the following questions about your beliefs towards BREEVA: (1=Strongly disagree, 5=Strongly agree)
   2. In general, I know a lot about BREEVA.
   3. I feel confident about my beliefs about BREEVA.
   4. My beliefs about BREEVA are pretty clear.

Serious:
How seriously did you take this survey? (1=Not seriously at all, 5=Very seriously)