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Why Are Résumé Characteristics Influential?

Effects of Grades and Work Experience on Recruiter Inferences and Judgments

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Abstract

The current study focused on the effects of grade point average (GPA) and prior work experience as résumé characteristics on (a) recruiters' decisions to interview and (b) inferences about general mental ability (GMA) and motivation. Participants were job recruiters who routinely participate in career-day events at a large university. Recruiters were asked to rank-order four hypothetical résumés and to rate the likelihood of interviewing. Recruiters were also asked to judge each candidate's GMA and motivation. Results indicated that work experience and grades affect recruiters' judgments about the likelihood of interviewing and that the effects of work experience and grades on these judgments are partially mediated by inferences about GMA and motivation.

Why Are Résumé Characteristics Influential?

Effects of Grades and Work Experience on Recruiter Inferences and Judgments

The résumé is often the first point of contact between a job applicant and a potential employer, and, as such, it can be considered the beginning of the hiring process. Employers often accept résumés from applicants as a screening method prior to the actual interview process. Consequently, decisions are made about whom to interview for a job vacancy, thereby leading to a choice in employee selection. An interviewer or recruiter may be faced with the challenge of choosing a limited number of interviewees from among dozens of resumes (Olney, 1982); as a result, each résumé may only receive a minimal amount of attention before a decision is made regarding whether that applicant is chosen for a personal interview (Hutchinson, 1984; Rogers, 1979). For example, in Rogers' (1979) study of human resource employees, two-thirds of respondents reported that the average amount of time they spent reading a résumé was one minute or less. Thus, it appears that the information contained in a résumé must be relatively persuasive in order to merit an invitation to interview. Because decisions to interview will ultimately affect selection decisions, it is important to understand what components of a résumé influence recruiters' decisions to interview, as well as why these résumé attributes are important.

Several researchers and authors of "how-to" books on job search have concluded that good résumés must include personal information such as name, address, and telephone number, plus an applicant's goals, education, and work experience (Feild & Holley, 1976; Hutchinson, 1984; Olney, 1982; Stephens, Watt, & Hobbs, 1979). Although much research has focused on description and preference of résumé content, résumés appear to be especially important because the information within them, specifically grade point average (GPA) and work experience, reflect variables that are related to ability (Brown & Campion, 1994; Gardner, Kozloski, & Hults, 1991; Hakel, Dobmeyer, & Dunnette, 1970; Posner, 1981; Taylor, & Snizek, 1984; Tschirgi, 1973) and motivation (Baird, 1985, as cited in Roth et al., 1996), which in turn, are related to job performance (Baird, 1985, as cited in Roth et al., 1996; Hunter & Hunter, 1984;

Roth, BeVier, Switzer, & Schippmann, 1996; Schmidt, Ones, & Hunter, 1992).

Whereas considerable previous research has examined *which* résumé characteristics are most influential in résumé decisions, I was unable to locate any published research that speaks to *why* such characteristics are important. The current study not only attempts to examine whether grade point average and work experience indeed affect job recruiters' judgments on the likelihood of interviewing applicants, but more importantly tries to offer a clearer understanding as to why GPA and work experience are so influential. Faced with the decision of which applicant will be most suitable for a certain job position, a recruiter will likely attempt to make distinctions between applicants by inferring such traits as ability and motivation from résumé characteristics. Therefore, I expect that not only will GPA and work experience have a direct effect on judgments of likelihood of interviewing, but also that the effects of GPA and work experience on judgments will be partially mediated by inferences about general mental ability and motivation (refer to Figure 1). Ideally, results of this study will help to provide a clearer understanding about what inferences are made by job recruiters about GPA and work experience when considering which applicant résumés best suit their needs.

The purposes of the current study are 1) to examine how GPA and work experience combine to influence recruiters' decisions and 2) to understand the inferences made by recruiters during the decision process. Below, I discuss related research on the relations among grades, experience, and important work-related variables that led to the development of the current study's hypotheses.

Grade Point Average

Recruiters are likely justified in considering job applicants' GPA as an influential factor in decisions to interview because GPA has been found to be related to several job-relevant outcome variables. Colarelli, Dean, and Konstans (1987) found GPA to be significantly correlated with performance and promotability. Furthermore, Day and Silverman (1989) discovered a significant relationship between GPA and several dimensions of performance, such

as potential for success and technical ability. GPA has also been found to be positively correlated with overall job performance evaluations (Roth et al., 1996; Saks & Waldman, 1998).

Numerous empirical studies have examined the importance of GPA as a résumé characteristic in the context of evaluating résumés for job suitability. Oliphant and Alexander (1982) found that résumés with high GPA were rated highest in the selection process while résumés that did not include GPA at all were rated lowest. Indeed, most studies have found that a higher GPA is preferred over an average or low GPA and that recruiters prefer the presence of GPA on a résumé as opposed to not having that information at all (Dipboye et al., 1975; Muchinsky & Harris, 1977; Thoms et al., 1999). It appears, therefore, that GPA is an important applicant qualification and that it apparently is perceived by recruiters to have some predictive value for future job performance.

Hypothesis 1: GPA will affect recruiters' reported likelihood to interview. Thus, a résumé reflecting a high GPA will be rated as more likely to be chosen for an interview than will a résumé with a low GPA.

Grade point average also appears to be suggestive of general mental ability and motivation (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Schmidt et al., 1992). Several meta-analyses have examined the relation between grades and job-relevant outcome variables. Hunter and Hunter (1984) suggested that motivational aspects of achieving high college grades may be predictive of motivation in management. An applicant with a high GPA has apparently worked hard on his/her coursework and maintained a high GPA throughout college. Hunter and Hunter (1984) suggested that an applicant with a high GPA has likely demonstrated ability, motivation, and a need for achievement within the context of academics and will more than likely continue to demonstrate those same traits within the context of job performance. In a more recent meta-analysis specifically examining the relationship between grades and salary, Roth and Clark (1997) suggested that grades are affected by cognitive ability and conscientiousness. Based on the findings of these studies and suggestions, recruiters may make inferences about general

mental ability and motivation from GPA.

Hypothesis 2: GPA will affect recruiter inferences about ability. Hypothetical applicants with high GPA will be rated as having higher ability than applicants with low GPA.

Hypothesis 3: GPA will affect recruiter inferences about motivation. Hypothetical applicants with high GPA will be rated as having higher motivation than applicants with low GPA.

Hypothesis 4: The effects of GPA on recruiters' reported likelihood to interview will be partially mediated by inferences about general mental ability and motivation.

Work Experience

Results of prior research have indicated a positive correlation between work experience and job-related outcomes, such as job knowledge and performance (Kolz, McFarland, & Silverman, 1998; McDaniel, Schmidt, & Hunter, 1988). In the context of résumé screening, work experience has been found to contribute significantly to a measure of overall suitability (Hakel et al., 1970). Relevant work experience affects recruiters' subjective impressions of applicants, which in turn positively affects hiring decisions (Wade & Kinicki, 1997). Some researchers have found that relevant work experience was rated more positively by respondents than was irrelevant work experience (Hakel et al., 1970; Knouse, 1994; Renwick & Tosi, 1978).

Prior research has also shown that work experience reflecting more challenging tasks are more likely to have greater effects on subsequent work experiences and outcomes (e.g., learning, motivation, and performance) than work experience that reflects less challenging tasks (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). Quiñones, Ford, and Teachout (1995) developed a conceptual model of work experience from a meta-analysis in which studies were categorized by specific levels of work experience (e.g., time spent in a particular job, amount of times a task was performed, types of jobs, etc.). Results of their study indicated a positive relationship between work experience and job performance, regardless of which measure was used. The strongest relationships found were between amount of experience and job performance and between task level (i.e., task

complexity) and job performance. It seems reasonable to expect that applicants who describe their work experience in terms of performing tasks of high complexity would be more likely to be chosen for interviews than would applicants describing low task complexity in work experience.

Hypothesis 5: Work experience will effect recruiters' decisions on the likelihood to interview. Thus, an applicant whose résumé contains work experience of high task complexity will be rated as more likely to be chosen for an interview than will an applicant whose résumé reflects low task complexity.

Work experience plays an important role in recruiters' decisions to interview by reflecting variables that are related to ability and motivation, and in turn having a positive influence on hiring decisions (Hough, 1984; Rasmussen, 1984). Prior work experience offers recruiters a glimpse into an applicant's previous job duties, which reflect task complexity of varying degrees. Thus, inferences may be made about an applicant's ability and motivation.

Following the Quiñones, et al. (1995) model of work experience, Tesluk and Jacobs (1998) extended the conceptualization of work experience and theorized that work experience leads to the development of knowledge, skills, motivation, attitudes, and values and that these characteristics play a role in job performance and other outcomes that are valued by organizations.

Hypothesis 6: Work experience will affect recruiter inferences about ability.

Hypothetical applicants with work experience reflecting high task complexity will be rated as having higher ability than applicants with work experience reflecting low task complexity.

Hypothesis 7: Work experience will affect recruiter inferences about motivation.

Hypothetical applicants with work experience reflecting high task complexity will be rated as having higher motivation than applicants with work experience reflecting low task complexity.

Hypothesis 8: The effects of work experience on recruiter judgments on the likelihood of interviewing will be partially mediated by inferences about general mental ability and motivation.

Pilot Studies

Method

Participants. For these pilot studies, a total of 186 college students at a large, southern university volunteered their time in exchange for extra credit. Eighty-four percent of participants were female, and the average age of all students was 20.5 years.

Materials and Procedures. The purpose of the initial pilot study was to determine whether or not the work experience created on the hypothetical résumés would be viewed as having either high task complexity or low task complexity. In pilot study 1, materials included a consent form, instructions, one résumé, a demographic questionnaire, and a questionnaire asking for comments about the experiment itself (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E, and F). A between-subjects design was utilized for this first pilot study. Therefore, each participant only reviewed a résumé representing either high task complexity or low task complexity. Participants were first instructed to rate the level of task complexity described within work experience on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = *low task complexity*; 5 = *high task complexity*). Then participants were instructed to rate five items on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*; see Appendices C and D). A total of 98 students participated in this phase of the pilot studies. Results indicated that participants did perceive the task complexity to be differentially complex. In a test of between-subjects effects on the complexity ratings, differences between low task complexity ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .85$) and high task complexity ($M = 3.15$, $SD = .93$) were shown to be significant, $F(1, 92)$

= 10.43, $p < .05$. However, effects on 3 out of the 5 items rated were not significant and it was apparent that manipulations were not strong enough.

A second study was conducted, again with a between-subjects design, also to determine whether or not participants would be able to distinguish between the two types of work experience. Work experience was revised such that a more obvious distinction could be made between work experience of high task complexity and work experience of low task complexity. All other information on the résumés and throughout the entire survey remained unchanged (see Appendices A, B, E, F, K, and N). (Although the intent of the main study was to manipulate both GPA and work experience, GPA was kept constant in the first two pilot studies.) Results showed that 82 new participants did indeed perceive the two types of work experience to be significantly different from each other. Résumés representing work experience with high task complexity ($M = 3.21$, $SD = .87$) and résumés representing work experience with low task complexity ($M = 1.98$, $SD = .70$), $F(1, 80) = 50.30$, $p < .05$ were shown to be significantly different when viewed separately in this between-subjects design. In addition, the effects on all 5 items were also shown to be significant.

Main Study

Method

Participants. Recruiters from a variety of business organizations around the country typically visit college universities to interview job-seeking students at special career-day events. For this study, a mailing list of organizations that usually recruit undergraduate business students for entry-level positions was obtained from Louisiana State University, Career Services. Survey packets were mailed to 430 organizations throughout the United States; 102 completed surveys were returned at a rate of approximately 23 percent. A variety of businesses were reported, with the majority in financial services (18%), CPA/accounting firms (11%), retail (11%), software

development/consulting (8%), and construction (7%). Forty percent of participants reported upper- and middle-level management as their current position, 29% work in human resources as managers, analysts, and directors, and 21% were recruiters. Positions for which participants typically recruited included production, sales, clerical, technical, entry-level professional, customer service, engineering, auditing, and upper management. Fifty-two percent of respondents were male, 44% were female, and the mean age was 38.

Materials and Procedures. Each participant received a packet in the mail containing a letter of introduction, instructions, four résumés that included survey items measuring inferences, a second survey on which résumés were rank ordered, a demographic questionnaire, and a postage-paid return envelope (see Appendices G, H, I, J, K, L, M, and N). Instructions explained exactly what participants were being asked to do, and included a description of a hypothetical entry-level manager trainee position (adapted from Thoms et al., 1999) for which applicants were to be screened. Participants first rated each résumé on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being “highly unlikely to interview” and 5 being “highly likely to interview.” Participants then rated items, at the bottom of each résumé, designed to measure inferences about ability, motivation, and interpersonal skills (adapted from Greguras, 1998). Next, participants rank ordered the set of résumés from 1 to 4, with 1 being first choice for an interview and 4 being last choice for an interview. Lastly, participants completed a demographic questionnaire.

Experimental résumés were constructed so that the only obvious differences among them were the variables of interest (i.e., GPA and work experience) in this study. To control for order effects, all other non-relevant information was counterbalanced among résumés, as was the order in which they were presented to each participant. Each résumé contained the applicant’s name (gender was controlled for by using only initials for first and middle names), address, a general objective statement, educational background (i.e., all majored in business administration and overall GPA was either 3.58 or 2.87), and prior work experience. Names of organizations were also hypothetical, created specifically for this study, and type of organization was comparable

among résumés. Types of job duties were varied, but all work experience was relevant to the hypothetical job position and each applicant currently worked at one job and had two previous jobs. No other personal information about the applicant was included.

Results

To test Hypotheses 1 and 5, that both GPA and work experience, respectively, affect recruiters' judgments on the likelihood of interviewing, a regression analysis was run with grades and work experience as the independent variables and likelihood of interviewing as the dependent variable. Both grades ($\beta = .28, t = 7.80, p < .05$) and work experience ($\beta = .63, t = 17.37, p < .05$) affected recruiters' judgments on the likelihood of interviewing applicants.

To test Hypotheses 2 and 6, that both GPA and work experience, respectively, affect recruiters' inferences about cognitive ability, a regression analysis was run with grades and work experience as the independent variables and cognitive ability as the dependent variable. Results showed that both hypotheses were supported, that grades ($\beta = .29, t = 7.09, p < .05$) and work experience ($\beta = .49, t = 11.80, p < .05$) appear to affect recruiters' inferences about applicants' cognitive ability.

To test Hypotheses 3 and 7, that GPA and work experience, respectively, affect recruiters' inferences about motivation, a regression analysis was run with grades and work experience as the independent variables and motivation as the dependent variable. Results showed that both hypotheses were supported, that grades ($\beta = .20, t = 5.09, p < .05$) and work experience ($\beta = .57, t = 14.52, p < .05$) appear to affect recruiters' inferences about applicants' motivation.

In testing the first part of Hypothesis 4, that the effects of GPA on recruiters' judgments on the likelihood of interviewing are partially mediated by inferences about general mental

ability, the three regression equations stipulated in Baron and Kenny's (1986) guidelines for detecting mediator variables were used. In the first equation, cognitive ability was regressed on GPA and the variance accounted for was statistically significant, $F(1, 401) = 37.72$, $\beta = .29$, $p < .05$. In the second equation, likelihood of interviewing was regressed on GPA and again the variance accounted for was statistically significant, $F(1, 391) = 35.61$, $\beta = .29$, $p < .05$. In the third equation, the likelihood of interviewing was regressed on both grades and cognitive ability. Consistent with the guidelines set forth by Baron and Kenny, inferences about cognitive ability affected the dependent variable, likelihood of interviewing, $\beta = .64$, $p < .05$. The third equation showed a significant decrease in the effect of grades, $\beta = .10$, $p < .05$, relative to the β -weight in the second equation, when the mediator, cognitive ability, was present. Thus, cognitive ability mediates the effects of grades on likelihood of interviewing. Because the effects of grades remain significant in the third equation, there is evidence for partial mediation.

Regression analyses were run in the same manner, as described above, to test the remainder of Hypothesis 4, that the effects of GPA on recruiter decisions on the likelihood of interviewing are partially mediated by inferences about motivation. In the first equation, motivation was regressed on GPA and the variance accounted for was statistically significant, $F(1, 404) = 17.02$, $\beta = .20$, $p < .05$. In the second equation likelihood of interviewing was regressed on GPA and again the variance accounted for was statistically significant, $F(1, 391) = 35.61$, $\beta = .29$, $p < .05$. In the third equation, the likelihood of interviewing was regressed on both grades and motivation. Results showed that inferences about motivation, $\beta = .63$, $p < .05$ affected the dependent variable, likelihood of interviewing. The third equation showed a significant decrease in the effect of grades, $\beta = .16$, relative to the second equation, when the

mediator, motivation, was present. Thus, motivation mediates the effects of grades on likelihood of interviewing, but because the effects of grades remain significant, there is partial mediation.

Regression analyses were used in the same manner as above in testing Hypothesis 8. Result showed that the effects of work experience on recruiters' judgments on the likelihood of interviewing are partially mediated by inferences about general mental ability and motivation. Refer to Table 1 for results of regression analyses used to test Hypotheses 4 and 8.

In addition to testing Hypotheses 1 through 8, a regression analysis was run to determine if recruiters had made any inferences concerning applicants' perceived interpersonal skills. In the analysis, grades and work experience were the independent variables and interpersonal skills was the dependent variable. Results showed that work experience ($\beta = .53, t = 12.62, p < .05$) did appear to affect recruiters' inferences about interpersonal skills, but that grades ($\beta = .08, t = 1.82, p > .05$) did not.

Discussion

This study examined the effects of GPA and work experience, as presented on hypothetical résumés, on recruiters' judgments on the likelihood of interviewing applicants. It was hypothesized that both work experience and grades would effect recruiters' judgments and that those judgments would be mediated by inferences about general mental ability and motivation. Results supported all hypotheses, that there was a direct effect of GPA and work experience on recruiters' judgments on the likelihood of interviewing, and that those judgments were partially mediated by inferences about cognitive ability and motivation. Prior research found that the presence of GPA on a résumé was preferred over its absence (Dipboye et al., 1975; Muchinsky & Harris, 1977; Thoms et al., 1999), and that high GPAs were preferred over low GPAs (Oliphant & Alexander, 1982). Also, both GPA and work experience were rated by

participants as important applicant qualifications (Hakel et al., 1970; Knouse, 1994; Renwick & Tosi, 1978). Thus, with regards to the significance of GPA in prior studies, it seems that the current study has produced consistent findings. GPA was found to directly influence recruiters' judgments of likelihood to interview, and was also partially mediated by recruiters' inferences about cognitive ability and motivation.

Concerning work experience, results also appear to be consistent with the findings of prior research. Work experience had a greater effect on judgments than GPA when both independent variables were regressed on the likelihood of interviewing. This finding may indicate that although GPA does have a significant effect on decisions to interview, work experience may weigh more heavily in that decision process. In comparison to GPA, work experience is a considerably more complex variable and this study did not attempt to cover the depths of its complexity. The current study focused on qualitative components of work experience (i.e., types of experiences that require high and low levels of responsibility) rather than on quantitative components such as job tenure or number of tasks performed (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). With respect to inferences about motivation, prior research has found that an individual's work motivation can be influenced by experiences in certain aspects of the immediate job and by the larger work environment (Waldman & Avolio, 1993). Motivation is also promoted in challenging job situations by prompting individuals to achieve a desired level of job competency or reward outcome (McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994). It would seem to follow that if an applicant describes work tasks that are perceived as more complex than others, then that applicant may be perceived as more motivated than others. Therefore, with regards to the relationship between work experience and motivation, the results of the current study are again consistent. Applicants whose work experience described higher

task complexity were rated as having more motivation than were applicants whose work experience reflected low task complexity. Similarly, results also indicate that applicants whose work experience was considered more complex than others were also thought to have higher general mental ability than others.

In a meta-analysis by Hunter and Hunter (1984) the validity of ability and other alternative predictors of job performance were examined. For various predictors of job performance for entry-level hiring, ability was found to be the best predictor, with a mean validity of .53 when compared with alternative predictors such as experience (.18), academic achievement (.11), and education (.10). In the same meta-analysis, an examination of studies measuring training and experience found an average validity of .13 for ratings of traditional training, experience, and education, while a mean validity of .49 was found on behavioral consistency measures, which assessed quality of work performance in past work experience. In addition, a validity of .17, found for academic achievement based on grades, was much higher than zero validity for amount of education, which suggested that grades were more highly correlated with cognitive ability than amount of education (Hunter & Hunter, 1984). These findings seem to be consistent with the results of the current study, suggesting that grades, work experience, and ability are valid predictors of future job performance, and thus may influence recruiters' judgments on likelihood of interviewing.

Although it was not hypothesized, results of another regression analysis indicated that recruiters also made inferences about applicants' interpersonal skills based on work experience. In this analysis, grades did not affect recruiters' inferences about interpersonal skills, but there were significant effects of work experience on interpersonal skills. Thus, recruiters also appeared to make inferences about applicants' interpersonal skills based on work experience.

This finding suggests that other applicant qualities (i.e., applicant dependability, flexibility, etc.) may also be inferred by recruiters in the process of judging résumés, and may thus affect recruiters' decisions of likelihood of interviewing.

From a theoretical perspective, the results of the current study appear to be significant. Findings imply that information contained within a résumé is not simply taken at face value by recruiters. Rather, recruiters appear to make inferences about an applicant's general mental ability and motivation based on that information. By gaining information through research about internal thought processes involved in decision-making, we can better understand how decisions are made and what factors influence those decisions.

Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations related to the findings in the current study. Results may not generalize to job vacancies other than entry-level manager trainee positions, the position for which recruiters in this study were asked to consider, nor would it necessarily generalize to undergraduate majors other than those in business administration.

The findings in the current study could prompt future research in several areas. Recruiters' inferences about ability and motivation could be measured in greater depth by using two or more different descriptions of high task complexity combined with two or more different descriptions of low task complexity in a within-subjects design. Also, interests and activities could be added to the résumé, including membership in clubs, volunteer work, and community service. Because it has been established by a majority of previous researchers that GPA is significantly related to other variables, future research would likely benefit most by examining the many aspects of work experience. As there are many complex components involved in work experience, several variables could be manipulated in studies utilizing a résumé format similar to

the ones used in this study. Varying levels of specificity could be examined, as outlined in the Quiñones et al. (1995) study, such as number of organizations, type of organization, number of jobs, job complexity, and time spent on a task. In addition, work experience could be manipulated such that it increases in complexity from the first job description to the current job description listed on the résumé. Also, the number of jobs could be increased, and the nature of the businesses could be varied on the résumé. It would seem that more complex work experience would result in more complex results concerning inferences about applicants' cognitive ability and motivation. In general, more complex and realistic résumés could provide more valuable feedback from recruiters.

On a different note, several studies have addressed the issue of recruiter training within organizations (Kinicki et al., 1990; Posner, 1981; Tschirgi, 1973). Recruiters' judgments may also depend, to a certain degree, on whether or not they have been trained by their organization and whether or not they are aware of the company's goals in the recruiting process. The effects of prior training on recruiters' inferences and judgments could also be examined in future studies.

In conclusion, the results of this study seem consistent with prior studies in which variables such as GPA, work experience, ability, and motivation were either manipulated or measured. Of theoretical note, this study provided some insight into internal processes involved in recruiters' judgments on information contained within résumés and further enhanced our understanding about factors that seem to influence judgments in general.

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Appendix A

Evaluating Résumés

I am soliciting your participation in a research study. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and all responses will be anonymous and confidential. Should you agree to participate, the total time for completion will be approximately 20 minutes. You will receive one extra credit point after you have completed the survey.

This is a pilot study; data gathered in this study will be used only for research purposes. The purpose of this research is to examine individuals' perceptions about information included in résumés. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact Donna G. Rockford by phone at 751-0414 or by email: drockfo@lsu.edu. You may also contact Jerel E. Slaughter, Ph.D., at Louisiana State University, Department of Psychology, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, or by phone at 578-9032, or by email: jslau@lsu.edu. If you have questions concerning the IRB status of this study, you may contact Robert Mathews, Ph.D., Chairman, Institutional Review Board by phone at 578-4114, or by email: psmath@unix1.sncc.lsu.edu.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study; your help is greatly appreciated.

Please sign below to indicate your informed consent to participate in this study. Detach this sheet from the remainder of the survey so that your responses will remain anonymous (but *do* turn in the *entire* survey). Also, please write your name legibly so that I can allocate your extra credit appropriately.

Name (please print legibly): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Instructions for Pilot Studies

The purpose of this research is to examine individuals' perceptions about information included in résumés. Please read the following hypothetical résumé carefully.

After you have read the résumé, please **unfold** the bottom of the page where you are asked to rate items based on information shown in the résumé, and to rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the statements. You will then be asked to provide some general background information on the last page. When you have finished these tasks, please remain seated for further instructions.

Appendix C

High Task Complexity

C. F. Smith

2453 Daffodil Lane, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70817, (225) 274-1234

Objective: To gain employment in entry-level management trainee position.

Education: B. A. - Business Administration
Louisiana State University
May, 2001 (3.58 GPA)

Employment:

Red River, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 2000-present

Assist office manager with such duties as preparation of monthly budget reports, distribution of reports to executive personnel, and assisting with organization and planning of annual business conference; compose and distribute inter-office correspondence; data entry.

ABC Company, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., November, 1998-June, 2000

Data entry of donations for non-profit organization; bank deposits; coordination and participation in semi-annual fund-raising activities; interaction with community leaders; general clerical duties.

Primary Services, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 1997-November, 1998

Coding and data entry of incoming supplies, accounts receivable, accounts payable; customer assistance with placing orders; general clerical duties such as filing, copying, mailing, etc.

Please rate the level of task complexity, described within work experience, in the preceeding hypothetical résumé by circling the appropriate number using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Low Task Complexity | | | | High Task Complexity |

Please rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements, regarding this résumé, by circling the appropriate response using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. This applicant has acquired valuable work experience. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This applicant appears to have handled difficult tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. This applicant should not be given complex tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This applicant has performed challenging tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. This applicant can be depended upon to handle important tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix D

Low Task Complexity

M. L. Jones**5786 Iris Avenue, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70817, (225) 359-0045**

Objective: To gain employment in entry-level management trainee position.

Education: B. A. - Business Administration
Louisiana State University
May, 2001 (3.58 GPA)

Employment:

Green Bayou, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 2000-present

Copying and assembling training packets; filing; sorting and distribution of incoming mail; answering 15-line switchboard; other general clerical duties.

ICS Company, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., November, 1998-June, 2000

Data entry; mail distribution to office employees; answer phones; scheduling appointments for office personnel; general clerical duties.

Citizens Services, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 1997-November, 1998

General clerical duties such as filing, data entry, making copies, answering phones, etc.; runner to other offices in the city and surrounding communities.

Please rate the level of task complexity, described within work experience, in the preceeding hypothetical résumé by circling the appropriate number using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|---|----------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Low Task Complexity | | | | High Task Complexity |

Please rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements, regarding this résumé, by circling the appropriate response using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. This applicant has acquired valuable work experience. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This applicant appears to have handled difficult tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. This applicant should not be given complex tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This applicant has performed challenging tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. This applicant can be depended upon to handle important tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix E

Demographic Information

Please answer the following items:

1. Are you currently employed? _____yes _____no

If you are currently employed, continue to answer the following questions about your current job. If you are not currently employed, but have worked in the past, please answer the following questions based on previous employment:

2. How many companies have you worked for? _____

3. Did you submit a résumé to your employer(s) in order to apply for the job(s)? ____yes ____no

4. If you are currently employed, how long have you been with this employer?

_____years _____months

5. If you are not currently employed, how much work experience do you have from previous jobs? _____years _____months

6. What is/was the type of organization/nature of the business? _____

7. What is/was your current position within the organization? _____

8. What is your GPA? _____

9. What is your age? _____

10. What is your gender (M or F)? _____

11. If you have any type of clerical/office experience, please describe in detail the tasks that you performed. _____

Appendix F

Additional Information

Concerning your evaluation of the previous résumé, please answer the following questions as thoroughly as possible:

1. Did you find this experiment interesting? Why or why not? _____

2. Was the information presented on the résumé realistic? If so, how? If not, why? (Consider specific information as well as format and appearance) _____

3. Were any parts of the experiment confusing? (consider instructions, résumé, background information) If so, exactly which parts? _____

4. If you were the experimenter, would you change any part of the experiment? If so, describe exactly what change(s) you would make. _____

5. Your other comments are welcome here: _____

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this study; I greatly appreciate your help.

Appendix G

Cover Letter for Main Study

January 4, 2002

Ms. Judy Petitto
DANKA OFFICE IMAGING
980 Hammond Drive, Suite 300
Atlanta, GA 30328

Dear Ms. Petitto:

We are conducting a research study and are writing to you in hopes that you can provide us with some assistance. Your name has been selected from among a list of job recruiters who typically participate in career-day events on campus. The list was obtained from Louisiana State University Career Services for use in this study. The purpose of this research is to examine recruiters' perceptions about information included in résumés. You will be reviewing four hypothetical résumés, then rating their suitability to interview for a specific job, and making decisions about the applicants based on the information contained within the résumés.

Although your participation is entirely voluntary, it is extremely important for the success of this study and will be greatly appreciated. Should you agree to participate, the total time for completion will be approximately 20 minutes. The information you provide will serve as valuable data from which we will attempt to gain a better understanding about the résumé screening process. All information that you provide will be kept confidential; however, we will maintain a database containing your name and address so respondents may receive feedback in the form of a brief summary of the results. Your survey packet is coded with a number that corresponds to your name and address in this database; once the study is completed, the database will be destroyed.

Data gathered in this study will be used only for research purposes. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study, you may contact Donna G. Rockford, by phone at 225-751-0414 or by email: drockfo@lsu.edu. You may also contact Jerel E. Slaughter, Ph.D., at Louisiana State University, Department of Psychology, Baton Rouge, LA 70803, or by phone at 225-578-9032, or by email: jslau@lsu.edu. If you have questions concerning the Institutional Review Board (IRB) status of this study, you may contact Robert Mathews, Ph.D., Chairman, Institutional Review Board by phone at 225-578-4114, or by email: psmath@lsu.edu.

You may detach and keep this cover letter for your reference; please return the remainder of the survey in the enclosed self-addressed, postage-paid envelope as soon as possible. Your participation in this study is important; your time and assistance are greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Donna G. Rockford

Jerel E. Slaughter, Ph.D.

Appendix H

Instructions for Main Study

Attached are four résumés for hypothetical job applicants. You will be screening these résumés in order to judge them for suitability for an entry-level management trainee position. The job position requires rotation among various departments within your organization and duties that include team project assignments in a variety of areas, analyzing and reporting data, performing basic management duties such as assigning workers to specific tasks, and interacting with other businesses in the community. Qualifications for the job include a bachelor's degree in business, strong communication skills, ability to use the latest computer software, ability to work on a team, and self-motivation.

After reading each résumé, please complete the rating and survey items presented at the bottom of each, which pertain only to that résumé. When you have read and answered items for all four résumés, please rank order the résumés on the following page according to the instructions at the top of that form. Your last task is to complete the demographic questionnaire at the end of the packet. When you have completed the survey, please fold and mail in the enclosed self-addressed, postage-paid envelope.

Your participation in this study is important; your time and assistance are greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Appendix I

Rank Order Résumés

Please rank order the four résumés you have just read by placing either number 1, 2, 3, or 4 adjacent to the applicant's name shown below. Number 1 should represent your first choice for an interview, number 2 your second choice, number 3 your third choice, and number 4 your last choice.

C. F. Smith _____

M. L. Jones _____

S. A. Thomas _____

T. B. Allen _____

Appendix J

Demographic Information for Main Study

Please answer the following items.

1. How long have you been with your current employer? _____ years _____ months
2. Regarding your current employer, what is the nature of the business? _____

3. What is your current position within the organization? _____

4. How much experience do you have screening résumés? _____ years _____ months
5. What is the average number of résumés you screen per month? _____
6. Do you typically recruit individuals for management-trainee positions? _____
7. If you typically recruit individuals for other positions, what are those positions? _____

8. What type of work experience did you acquire before you graduated from college? _____

9. What was your GPA? _____
10. What is your gender (M or F)? _____
11. What is your age? _____
12. Your comments are welcome here. _____

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this study; your help is greatly appreciated.

Appendix K

High GPA-High Work Experience

C. F. Smith**2453 Daffodil Lane, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70817, (225) 274-1234**

Objective: To gain employment in an entry-level management trainee position.

Education: B. S. - Business Administration
Louisiana State University
May, 2001 (3.58 GPA)Employment: **Red River, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 2000-present**

Assisted office manager with such duties as preparation and distribution of monthly reports to executive personnel; assisted with organization and planning of annual business conference, including designing presentations on Power Point and setting up multi-media equipment; coordinated schedules and reservations for supervisors' business trips; composed and distributed inter-office correspondence; received training for frequent use of Excel, Power Point, and Word 2000 software.

ABC Company, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., November, 1998-June, 2000

Assisted program coordinator with semi-annual fund-raising activities, including interacting with community leaders; general clerical duties such as copying, filing, answering phones, and scheduling meetings and appointments for supervisors.

Primary Services, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 1997-November, 1998

Coding and data entry of purchase orders and invoices; posted daily accounts receivable and accounts payable activity; customer assistance with placing orders; utilized problem-solving skills; general clerical duties such as filing, copying, mailing, faxing, and occasional delivering; received training for daily use of Lotus 1-2-3, Peachtree, and Word Perfect 5.0 computer programs.

Please rate the extent to which you believe this applicant is likely to be interviewed by circling the appropriate number using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Highly Unlikely To | | | | Highly Likely To |
| Interview | | | | Interview |

Please rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements, for this résumé, by circling the appropriate response using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. This applicant is intelligent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This applicant probably does not perform well on cognitively challenging tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. This applicant can likely mentally process information quickly and easily. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This applicant is motivated to perform his or her job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. This applicant is likely to work harder than most. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. This applicant is likely to require minimal prompting to perform a task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. This applicant is likely to perform well in socially interactive situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. This applicant is likely to possess valuable interpersonal skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. This applicant can likely communicate well with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix L

Low GPA-Low Work Experience

M. L. Jones

5786 Iris Avenue, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70817, (225) 359-0045

Objective: To gain employment in an entry-level management trainee position.

Education: B. S. - Business Administration
Louisiana State University
May, 2001 (2.87 GPA)

Employment: **Green Bayou, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 2000-present**
Receptionist duties such as forwarding incoming phone calls to office personnel and occasional faxing for supervisors; sorting and distributing mail; copying and distributing inter-office memos.

ICS Company, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., November, 1998-June, 2000
General clerical duties including light typing, answering phones, filing, copying documents for office manager, and distributing mail to office employees.

Citizens Services, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 1997-November, 1998
Clerical duties such as filing, making copies, answering phones, etc.; frequently running errands and making deliveries and pickups to other local offices.

Please rate the extent to which you believe this applicant is likely to be interviewed by circling the appropriate number using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Highly Unlikely To Interview | | | | Highly Likely To Interview |

Please rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements, for this résumé, by circling the appropriate response using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. This applicant is intelligent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This applicant probably does not perform well on cognitively challenging tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. This applicant can likely mentally process information quickly and easily. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This applicant is motivated to perform his or her job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. This applicant is likely to work harder than most. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. This applicant is likely to require minimal prompting to perform a task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. This applicant is likely to perform well in socially interactive situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. This applicant is likely to possess valuable interpersonal skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. This applicant can likely communicate well with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix M

Low GPA-High Work Experience

S. A. Thomas**3557 Garden Court, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70817, (225) 665-1234**

Objective: To gain employment in an entry-level management trainee position.

Education: B. S. - Business Administration
Louisiana State University
May, 2001 (2.87 GPA)Employment: **White Streams, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 2000-present**
Assisted office manager with such duties as preparation and distribution of monthly reports to executive personnel; assisted with organization and planning of annual business conference, including designing presentations on Power Point and setting up multi-media equipment; coordinated schedules and reservations for supervisors' business trips; composed and distributed inter-office correspondence; received training for frequent use of Excel, Power Point, and Word 2000 software.**MPZ Company, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., November, 1998-June, 2000**

Assisted program coordinator with semi-annual fund-raising activities, including interacting with community leaders; general clerical duties such as copying, filing, answering phones, and scheduling meetings and appointments for supervisors.

People Services, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 1997-November, 1998

Coding and data entry of purchase orders and invoices; posted daily accounts receivable and accounts payable activity; customer assistance with placing orders; utilized problem-solving skills; general clerical duties such as filing, copying, mailing, faxing, and occasional delivering; received training for daily use of Lotus 1-2-3, Peachtree, and Word Perfect 5.0 computer programs.

Please rate the extent to which you believe this applicant is likely to be interviewed by circling the appropriate number using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Highly Unlikely To | | | | Highly Likely To |
| Interview | | | | Interview |

Please rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements, for this résumé, by circling the appropriate response using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. This applicant is intelligent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This applicant probably does not perform well on cognitively challenging tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. This applicant can likely mentally process information quickly and easily. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This applicant is motivated to perform his or her job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. This applicant is likely to work harder than most. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. This applicant is likely to require minimal prompting to perform a task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. This applicant is likely to perform well in socially interactive situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. This applicant is likely to possess valuable interpersonal skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. This applicant can likely communicate well with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Appendix N

High GPA-Low Work Experience

T. B. Allen**1194 Magnolia Drive, Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70817, (225) 775-9118**

Objective: To gain employment in an entry-level management trainee position.

Education: B. S. - Business Administration
Louisiana State University
May, 2001 (3.58 GPA)Employment: **Blue Lakes, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 2000-present**
Receptionist duties such as forwarding incoming phone calls to office personnel and occasional faxing for supervisors; sorting and distributing mail; copying and distributing inter-office memos.**RST Company, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., November, 1998-June, 2000**
General clerical duties including light typing, answering phones, filing, copying documents for office manager, and distributing mail to office employees.**Prime Services, Inc., Baton Rouge, La., June, 1997-November, 1998**
Clerical duties such as filing, making copies, answering phones, etc.; frequently running errands and making deliveries and pickups to other local offices.

Please rate the extent to which you believe this applicant is likely to be interviewed by circling the appropriate number using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|---|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Highly Unlikely To | | | | Highly Likely To |
| Interview | | | | Interview |

Please rate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements, for this résumé, by circling the appropriate response using the following scale:

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. This applicant is intelligent. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. This applicant probably does not perform well on cognitively challenging tasks. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. This applicant can likely mentally process information quickly and easily. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. This applicant is motivated to perform his or her job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. This applicant is likely to work harder than most. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. This applicant is likely to require minimal prompting to perform a task. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. This applicant is likely to perform well in socially interactive situations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. This applicant is likely to possess valuable interpersonal skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. This applicant can likely communicate well with others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Table 1

Regression Analyses for Detection of Mediating Effects of Cognitive Ability and Motivation on the Relation Between GPA and Work Experience on Likelihood of Interviewing

Step 1: Effects of IV on Mediator

| Relationship | β | t | p |
|---|---------|-------|------|
| GPA \rightarrow Cognitive Ability | .29 | 6.14 | .000 |
| GPA \rightarrow Motivation | .20 | 4.13 | .000 |
| Work Experience \rightarrow Cognitive Ability | .49 | 11.15 | .000 |
| Work Experience \rightarrow Motivation | .57 | 14.09 | .000 |

Step 2: Effects of IV on DV

| Relationship | β | t | p |
|--|---------|-------|------|
| GPA \rightarrow Likelihood of Interviewing | .29 | 5.97 | .000 |
| Work Experience \rightarrow Likelihood of Interviewing | .63 | 16.23 | .000 |

Step 3: Effects of IV and Mediator on DV

| Relationship | β | t | p |
|--|---------|-------|------|
| GPA and | .10 | 2.61 | .009 |
| Cognitive Ability \rightarrow Likelihood of Interviewing | .64 | 16.30 | .000 |
| GPA and | .16 | 4.19 | .000 |
| Motivation \rightarrow Likelihood of Interviewing | .63 | 16.67 | .000 |
| Work Experience and | .40 | 10.35 | .000 |
| Cognitive Ability \rightarrow Likelihood of Interviewing | .47 | 12.34 | .000 |
| Work Experience and | .38 | 8.87 | .000 |
| Motivation \rightarrow Likelihood of Interviewing | .45 | 10.56 | .000 |

Figure Caption

Figure 1. A conceptual model of variables affecting the likelihood of interviewing

