ONLINE INFORMATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PERCEPTIONS OF APPLICANTS' ORGANIZATIONAL FIT: A TEST OF TWO MECHANISMS

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ABSTRACT

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As employers turn to online sources to supplement information about applicants obtained from applications, resumes, and other self-generated information, how may the nature of the information as well as the medium from which it was obtained affect an employer's perception of an applicant's fit? This work addresses the use of online information to reduce uncertainty about a target individual, focusing on effects in the hiring process. Two experiments are presented addressing nine theoretically-derived hypotheses and one research question. The first study tested the effects of positively or negatively valenced information on perceptions of applicant fit. The second study addressed two mechanisms (observation in multiple contexts and warranted information) by which online information can influence perceptions, specifically of perceived applicant person-job fit. Results of an experiment with 167 graduate business students presented mixed results, indicating that positive information influences perceptions of an applicant's employability more than negative. However, many of the mechanisms common in online information did not significantly influence perceptions of fit. Findings are discussed with respect to uncertainty reduction theory in general as well as with respect to practical implications for job applicants and hiring employers.

For Bones. Go Blue!

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INTRODUCTION

Coutu (2007), in a *Harvard Business Review* case study, posed a hypothetical situation in which an employer believed he had identified an ideal candidate for a position managing the company's Chinese division. However, a cursory web search revealed that during her college years, the job candidate had protested United States' businesses operating in China. Knowing that the job entailed being the spokesperson for the company's Chinese operations, how would this information influence the employer's perception about the otherwise highly qualified candidate's job-related skills and personality? The question becomes more complex considering that the questionable information about the candidate's background was not revealed during the traditional job search process (i.e., resume, interview, and references), but rather was revealed from a peripheral search of the Internet. Coutu's hypothetical situation provides an insight into the nature of the growing trend of employers to seek information about applicants and employees using the Internet.

Although Coutu's case study sets the stage for timely questions about the organizational practice and legality of using online information in employment, it is premised upon the assumption that online information about a target can influence perceptions of the target, and specifically whether the target is a good fit for a job. While empirical work has demonstrated the influence of online information about a target on perceptions of social attraction (e.g., Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006), the assumption that online information can influence perceptions salient to an employment context remains unstudied. To address this paucity in the organizational

literature, this work presents two related studies that will assess how disparate mechanisms influence the effect of online information on perceptions of a target with respect to dimensions of employability.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research has recently looked at the media and interpersonal effects of online information on perceptions about a target individual in several contexts. For example, Ellison, Henio, and Gibbs (2006) looked at how self-presentation in an online dating website was strategically manipulated to pursue relational partners. Walther, Van Der Heide, Hamel, and Shulman (2009) found that subjects' perceptions of a target individual were influenced when exposed to messages posted by third parties to the target's social network profile on perceptions of the individual. Epley and Kruger (2005) explored how channel effects may ameliorate stereotypes when communicating with a target via e-mail or telephone. Though a small sample of the growing work addressing impression formation in online communication, these studies reflect a trend of exploring the process of impression formation in interpersonal contexts—either dating or casual interaction. However, the effect of similar processes of impression formation within organizational relationships, such as an employer's perceptions of a current employee or a job applicant, has been relatively unresearched.

During the hiring process, recruiters and human resource employees seek to develop impressions of individual job applicants to make informed predictions of individuals' potential benefit to the company over their organizational tenure. The interaction between an employer and employee can represent a 30-year relationship during which time the two entities symbiotically benefit. Because of the costs associated with attracting, identifying, and hiring an

individual who will enable these mutual benefits, the hiring process represents a significant organizational investment, both of time and resources.

Conceptualizing the Hiring Process

The hiring process can be conceptualized several ways. In some respects determining what job applicant to hire is a decision-making task (Delaney & Huselid, 1996), whereby employers seek to determine which job applicant best reflects the needs of the job as determined by the position description. Alternately, the hiring of a new employee may be considered as a process seeking fairness and equity towards applicants, even going so far as to be guided by algorithms to minimize the chances of employing discriminatory hiring practices (Cronbach, Yalow, & Schaeffer, 1980).

However, a particularly effective way to conceptualize the hiring process is to consider it as an uncertainty reduction task. This is particularly appropriate as uncertainty reduction has been conceptualized as a dyadic process between unacquainted parties to reduce uncertainty about the rewards from future interaction (Berger, 1979; Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Human resource employees, motivated by the organization's need to hire individuals with both the skills and personalities to benefit the organization, seek to reduce their uncertainty about an applicant within a limited time frame to make a decision about the best individual job candidate to hire based on how well the employee perceives the applicant's knowledge, skills, abilities, and their personality will benefit future organizational processes (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2009). The process of learning about a job applicant in the hiring process can be addressed in two ways: The focus of information sought and the mechanisms of uncertainty reduction. These components will be addressed in the following sections.

Seeking Perceptions of Fit

When identifying a new organizational member, employers typically seek two types of fit: Person-Job (PJ) and Person-Organization (PO) fit (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Kristof, 1996).

Person-Job Fit

Defining PJ Fit. Person-job fit refers to the individual's ability to complete specific job tasks. PJ fit is typically considered as the congruence between an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) and the KSAs required for a particular job (Edwards, 1991). Person-job fit has been a traditional foundation of employee selection as applicants' skills and abilities are matched to the position requirements found in a job description (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999).

Assessing PJ Fit. Employers searching for information about a target's PJ fit seek information to make assessments about a candidate's work experiences, job-related abilities, and previous training (Cable & Judge, 1997; Chuang & Sackett, 2005). At its most basic level, information about prior work experiences, job skills and training, as well as scholastic and social achievements provide primary insights into applicants' KSAs, values, and motivations. In particular, information related to KSAs or other key competencies are predictive of applicants' ability to perform duties associated with the position (Eder & Harris, 1999; Posthuma, Morgenson, & Campion, 2002).

Information about a job applicant's KSAs has typically been obtained from formal application materials. For example, resumes have the applicant self-identify their training and past experiences, as well as any certifications or unique skills that relate to the position (Cole, Rubin, Feild, & Giles, 2007). For instance, data on applicants' skill sets, ability to function in a team environment, and attitudes about work may be quite relevant to candidates' fit to a position. In cases where the applicant pool is excessively large, applicant test scores or the use of software

to search for key words in resumes may be the initial basis for selecting or eliminating applicants (Chapman & Webster, 2003).

Person-Organization Fit

Defining PO Fit. Person-organization fit refers to a fit between an individual's personality, beliefs, and values and the organization's espoused culture, norms, and values (Kristof, 1996; Morley, 2007). Past research has typically conceptualized PO fit as the degree of compatibility between an organization and its employees (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Ng & Burke, 2005). PO fit has been found to correlate moderately to highly with job satisfaction (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005), organizational citizenship (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006), organizational commitment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), and reduced turnover (Arthur, Bell, Villado, & Doverspike, 2006; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006).

Assessing PO Fit. Employers searching for information about a target's PO fit may seek information to make assessments about a candidate's work ethic, personal and professional values, and personal traits and habits (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Piasentin & Chapman, 2006). By assessing the congruence between applicant and organizational values (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Posner, 1992), PO fit reflects the supplementary fit of an applicant into the organization (Sekiguchi, 2004). Measurement of perceptions of PO fit have focused on both applicants' and employers' perceptions of applicants' fit into an organization's culture and structure (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996). Further, measurement has been conducted both subjectively, by having only one party rate the perception of applicant's fit, and objectively, by having the applicant and organizational representative both complete personality profiles and then examining responses for degree of congruency (Kristof, 1996). While PO fit has been found to correlate highly with increased

organizational tenure (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), perceptions of PO fit have also been illustrated to positively influence the likelihood of being hired to a position (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Sekiguchi, 2007).

Hiring as an Uncertainty Reduction Process

An effective way to conceptualize the complexities of seeking information to assess applicant fit is to consider the hiring of new employees as an uncertainty-reduction process. Faced with unknown applicants, recruiters and human resource employees seek to obtain information about potential new hires from which to predict future performance and assimilation to the open position and to the organizational culture. As this research seeks to understand how employers learn about job applicants and how information-acquisition processes affect perceptions of fit, the following section will elaborate the theoretical process of uncertainty reduction, and further indicate how emergent uncertainty reduction strategies are being integrated into the hiring process.

Uncertainty Reduction

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Berger's uncertainty reduction theory (URT; Berger & Calabrese, 1975) posits that when strangers (such as an employer and an applicant) anticipate interaction, they engage in strategies to acquire information about the interactant to structure the initial interaction by reducing uncertainty about their communication partner and expectations of the interaction. Berger (1987) noted three strategies by which an individual may seek information about an individual: Passive, active, and interactive. Passive information seeking involves observation of a target, such as observing an intern in a work setting before hiring the individual to a full-time position. Active information seeking involves discussing a target with a second party who is familiar with the

target individual, such as calling references to assess an applicant's work ethics or job abilities, as well as modifying the target's environment to assess reactions to the novel environmental stimulus. Finally, interactive information seeking entails direct communication with the target individual, a strategy exemplified in the job interview.

A central goal of uncertainty reduction processes is to acquire information about a target individual. Indeed, numerous studies have demonstrated a negative correlation between the amount of information obtained about a target and a perceiver's uncertainty (Clatterbuck, 1979; Sunnafrank, 1986; Westerman & Tamborini, 2008). Behavioral decision theory posits that inferences may be drawn from information to construct mental schema about an individual (Asch, 1946, 1952; Einhorn & Hogarth, 1981), suggesting that information about an individual allows us to form impressions of that individual. General, broad information about a target is often weighed against stereotypes or social categories, and provides base-rate information on which to form impressions (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Exceptional or particularly vibrant information about a target typically overrides base-rate impressions of targets (Bar-Hillel, 1980). In an experiment using accounts of a stereotypical welfare recipient, subjects' impressions were significantly more negative when the information was supplemented by an additional description of the subject maintaining an affluent lifestyle, positively correlating additional information with a more nuanced impression of the target (Hamill, Wilson, & Nisbett, 1980). To reduce uncertainty in hiring, employers utilize several tools to obtain supplemental information from applicants to better-predict applicants' future behaviors and interactions should they be hired.

Reducing Uncertainty of Organizational Fit

Historically, employers have received information about applicants' KSAs and personalities through interviews and requested documentation such as resumes and applications.

Early work illustrated these traditional means of assessing an applicant's potential fit are perceived as helpful and informational in learning about the applicant (Eder & Harris, 1999; Jablin, 2001). However, particularly in competitive (either due to the position being filled or the immediate job market) hiring processes, information presented in resumes and interviews may not accurately reflect an applicant's KSAs or personality. Traditional tools in the hiring process (e.g., resumes and applications) are highly malleable and typically allow an applicant to self-disclose characteristics he perceives the employer may value. With time and desire, applicants can easily misrepresent (or explicitly lie about) themselves to present qualities they perceive would be more desired by an employer, such as specific skill sets, personal attitudes, and job experience they may not possess at the professed level. Selectively self-presented information may not allow employers to effectively reduce uncertainty about an applicant's KSAs or personality.

Wood, Schmidtke, and Decker (2007) noted that individuals may misrepresent themselves on resumes and applications to increase their chances of being hired. Findings by Weiss and Feldman (2006) similarly indicated that individuals were likely to lie during interviews to appear to conform to job requirements. Gilmore and Ferris (1989) advanced a potential motivation for applicants to exaggerate or lie on requested materials like applications and interviews: Particularly in a competitive job market, applicants attempt to present facets of themselves they perceive the employer desires, and in doing so indicate a better fit then competing applications. Though most organizations utilize resumes and applications to learn about applicants, if information made available in these types of traditional tools does not accurately reflect the applicant, traditional tools may not be effective means of an employer's

reduction of uncertainty about the applicant. To overcome this deficit, employers are turning to an emergent uncertainty reduction strategy: seeking information online (Bohnert & Ross, 2010).

Uncertainty Reduction Online

One means of obtaining information about a target with whom interaction is expected is to seek information about the target online. The ability to obtain uncertainty reducing information from online sources has been labeled *extractive* information seeking. Ramirez et al. (2002) describe extractive information seeking as an information acquisition process unique to and occurring within "new media," including "searches of electronic list postings and Usenet newsgroup messages and archives, … [drawing] upon a vast storehouse of written communication generated by targets" (p. 220). Extractive information offers an archive of stored data, particularly through Internet websites, chat forum logs, personal webpages, social network site profiles, blogs, and virtual spaces (Antheunis, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2010; Girard & Fallery, 2009; Ramirez & Walther, 2009).

Individuals are using the Internet, in part, to extract information about targets with whom they expect to interact. Although Antheunis et al. (2010) focused on the use of interactive strategies as a means of keeping abreast of current acquaintances, their discussion also addressed the numerous (although statistically insignificant) users of the Dutch SNS Hyves who used the website to search for information about individuals with whom they had had limited or no interaction. Similarly, Joinson (2008) had Facebook users list words associated with their use of SNSs. A follow-up survey had Facebook users rate their use along the seven unique uses and gratifications derived from the generated word list: social connection, shared identities, content, social investigation, social network surfing, and status updating. Survey responses from 241

Facebook users indicated that individuals frequently visit Facebook to engage in social investigation, using the site to learn more about targets met both online and offline.

As significant face-to-face interaction with an applicant is atypical until the first interview (Chuang & Sackett, 2005), employers are turning to extractive strategies as a means of screening applicants and vetting their selective self-presentations throughout the hiring process (Bohnert & Ross, 2010). However, while information is being sought online throughout the hiring process, it is likely that information obtained before the first interaction (i.e., interview) plays a critical role in governing applicants' likelihood of advancing in the hiring process, as pre-interaction impressions may be used to screen out unqualified candidates from further consideration (Chapman & Webster, 2003).

Information obtained prior to anticipated interaction with a target can exert a strong influence on the perceiver's judgments about a target (Douglas, 1985). Research in multiple contexts has demonstrated the ability of online information to similarly influence a perceiver's perceptions of a target's abilities and the target's personality. Studies by Edwards and colleagues (Edwards, Edwards, Shaver, & Oaks, 2009; Edwards, Edwards, Qing, & Qahl, 2007) found that peers' statements about a professor posted to an online faculty-rating forum (Ratemyprofessor.com) significantly influenced decisions about whether to enroll in that professor's courses, perceptions of the instructor's credibility, and perceived teaching skills. Similarly, research of online dating services has indicated that users' selective textual self-presentations influenced suitor's perceptions of users' attractiveness and personal characteristics (Fiore, Taylor, Mendelsohn, & Hearst, 2008), as well as likelihood of moving the relationship from CMC to face-to-face (Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006).

Reducing Uncertainty of Applicant Fit Using Online Information

The preceding sections have addressed how individuals search and are influenced by information about a target, specifically focusing on the process and effects of extractive strategies. However, although employers are turning to the Internet to seek information about job applicants, there remains a paucity in understanding the effects of such extractive strategies in the hiring process. In an initial study of the effects of online information, Bohnert and Ross (2010) asked undergraduate students to evaluate a job candidate based on an online social network profile, manipulating the emphasis of the online profile (either drinking- or family-oriented) as well as the perceived intended audience of the profile. Findings indicated the supplemental online profile influenced perceptions of the applicant's professionalism and estimated starting salaries. Although Bonhert and Ross' (2010) findings support the assertion that online information influences perceptions of job applicants, they do not address the psychological mechanisms and processes by which study participants' perceptions were influenced—although we know influence happened, we are unsure how the influence happened.

The following sections present two studies to empirically test the mechanisms and effects that occur as employers obtain online information about applicants to supplement traditional information sources. Examining the influence of specific foci of information on particular impressions will help test specific psychological processes that influence perceptions of job applicants, and ultimately affect the hiring process. These studies represent a novel contribution to the field's understanding of how unique characteristics of information afforded by online sources affect particular perceptions, specifically perceptions of PJ and PO fit.

The first study addresses the main effects and interaction between online information's valence (positive vs. negative) and focus (addressing applicants' KSAs vs. personality) on

assessments of an applicant's perceived PO and PJ fit and attributional certainty. After addressing the effects of online information on perceptions of applicants, two additional studies are proposed to explore distinct mechanisms commonly associated with online information that may govern uncertainty reduction about applicant fit. The second study will assess the role of obtaining information in multiple online contexts in forming perceptions of person-job fit. The second study will also assess the role of the obtaining information online created either by the target or a third-party that is more likely to reflect the applicant's real self on an individual's perception of the target's person-job fit. Although these two studies explore distinct facets of uncertainty reduction in the hiring process using online information, they represent a series of closely-linked processes that, when taken together, depict the complex communicative and psychological processes at work in using online information to form impressions of others, specifically within the context of selecting a new organizational member.

It is important to note that both studies operate under the assumption that information has been obtained about the target individual and address the effect of that information, with little theoretical or methodological attention the processes by which information is sought and obtained online. Significant research has already been conducted to assess how individuals seek information online (Hölscher & Strube, 2000) as well assess the credibility of online information resources (Metzger, 2007). Although issues associated with the search for information and verifying that information obtained reflects the intended target (rather than a similarly-named third party) are important, the following studies operate under the assumption that information about the intended target has been obtained from online sources. Moreover, the volatile natures of privacy settings for web services (Lewis, Kaufman, & Christakis, 2008) and legal environment surrounding using such searches in a hiring process (Mishra & Crampton, 1998;

Sprague, 2008) do not lend themselves to parsimonious study alongside the effect of online information once it is obtained. Consequently, to effectively study the effect of information in a way not constrained to particular program settings or legal doctrines that may vary over time or technological affordances, the present research assumes that information has been found online, and seeks to assess the effect and processes that online information may have on perceptions of applicants. Given that an employer has found information on the Internet about a job applicant, how would that information influence the employer's perceptions of the job applicant, and how would that influence be unique given the unique characteristics of information that is obtained online?

STUDY 1 – UNCERTAINTY REDUCTION AND PERCEPTIONS OF FIT

Of initial interest to this research is whether online information actually influences perceptions of organizational fit. As previously addressed, several studies (Ellison et al., 2006; Walther, Van Der Heide, Westerman, & Tong, 2008) have demonstrated the ability for online information to influence perceptions of physical and social attractiveness in addition to other interpersonal attributions when learning about others. Do similar effects occur outside of interpersonal uncertainty reduction, such as when employers obtain information online about applicants? Although Bohnert and Ross (2010) found that individuals with a online profile with a photograph of the user in a professional setting were more likely to be offered a job interview than individuals with online profiles with a photograph of the user's family, it is unclear what about the professionally-oriented rather than family-oriented profile resulted in the increase in participants willingness to interview the applicant. Were participants' impressions of the applicant made more positive when viewing a professional profile, made more negative when viewing a totemic profile, a combination thereof, or the result of a spurious effect? Moreover,

were perceives more likely to extend a job offer to those displaying a professional SNS profile because of the content of that profile, or because professional profiles resulted in greater certainty about the target than negative information? The first study extends current literature by exploring the effect of online information on specific perceptions of a target within an organizational context. Specifically, the first study proposes that the valence and focus of information obtained about a target affects the attributional certainty, perceived fit, and willingness to progress the target along in the hiring process.

Extractive Uncertainty Reduction

Uncertainty reduction theory (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) posits that individuals engage in strategies to reduce uncertainty about those with whom they expect to interact. Previous studies have illustrated that both use of uncertainty reduction strategies and information obtained about a target reduce uncertainty about that target. For example, Gundykunst (1983) found that in dyadic interactions, the amount of information presented by a target (rather than the number of questions asked) best-predicted the amount of uncertainty reduced about the target. Further, Westerman and Tamborini (2008) demonstrated a positive correlation between the number of uncertainty reduction strategies employed and the perceiver's level of certainty regarding a target individual. Though these findings have been replicated using various combinations of Berger's (1987) three uncertainty reduction strategies (interactive, active, and passive), Research has not yet empirically demonstrated the informational and/or attributional gains afforded by extracted information.

The few studies exploring uncertainty reduction in online contexts have thus far focused on Berger's (1987) three uncertainty reduction strategies. For example, Antheunis et al. (2010) surveyed 2,188 users of the Dutch SNS, Hyves, assessing how users had integrated interactive,

active, and passive strategies in their online relationships; however, the survey did not address information uniquely extracted from online sources. Similarly, although Westerman and Tamborini (2008) examined the process of uncertainty reduction in mediated dyads, their experiment relied on interactive message exchange, not addressing the use of additional information about interactants that may have been available online. Consequently, although the theories underpinning extractive information seeking and the uncertainty reducing value of extracted information have been developed, the empirical value of extracted information on reducing uncertainty of a target has received little support.

It is expected that information from online sources about a target individual reduces uncertainty about that target individual. Ramirez et al. (2002) do not suggest that the cognitive processes involved in uncertainty reduction function differently when using extractive strategies as compared to interactive, active, or passive. Therefore, as with traditional strategies, additional information gained from an online source should result in gains in attributional confidence about a target. Although this expectation does not necessarily address the unique properties of online information, it does guide an initial hypothesis to test the contribution of online information towards an individual's cognition about a target individual. Consequently, the first hypothesis empirically tests the effect of extracted information on attributional certainty.

H1: Individuals presented with online information about a target have more attributional certainty about the target than when no online information is present.

Although the first hypothesis seeks to confirm the contribution of extracted information on the level of uncertainty about a target, it leaves several issues unaddressed. Specifically, although support of the first hypothesis would indicate that

extractive information has an effect on an individual's perceptions of a target, it does not indicate the cause or direction of that effect. How would more confident attributions of a job applicant affect the perceptions of that applicant? One means of answering this question is to explore the valence of the additional information, specifically looking at the effect of positive or negative information on perceptions of applicant fit.

Attribution Bias in Uncertainty Reduction

Uncertainty reduction theory posited that reductions in uncertainty result in increased affinity toward a target (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In other words, because I know you better I like you more. Obtaining information depicting a target possesses desirable qualities results in positive impressions of attractiveness and desire for additional interaction (Asch, 1946). Several online sources may be expected to provide information about a job applicant's KSAs and personality. Applicants may develop an online resume or portfolio to highlight previous work experiences and projects. Similarly, applicants may use sites like LinkedIn.com to construct a professional online profile, have former colleagues attest to the quality of their work, and professionally network with employers. Employers obtaining positive information about a job applicant from the Internet prior to initial interaction should overlay the positive information onto perceptions of the applicant's fit, increasing perceptions of fit.

H2: Perceivers presented with positively-valenced online information about a job applicant report perceptions of greater (a) person-job fit and (b) person-organization fit than when the positively-valenced information is not present.

However, the presumption that all information (by which uncertainty is reduced) about a target is beneficial to the relationship by leading to increased liking has been contested. Sunnafrank's (1986) outcome value theory (OVT) asserts that the nature of acquired information

affects the valence of a perceiver's impressions either positively or negatively. Taking an economic approach to relationship development, Sunnafrank proffered that some information, such as dissimilarity about a salient relational topic or a stigmatizing trait, may be perceived as negative to future interaction, and as a result additional uncertainty reduction may result in less liking towards a target. Consequently, although URT's prediction that information attenuates uncertainty and thereby affects perceptions of a target remains steadfast, resultant perceptions of a target may not always be positive and may instead be negative.

Research has demonstrated that expectations of targets can affect impression formation and development, so that valenced information about a target individual can affect the general perception of that target negatively. Obtaining information about targets depicting undesirable qualities results in negative impression of the targets and a reduced desire for future interaction (Kellermann, 1984). Given the effect of the negativity bias on perceptions, it stands to reason that employers obtaining negative information from the Internet about a job applicant prior to interaction should overlay the negative information onto perceptions of the applicant, reducing perceptions of fit. However, negative online information and its effect deserve separate consideration from a positivity bias for two reasons.

Online information may be more negative than information about a target obtained from traditional information seeking strategies. Several studies have illustrated individual's proclivity to engage in social taboos or *faux pas* in their online presentations (Barash, Ducheneaut, Isaacs, & Bellotti, 2010; Karl, Peluchette, & Schlaegel, 2010). A second reason for unique consideration of negative online information stems from the negativity bias, which posits that negative information has a greater influence on negative impressions of a person than positive information's influence on positive impressions (Kellermann, 1984; Wojciszke, Brycz, &

Borkenau, 1993). Although these considerations both advocate the effect of positive and negative information on perceptions of targets, they also suggest that negative information may be more prominent online and result in greater attitudinal shift as a result of exposure. Consequently, the third hypothesis is offered separately to reflect the potentially greater frequency and effect of negative attributional biases stemming from online information:

> *H3: Perceivers presented with negatively-valenced online information about a job applicant report more negative perceptions of (a) person-job fit and (b) person-organization fit than when the negatively-valenced information is not present.*

Focus of Information in Uncertainty Reduction

The previous two hypotheses address the impact of the valence of online information on generalized perceptions of applicant fit, so that negative information should make applicants be perceived as less hirable, while positive information should make applicants more hirable. However, these generalizations of perceptions of fit do not integrate the earlier discussions of PJ and PO fit. How do different foci of information influence different types of fit? Whereas H2 and H3 addressed the effect of general online information on perceptions of fit, the following section addresses how the focus of online information may influence particular perceptions of fit. Although positive or negative information should accordingly influence gross perceptions of a target, information focused on selected attributes and qualities of an applicant should influence different types of perceived fit.

Recalling the earlier discussion of PJ and PO fit, different foci of information uniquely influence on different perceptions of fit (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Information about a job applicant's KSAs exerts significant influence on perceptions of PJ fit (Cable & Judge, 1997), while information about a job applicant's personality and habits exert significant influence on

perceptions of PO fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). As information focused on an applicant's various qualities are more salient to distinct perceptions of fit, it is possible to offer hypotheses to support the effect of particular foci of interaction on particular types of fit. As both professional and personal information is available online, extracted information should influence perceptions of PJ and PO fit, according to how salient the focus of the information is to the formation of a particular perception of fit. Information of a professional nature (e.g., a LinkedIn profile presenting an applicant's educational and work background) would be expected to exert more influence on perceptions of PJ fit, while information of a personal or social nature (e.g., a Facebook profile presenting information about an applicant's hobbies and interests) would be expected to exert more influence on perceptions of PO fit.

H4: Online information about a job applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities influences perceiver's perceptions of an applicant's person-job fit more than the perceiver's perceptions of an applicant's person-organization fit.

H5: Online information about a job applicant's personality influences perceiver's perceptions of an applicant's person-organization fit more than the perceiver's perceptions of an applicant's person-job fit.

Thus far, Study 1 has presented three sets of hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 addressed the effect of online information on attributional certainty. Hypotheses 2 and 3 addressed the effect of the valence of online information on perceptions of an applicant's fit. Finally, hypotheses 4 and 5 addressed the effect of particular foci of information on distinct perceptions of fit. Although these hypotheses independently test unique aspects of URT and OVT within the hiring context, exploring the interaction of the valence (either negative or positive) and focus (addressing either KSA or personality) of information on perceptions of applicant fit, and specifically on hiring

decisions is an intriguing prospect. Surely, these components never occur in isolation—information about job applicants online is never strictly neutral yet tailored to affect either perceptions of PJ or PO fit. Consequently, while earlier hypotheses (and particularly hypotheses 2-5) represent unique theoretical contributions to the understanding of uncertainty reduction within hiring, understanding how these factors interact is not only theoretically interesting, but also of practical interest.

Interaction of Valence and Focus of Information

The previous sections have addressed the effect of two factors on perceptions of applicants: the valence and focus of information. However, what happens when these factors are crossed? Consequently, this section lays out a hypothesis for a crossed design of these two factors. Under what condition would a job applicant be the most desirable to an employer and, alternately, under what condition would a job applicant be least desirable?

Previous studies have indicated that employers seek to hire job candidates that are perceived as good fits—both PJ and PO fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Sekiguchi, 2007). This is reflected in the second hypothesis, indicating that positively valenced information about a job applicant (whether that information addresses KSAs or personality) should increase the perceptions of an applicant's fit, and consequently an employer's willingness to hire that employee. Contrarily, employers are less likely to hire employees with poor fit, which is reflected in the third hypothesis—employers should be less willing to hire an applicant after being exposed to negative information about that applicant.

Both perceived PJ and PO fit are desired of a successful applicant. Several studies (e.g., Cable & Judge, 1997; Sekiguchi, 2007) have indicated that perceptions of PO fit are most predictive of hiring decisions; however these studies focused on perceptions of fit following the

first interview. As the present research is predominantly concerned the pre-interaction perceptions and effects of online information, it is prudent constrain the research to pre-interaction effects and hypotheses. Several works have articulated the increased importance of perceived PJ fit over perceived PO fit prior to the first interview. For example, Adkins, Russell, and Werbel (1994) found that work value congruence (a form of PJ fit) between the applicant and recruiter best predicted the recruiter's pre-interview perception of the applicant's employability and organization-specific fit. Recruiter's perceptions of an applicant's employability were, in turn, positively correlated with applicants being offered a follow-up interview. Similarly, Chuang and Sackett (2005) surveyed 446 campus recruiters regarding the perceived importance of various facets of applicant fit throughout the hiring process. Survey responses indicated that PJ fit was perceived as more important than PO fit prior to the first interview. Although both PJ and PO fit are important in hiring decisions, it seems that perceptions of PJ fit exert more influence on an employer's decision to further consider an applicant for the job position, including offering an initial interview.

Given the importance of positive information and information addressing applicants' KSAs (which guide perceptions of PJ fit) prior to the first interview, the valence and focus of information on perceptions of fit should interact with respect to how willing an employer would be to advance the applicant in the hiring process—within the context of this study, operationalized as offering an interview. An observer's perceptions of the applicant should be most positive when presented with positive information about an applicant's KSAs, (influencing perceptions of PJ fit). Positive perceptions should also occur when an observer is presented with positive information about an applicant's personality (influencing perceptions of PO fit), though resultant perceptions should not be as positive as when presented with positive KSA information.

When information is negatively valenced, similar effects can be predicted in the opposite direction. As KSAs are most influential before the first interview, an observer's perceptions should be the most negative when presented with negatively valenced information about an applicant's KSAs. Negative information about an applicant's personality should also negatively influence perceptions of the applicants, though to a lesser degree than negative information about the applicant's KSAs. Furthermore, because of the negativity effect, conditions in which information is negatively valenced should result in greater reductions in perceptions of PJ and PO fit than increases in perceptions of PJ and PO fit in comparable positively-valenced conditions.

Taken together, the valence and focus of online information about a target should interact so that an employer should perceive an applicant most favorably (as measured by willingness to offer the applicant an interview) when presented with online information that positively addresses the applicant's KSA; perceive an applicant somewhat favorably when presented with online information that positively addresses the applicant's personality; perceive an applicant somewhat unfavorably when presented with online information that negatively addresses the applicant's personality; and perceive an applicant most unfavorably when presented with online information that negatively addresses the applicant's KSAs. The expected interaction between the valence and focus of online information is represented in Table 1. These predictions can be formalized in a hypothesis ordering the effects of online information with respect to a control condition:

H6: Perceivers are more willing to offer a job interview: a) when a job applicant's online information positively addresses the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities more than when a job applicant's online information

positively addresses the applicant's PJ fit; b) when a job applicant's online information positively addresses the applicant's PJ fit more than when a job applicant's online information negatively addresses the applicant's PO fit; and c) when a job applicant's online information negatively addresses the applicant's PO fit more than when a job applicant's online information negatively addresses the applicant's PJ fit.

The hypotheses derived in the first study reflect an initial test of extractive information seeking and its effects on perceptions of a target individual, including impacts on attributional certainty with specific considerations toward attributions of work skills and attitudes. Although several studies (Antheunis et al., 2010; Ellison et al., 2006; Westerman & Tamborini, 2008) have suggested online information can influence perceptions, these suggestions have not been empirically validated. Similarly, the popular press (Gordon, 2008; Lewis, 2006) and scholarly articles (Brandenburg, 2008; Cappelli, 2000) have suggested that a job applicant's online identity performance can influence employers' perceptions of that applicant without rigorous experimental testing of those conclusions. By conducting a structured laboratory experiment of controlled online information, Study 1 offers an initial validation of Ramirez et al.'s (2002) extractive information seeking, by demonstrating that online information reduces uncertainty about a target and moreover that increased attributional certainty may manifest as perceptions about a job applicant's employability.

However, beyond understanding how online information affects employers' perceptions of job applicants' fit, it would be helpful to understand how mechanisms unique to extractive information seeking may inherently influence the impressions formed about a target's perceived fit. Consequently, the second study addresses two different mechanisms for uncertainty reduction

enabled by online information: observation in multiple contexts and the warranting value of information. Developing an understanding of the different mechanisms at work in using online information to form impressions of others would complement the first study by providing explanatory power not only of the effects of increased attributional certainty on perceptions of PJ and PO fit, but also the unique mechanisms by which online information can influence those perceptions of fit.

STUDY 2 – WARRANTING EFFECTS IN MULTIPLE ONLINE CONTEXTS

Multiple Contexts and Warranting

Extractive strategies, more so than traditional uncertainty reduction strategies, afford perceivers two distinct mechanisms by which impressions of a target may be influenced. As previously noted, information obtained from online sources depicting the target in alternate social contexts than expected by the perceiver may exert more influence on perceptions of the target. Complimentarily, information obtained from online sources may be high in warranting value, influencing perceptions of the credibility of the message. While both of these mechanisms may affect impressions of a target, they do so differently. Study 2 isolates and addresses these psychological processes in the context of pre-interaction impressions of job applicants.

Observation in multiple contexts and information high in warranting value are mechanisms readily available when using extractive information-seeking strategies—individuals frequently present multiple selves online as they move across multiple social contexts (Turkle, 1995) and others are enabled to provide information about an individual (Smock, 2010; Walther et al., 2009), particularly given the rise and prominence of Web 2.0 which emphasizes interactivity and public creation of content (O'Reilly, 2005). Although observation in multiple contexts and information high in warranting value are readily-used and observable online, offline

analogs also make possible the same mechanisms, albeit in a sometimes more belabored manner. For example, individuals may utilize passive strategies to follow and discreetly observe a target as they traverse social circles, and in doing so observe the target in multiple contexts to form an impression. Further, within the hiring context, recruiters often form impressions of applicants based, in part, on active information seeking involving letters of recommendations and phone calls to previous employers, both of which reflect obtaining information high in warranting value as it was not generated directly by the applicant. Though offline equivalents exist, the ease and accessibility of online information make these two mechanisms particularly salient in consideration of extractive information seeking strategies. Consequently, Study 2 seeks to explore these mechanisms as they exist in the formation of impressions of online information to enhance and explain potential mechanisms for Study 1 should its hypotheses be supported, but also as a more general test of URT holistically, particularly should Study 1 hypotheses not receive support. To do this, Study 2 continues to focus on the uncertainty reduction process during preinteraction hiring decisions.

The focus on preinteraction impressions in Study 2 continues to be guided by previous work which shows that although information about a target (such as that obtained in applications and online) can significantly influence impressions of a target, uncertainty reduced via subsequent interaction with the target can override and replace any preinteraction impression (Burgoon & Le Poire, 1993; Burgoon, Le Poire, & Rosenthal, 1995). Previous work has indicated that information to assess PJ fit is predominantly sought prior to initial interaction with applicants, whereas information to assess PO fit is predominantly sought after initial interaction with applicants (Chuang & Sackett, 2005). As studies 2 and 3 are interested in specific processes and effects of uncertainty reduction before initial interactions, the literature reviews and

hypotheses will emphasize perceptions of PJ fit. The emphasis on PJ fit in study 2 should not be construed as indicating that similar processes do not exist when assessing PO fit; but rather reflects the more significant role that perceptions of PJ fit play in developing initial preinteraction impressions of applicants (Chuang & Sackett, 2005; Sekiguchi, 2007). Focusing on perceptions of PJ fit should facilitate larger effect sizes during analysis to accurately assess the processes involved in reducing uncertainty about job applicants using information obtained online.

Multiple Contexts

One mechanism by which extractive information reduces uncertainty about a target stems from the relative ease of observing the target in multiple social contexts. Berger and Douglas (1981) noted that the ability to engage in uncertainty reduction in multiple contexts, and particularly informal contexts, is beneficial when forming perceptions about a target. Individual are less likely to engage in self-monitoring and observation of the less strategically-presented self in some contexts compared to others. Individuals not only prefer multiple information sources to reduce uncertainty, but report greater reduction in uncertainty when observing a target in multiple contexts rather than a single context (Berger, 2002; Teboul, 1994).

When reducing uncertainty about an applicant, observing how the applicant communicates with and presents himself/herself toward others in a professional context (e.g., Linkedin.com, a professional networking site) as well as in a social context (e.g., on Facebook.com, a social network site known for facilitating interpersonal relationships) would more strongly affect perceptions of the applicant's job skills information obtained from a single structured context, such as a self-presentation within a resume. Consequently, a one mechanism by which extractive information may affect uncertainty reduction is that the Internet may allow

an employer to observe the job applicant in multiple contexts, particularly those contexts where the applicant is less likely to self-monitor behavior. Additional information about the target from online contexts offers three gradients of influence on perceptions beyond those perceptions formed from requested materials such as resumes and applications.

Information from only online professional contexts offers minimal gains in attributional certainty as the online context does not significantly differ from the context under which the applicant constructed the requested materials. Next, information from only online social contexts offers moderate gains in attributional certainty as the online contexts differs from the context under which the applicant constructed the requested materials, but only provides a single context for comparison—social. Finally, information from both online professional and social contexts should offer substantial gains in attributional certainty by affording perceptions of the applicant in multiple contexts—hiring, professional, and social contexts. The following section details these expectations by proposing four hypotheses to test both the unique gains of attributional certainty from obtaining information in multiple contexts as well as differences in these gains based on the contexts from which information is obtained.

First, observing the target individual in the same context in which future interaction is expected would afford a minimal level of uncertainty reduction. In keeping with prior research on selective self-presentation, individuals within a given context should seek to strategically manipulate their self-presentation to conform to the norms and expectations of that social context. For example, an individual's presentation and interactions on LinkedIn.com, a site for professional networking, should closely mirror the individual's presentation and interactions in the workplace. While additional information obtained from interactions with others in online professional contexts should reduce uncertainty about the target's professional conduct

(Clatterbuck, 1979; Goffman, 1959), gains in certainty should be minimal, as information would be drawn from a single context.

Second, observing the target in social contexts online would be expected to afford more uncertainty reduction than observations across only professional contexts online. The ability to observe behavior when a target is less-likely to self monitor behaviors and interactions has been demonstrated to result in greater attributional certainty about the target's attitudes and behaviors (Berger & Douglas, 1981). Though applicants may carefully monitor their self-presentations in resumes and interviews, they are less likely to monitor their self-presentation outside of the professional context, such as when interacting with friends via an online social network site such as Facebook. Consequently, observing an individual's interactions in alternate online contexts should provide perceivers with significant gains in attributional certainty than when only provided with requested information (e.g., resume or application) within a given context. The first hypothesis for Study 2 tests these expectations:

H7: Online information about a target from a single, social context results in greater uncertainty reduction than when a perceiver has online information about a target from a single, professional context.

Finally, observing the target in multiple contexts would be expected to afford more uncertainty reduction than observations across multiple contexts. The ability to validate behavior across contexts is expected to result in uncertainty reduction, and greater uncertainty reduction than observation of the target in any single context (Berger & Douglas, 1981; Goffman, 1959). The second hypothesis for Study 2 tests this expectation:

H8: Online information about a target from a multiple sources reflecting both professional and social context results in substantial uncertainty reduction greater than when a perceiver has online information from either single context.

It should be noted that the process of controlling for multiple sources of information in a single social context has been developed theoretically to develop H8; but presents methodological challenges. The Methods section will further address the process of operationalizing H8 and controlling for multiple information sources within a single social context.

Hypotheses seven and eight test independent effects of acquiring information from specific contexts of online interaction beyond simply being provided with requested information, and as such can be tested and discussed separately from each other. However, taken together, hypotheses 7 and 8 suggest a continuum of uncertainty reduction determined by the context(s) from which online information is obtained so that uncertainty reduction is greatest when information about a target is obtained from both professional and social contexts online, less so when information is only obtained from only social contexts online, less still when information is obtained from only social contexts online, and minimal when information is only obtained from professional contexts online.

The ability to scour the Internet to ascertain how an applicant presents himself and interacts with others across contexts represents one unique mechanism to reduce uncertainty about a target utilizing online information. Addressing the role of observation in multiple contexts can illustrate incremental gains resulting from similar information presented across contexts. However, an additional mechanism that can work independently of social context is warranting, which addresses how information within a single context can enable significant uncertainty reduction based on how the message was

constructed, specifically focusing on the individual constructing the message. The final study addresses warranting theory as a mechanism of uncertainty reduction in the hiring process.

Warranting

Warranting was offered by Walther and Parks (2002) as a construct for the analysis of how perceivers assess online information about a target (i.e., the target's virtual identity) to form impressions of the target's actual identity. Information provides greater warranting value to the perceiver when "the content of that information is immune to manipulation by the person to whom it refers" (Walther & Parks, p. 552). In this way, warranted information can be likened to signaling theory (Donath, 1999, 2008), which posits that costly cues—those more difficult to fabricate—more strongly affect a perceiver's belief that the target possesses a professed characteristic, whereas conventional cues—those more easily manufactured—are less trusted. Consequently, individuals reducing uncertainty online, even via extractive information, are likely to heavily rely on cues that are higher in warranting value. That is, individuals will rely on cues less likely to be manipulated by a target to guide uncertainty reduction and form impressions about the target.

Warranted information online is often derived from the target's social network, either in the form of articulated affiliations (i.e., a Facebook friends list) or more commonly through the comments posted by others about the target. Walther et al. (2009) examined the warranting principle by testing the effects of messages about a target posted by others on the target's social network profile on perceptions of the target. Participants viewed Facebook profiles of a target in which the target posted a self-descriptive message and a contradictory message was posted by a second party on the target's Facebook wall—a public discussion board on the target's profile.

Participants' perceptions of the target were more strongly influenced by the valence of the second-party's post than by the target's self-description. The researchers explained these results using the warranting value of second-party posts: Though targets could strategically construct their self-presented message, the messages of others were more difficult to manipulate and therefore had higher warranting value which exerted more influence on perceptions of the target.

Even system-generated cues may influence perceptions of a target due to greater warranting value. Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, and Walther (2008) conducted an experiment in which participants viewed a target's Facebook profile to assess the target's popularity and desirability. Profiles were held constant with the sole exception of manipulating the number of Facebook friends displayed for the target—a costly and difficult to fabricate system-generated value based on the number of formal social connections. Results demonstrated that the number of friends indicated by the SNS influenced participants' perceptions of a target's social attractiveness and perceived extraversion. Studies addressing the warranting value of online information particularly in social network sites (e.g., Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008; Utz, 2010), support the notion that cues to identity difficult or costly to manufacture or fabricate strongly influence individuals' certainty and perceptions of a target.

Within the context of hiring, acknowledgement of an applicant's job skills posted by a coworker (such as a recommendation posted on LinkeIn.com) should more strongly affect perceptions of the applicant's job skills than a similar message posted by the applicant himself. Similar claims should influence the perception of an applicant's KSAs and personality more when created by others, as the claims of others are more difficult for an individual to influence. Following Walther et al.'s (2009) findings, third party information generated by others should

exert greater influence on outside parties' perceptions of a target than first party information generated by the target. This prediction drives the final hypothesis:

> *H9: Perceivers see a target as having greater knowledge, skills, and abilities when presented with online information created by third-parties about the target's knowledge, skills, and abilities then when seeing information about the target's knowledge, skills and abilities created by the target.*

Research Question

Although it is possible that only one of the aforementioned processes exerts an influence on perception, it is more likely (as evidenced by H7 and H8) that both observation in multiple contexts and the warranting value of information influence perceptions of a target. However, while both processes may be at work, it is unclear how each process may contribute to the final influence in uncertainty reduction and perception, and moreover the respective influence of each process. To begin to assess the influence of each process on impression formation, this study offers a research question to begin to understand the partial influence of each process exerted on the impression developed a target:

> *RQ1: Do observation in multiple contexts and warranted information interact to affect perceptions of an applicant's person-job fit?*

Summary

Since its proposition, URT has received much scholarly attention as a communicative theory governing interactions, and particularly information-seeking early in relationships. However, URT research has been limited in two ways. First, research has focused on information-seeking strategies that require seekers to interact or observe others in-person, without considering the implications of selective self-presentation or accessing information about

a target that may be geographically or chronemically separate from the perceiver. Second, research has not probed deeply into the role of impression formation in URT processes. This study seeks to fill these gaps in the literature by exploring an emergent strategy for uncertainty reduction: Extractive information seeking. By addressing the use of new technologies to observe a target and guide initial impression formation within a hiring context, this work will not only extend existent URT literature into organizational relationships, but allow the exploration of the operation of specific mechanisms at work in extractive strategies for uncertainty reduction.

These hypotheses reflect a theory-driven line of research into emergent URT processes reliant on online information, addressing how unique properties of extracted information influence perceivers' impressions of a target and the target's characteristics. Practical implications of this work will also facilitate a more detailed understanding of how online information impacts perceptions in organizational (rather than interpersonal) relationships, specifically by using online information to reduce uncertainty about job candidate's likely fit with requisite job duties and organizational culture before entering into an organization. Two experiments (with studies 2 and 3 being tested in a single, combined experiment) will be conducted to assess the proposed hypotheses.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 167 participants were recruited and randomly assigned to each study. Study 1 utilized 89 subjects, with approximately 18 subjects assigned to each of the four experimental conditions and one offset control condition. Study 2 utilized 87 subjects, with approximately 15 randomly assigned to the six experimental conditions and one offset control condition.

For both studies, a convenience sample of participants was recruited over a three month period from Master's of Business Administration (MBA) courses at several institutions. Because of the large sample size desired for the studies, recruitment took several forms. First, instructors of three MBA courses allowed the study to be distributed either during or immediately following a scheduled class session. Second, email requests were sent to the department chairs and/or MBA program coordinators of eight schools, seeking an invitation to participate in an online version of the study. Third, email requests were sent to fifty-seven instructors at nine Business schools to be forwarded to students currently enrolled in their MBA courses. Fourth, recruitment messages were posted to listserves at four additional universities; listserve messages were sent only to currently-enrolled MBA students. Fifth, the researcher activated social capital by sending personal emails to friends currently enrolled in MBA programs requesting their participation as well as the forwarding of the request to participate to others enrolled in the friends' MBA program. Ultimately, participants were drawn from twenty-eight programs across eighteen colleges and universities.

Participants were recruited from human resource classes as much as possible to maximize the likelihood that participants had training, experience, and knowledge in the field of human resources and hiring. However, additional MBA courses outside of human resources were used to supplement participant pools. To ensure no selection effects of recruiting for specific conditions within an intact course, subjects were randomly assigned to all conditions across all recruitment locations. Further, analysis of differences between students recruited from human resource and non-human resource classes across independent and dependent variables were not significant, so data was collapsed.

Human resource students were selected as ideal participants as many of them have experience working in human resources within organizations (Crant, 1996; Dreher & Ryan, 2004), and current coursework further reflects emergent trends in human resource policies and practices. Moreover, several works (e.g., Elliott, Hodge, Kennedy, & Pronk, 2006; Gordon, Slade, & Schmitt, 1986) have demonstrated external validity of research involving college students, and particularly MBA students, on similar studies of working professional counterparts, suggesting that MBA students excellent proxies for research reflecting attitudes, values, and beliefs of the present workforce. Participants were compensated for their participation based on the course from which they were obtained—students completed the study either as part of a class requirement, received a $5 gift card to an online retailer, or were entered into a raffle for a $25 gift card. No significant differences emerged based on nature or amount of compensation for participation. Participants for this study were recruited from several courses using in-class and emailed announcements. Participants were asked to complete the study individually in the classroom setting (for those taking the pen-and paper study) or at their home computer (for those taking the online study).

Procedures

Study 1

Study 1 explores the influence and interaction of the valence and focus of additional information about a job applicant, obtained from an online source, on an individual's perceptions of the applicant's person-job fit and person-organization fit. To test the hypotheses derived for Study 1, participants were asked to help a university check the job readiness of graduating seniors by reviewing information collected about a purported graduating management major and evaluating their job readiness for an entry-level management position. A pen-and-paper packet

and survey was used for 85 participants, while an online version of the survey (in which applicants viewed digital images of the stimuli material and completed an identical online survey) was used for 82 participants.

After indicating their consent to participate, participants viewed a packet of information in accordance with their assigned experimental condition. Participants were given as much time as they need to evaluate the target using the information provided. Once participants had completed their evaluation of the packet materials, they completed the measures (also included in the provided packet) and returned all completed items (stimuli and measures) to the researcher. Upon completing their study, participants were thanked for their participation and compensated in accordance with recruitment policy.

Experimental Conditions

Study 1 represents a 2 (positive vs. negative information) X 2 (information addressing KSAs vs. information addressing personality) fully-crossed design, in addition to a fifth control condition. Consequently, four experimental conditions and one control condition ($N = 89$, $n \approx 18$) were created for this study, as reflected by slight variations in the stimuli materials within the provided packets. In all five conditions, packets contained identical information traditionally requested by employers of job applicants: A resume, application, and cover letter (see Appendix B). The applicant and all documentation were fabricated for the purposes of this experiment, which was presented to participants as an effort by the University's career services office to check the job readiness of graduating seniors by having current MBA students evaluate how effective a randomly-selected Business major will be during an upcoming job search for an entry-level staff management position. A prototypical college management graduate's resume and cover letter were obtained from the university's career services and served as a model for the

cover letter and resume, as well as the content for the application. Information in the resume, application and cover letter were consistent both internally (across experimental conditions) and externally (reflective of typical experiences and information provided by graduating, job-seeking management students). Resumes, applications, and cover letters, including their contents, were held constant across all five conditions. In the control condition, these three sources of information were all that participants received.

In the treatment conditions, subjects were provided with one piece of additional information, based on their assigned condition. Participants in the four treatment conditions were provided with a printed copy of a SNS profile authored by the applicant, isolating a recent wall post (a forum visible to the user's SNS network) addressing a recent presentation at work. The wall posts' appearance, as well as the approximate length of the post, was held constant across conditions. However, the topic and valence of the message were altered to reflect the manipulated condition.

To manipulate the valence of information, the wall post reflected on either a positive or negative experience at work. The content of that post was governed by the manipulation of the second variable of interest: the focus of the information. To manipulate the focus of information, the wall post reflected either on the application of the target's KSAs or personality, as related to the work experience. These two conditions were fully-crossed to create four experimental conditions. In the positive/PJ condition, the wall post read, "I had an awesome meeting today! The boss was really pleased with how well I'd forecasted our inventory needs and how I'd managed to keep extra stock low. Afterward, the boss told me I was really knew my job and I was thinking like a manager." In the negative/PJ condition, the wall post read, "I had an awful meeting today! The boss was really upset with how poorly I'd forecasted our inventory needs

and how I'd managed to keep a lot of extra stock. Afterward, the boss told me I didn't know my job and I wasn't thinking like a manager." In the positive/PO condition, the wall post read, "I had an awesome meeting today! The boss told me he sees me as a good person and that I've related with my work team well. Afterward, the boss told me my personality was fitting into the groups' and I was interacting like a team player." In the negative/PO condition, the wall post read, "I had an awful meeting today! The boss told me he sees me as a bad person and that I've related with my work team poorly. Afterward, the boss told me my personality wasn't fitting into the groups' and I wasn't interacting like a team player." Pretests confirmed the stimuli result in the intended effects on perceptions of PJ and PO fit before executing the study. Stimuli material for Study 1 can be found in Appendix C.

Study 2

Study 2 explores the influences on perceptions of person-job fit of mechanisms unique to extracted information: The ability to observe a target in multiple contexts, and the increased warranting value of available information, respectively. Procedures for study 2 followed closely with the procedures of study 1, using similar recruiting methods, participants, and experimental materials. Again, participants viewed a provided packet of information about a purported graduating Business major, and asked to evaluate the job candidate for the university's career services assessment of matriculating students.

Experimental Conditions

Study 2 represents a 3 (social context vs. professional context vs. both contexts) X 2 (1^{st} person vs. 3^{rd} person source) fully-crossed design. Consequently, six experimental conditions ($N = 78$, $n \approx 13$) were created for this study, as reflected by slight variations in the stimuli materials

within provided packets. In all six conditions, packets contained identical information, consistent with Study 1, traditionally requested by employers of job applicants: A resume, application, and cover letter (see Appendix B). Resumes, applications, and cover letters, including their contents, were held constant across all six conditions. The offset control condition from Study 1 was used as the control condition for Study 2, and included only these three sources of information.

In the treatment conditions, subjects were provided with two additional pieces of information from online sources, based on their assigned condition. Copies of two online information sources, a social network site (either Facebook or LinkedIn) and a discussion board (either professional or hobbyist in nature) were provided, with both isolating a claim made about the applicant. Providing two online sources of information affords control over the amount of information presented across conditions. The approximate appearance, content, and length of the online were held constant across conditions. However, the context of messages was altered to reflect the manipulated condition.

To manipulate the context of the information, the online information was either posted to a professional online site (i.e., LinkedIn profile and/or professional discussion forum) and/or a social online site (i.e., Facebook profile and/or sports-related social discussion forum), according to the assigned condition. Content of these online sources of information was controlled as much as possible to be of equitable negative valence and addressing the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities. The intentional manipulation of this condition was the context of each of the two sources of online information.

To manipulate the source of information, both pieces of additional online information had the author either identified as the applicant (1st-person self-presentation) or by a third party. In

the 1st-person negative information condition, statements included, "I had an awful meeting today! The boss was really upset with how poorly I'd forecasted our inventory needs and how I'd managed to keep a lot of extra stock. Afterward, the boss told me I didn't know my job and I wasn't thinking like a manager," in the professional LinkedIn and social Facebook conditions, and a discussion forum message read, "In looking over this question, I don't think there was much thought put into it. It's a pretty fundamental rule of management to always stay within budget. This is baseline stuff that anyone who ever paid attention in a management course should know." In the 3rd-person negative information condition, statements included, "You had an awful meeting today! The boss was really upset with how poorly you'd forecasted our inventory needs and how you'd managed to keep a lot of extra stock. Afterward, the boss told me you didn't know your job and you weren't thinking like a manager," in the professional LinkedIn and social Facebook conditions, and a discussion forum message read, "In looking over this question, I don't think there was much thought put into it. It's a pretty fundamental rule of management to always stay within budget. This is baseline stuff that anyone who ever paid attention in a management course should know" These two conditions were fully-crossed to create six experimental conditions, wherein participants received one SNS post and one discussion forum post, with both posts being authored by either the applicant or a third party. Stimuli material for Study 2 can be found in Appendix D.

Measures

The survey instrument for all studies was a single post-treatment assessment of participants' perceptions of the target (i.e., job applicant). The instrument was comprised of three different sections to assess the variables of interest of this study. Specifically, the instrument

assessed uncertainty reduction, perceptions of PJ and PO fit, and willingness to progress the applicant in the hiring process. The instrument can be found in Appendix B.

Uncertainty Reduction

Following previous uncertainty reduction research (e.g., Douglas, 1990; Tidwell & Walther, 2002), post-evaluation uncertainty was measured using a five-item subset of Clatterbuck's (1979) CL7 of global uncertainty measure. Low scale responses indicate greater general uncertainty about a target while high scale responses indicate greater degrees of confidence in knowledge about the target and ability to predict the target's behaviors. Responses to the CL7 were reliable, Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$.

Although the CL7 measure of attributional certainty has been used to assess relational certainty in previous research, it has not been applied within the specific context of uncertainty regarding an individual's job performance. Consequently, two additional 7-item scales were developed for this study to more directly assess uncertainty reduction within a hiring context. The first original scale, the 7-item person-job fit certainty measure (PJ7), used four items adapted from Brkich, Jeffs, and Carless (2002), two items adapted from Higgins and Judge (2004), and two items adapted from Saks and Ashforth (2002) to assess PJ fit, and focused on confidence in participant's perceptions of the targets personality and values, and their congruence with the personalities and values commonly associated with the potential employer. Sample items include, "How certain are you that this is the right kind of job for Chris Mayburn," and, "How well can you predict that Chris Mayburn's ability to achieve a high level of performance in this particular position," ($\alpha = .91$).

The second original scale, the 7-item person-organization fit certainty measure (PO7), used items adapted from Piasentin and Chapman (2006) to assess PO fit, and focused on

confidence in participant's perceptions of the targets personality and values, and their congruence with the personalities and values commonly associated with the potential employer. Sample items include, "How accurately can you predict how well Chris Mayburn would fit in with other people who typically work for an accounting firm," and "How well can you predict Chris Mayburn's personal values," (α = .95).

Person-Job and Person-Organization Fit

Post-evaluation perceptions of applicant's PO and PJ fit will be measured using eight items. Four items from Cable and Judge (1996) assessed perceived Person-Job fit by having respondents report their subjective assessments of a target's PJ fit using items that originally addressed PJ fit from the applicant's perspective. Items were modified to reflect the employer's perception of PJ fit, operationalized as the prior knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed by the applicant that can be applied to the job position for which the individual is being considered. Items include, "The match is very good between the demands of the job and the applicant's personal skills," "The applicant's abilities and training are a good fit with the requirements of this job," "This applicant's personal abilities and education provide a good match with the demands that this job would place on them," and, "This applicants' job performance would be hurt by a lack of expertise on the job," where respondents rated their agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5), with the last item being reverse coded. These initial four items were unreliable (α = .40), and so the first item (The match is very good between the demands of the job and the applicant's personal skill) was dropped. The resulting 3-item items demonstrated acceptable reliability (α = .78) and were used to measure PJ fit.

Following earlier research (Cable & Judge, 1996, 1997; Kristof, 1996; Morley, 2007), person-organization fit was operationalized as the perceived supplemental fit between the personality, values, attitudes, and beliefs of the job applicant and the organizational unit to which the individual is applying. Two items from Cable and Judge (1997) assess perceived PO fit by having respondents report their subjective assessments of a target's PO fit on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Items ask, "This applicant matches or fits the organization and the current employees in the organization," and, "The applicant's values reflect the own organization's values and 'personality.'" Two additional items, "This applicant's personality would fit in with the personality of this organization," and, "This is the type of person that would mesh well with the group's personality," were developed for this survey to also assess perceived PO fit, and were similarly rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Cable and Judge (1997) found strong predictive reliability using only the first item, and the four-item scale demonstrated questionable reliability (α = .67). Consequently, following Cable and Judge's suggestion, only the first item ("This applicant matches or fits the organization and the current employees in the organization") was used to measure PO fit.

Willingness to Progress

To assess the third dependent variable, willingness to progress the applicant in the hiring process, a new three-item measure was used. Participants will be asked to indicate agreement with statements addressing the likelihood of recommending the applicant: 1) be invited for an initial on-site interview for a management position; 2) offered a comparable management job; and 3) be removed from consideration. The third item was reverse scored. Responses for these three items were provided on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). These items demonstrated adequate reliability, α = .79. The mean of these

three items was used as a measure of willingness to progress the applicant along in the hiring process.

To validate these original items, four additional items are drawn from Adkins et al.'s (1994) employability scale to assess the applicant's employability at a general level—how capable is the applicant to get a job in general, even if it not the specific opening to which the applicant is applying. Responses to items were provided on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from *low employability* (1) to *high employability* (7). Items include, "Given your overall impression of this candidate, how 'employable' do you think Chris Mayburn is (i.e., how likely do you think this candidate is to receive other job offers)?" and, "Regardless of the candidate's qualifications, how likable is Chris Mayburn?" These four items demonstrated good reliability (α = .88), and the mean of the employability scale was significantly correlated with the new willingness to progress scale, $r(167) = .60$, $p < .001$, supporting the convergent validity of the new scale.

Control Measures

The aforementioned dependent measures allowed direct analysis of the proposed hypotheses by comparing perceptions of fit across specific conditions. However, it was important to have additional information to provide statistical control for individual differences that may exert influence on participants' perceptions of fit. Consequently, several other items were included to be able to control for individual differences that may exert spurious influence on the data.

Homophily. Early studies in impression formation and the formation of judgments about targets noted a positive correlation between similarity and the accuracy of judgments (Allport, 1937) as well as making judgments more favorable (Kinder, 1925). As perceivers see themselves

in and identify with a target, their perceptions of that target become more positive and more ingrained. Consequently, perceived similarity with the job applicant was measured as a covariate, using McCroskey, Richmond, and Daly's (1975) Attitude and Background Homophily scales. Each scale is measured using four Likert-type items rated on a 7-point scale, where responses are added together and can range from 4 to 28 (inclusive) with higher scores indicating greater degrees of perceived homophily (α = .72).

Nature of Online Disclosures. The nature of disclosures online may further affect the strength and direction to which perceptions of the target are influenced. It is possible that individual web sites used for the stimuli may carry certain meanings or guide normative expectations for actions and disclosures. For example, more credible online information sources exert greater influence on perceptions resulting from that information (Eastin, 2001; Metzger, Flanagin, & Zwarun, 2003). To account for the perceived credibility of the source and its information, Eastin's (2001) three-item scale of source credibility was adapted to specifically assess the credibility of the online information presented in Study 2. Items include, "The comment presented on the Facebook/LinkedIn page was very accurate," "The comment presented in the Facebook/LinkedIn page was very factual," and "The comment in the Facebook/LinkedIn page was very believable." Online information in this study was normally distributed around the midpoint (α = .86, M = 3.00, SD = 1.01).

In addition to credibility, the appropriateness of disclosures may confound the influence exerted by specific statements. As the appropriateness of disclosures is often governed by the social context or interaction in which the disclosure occurs (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987), KSA- and personality-related statements not reflective of statements typically found on the online tools depicted in Study 2's stimuli material may confound the effect of the disclosure. Consequently,

three original items, "When using Facebook/LinkedIn, I often see comments like the one posted on Chris Mayburn's Facebook/LinkedIn profile," "The comment in the Facebook/LinkedIn page is appropriate," and, "The comment in the Facebook/LinkedIn page is typical for interactions on that site," assessed the naturalness of the disclosure in the online stimuli used in Study 2. Responses to items were provided on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). These initial three items were unreliable (α = .40), and so the third item (The comment in the Facebook/LinkedIn page is typical for interactions on that site) was dropped. The resulting 2-item items demonstrated adequate reliability (α = .65) and were used to measure the naturalness of online information.

Finally, to assess the perceived reliability and accuracy of the online information, three items were adopted from previous research into the reliability and accuracy of online word of mouth advertising (Park & Lee, 2009). Directly assessing the credibility and influence of the online information presented in the stimuli, these items asked participants to agree with the statements, "Overall, I think the online information about Chris Mayburn is credible," "I would refer to the online information presented in a hiring decision," and, "This online information would crucially affect my hiring decision about Chris Mayburn" on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The items demonstrated questionable but adequate reliability, α = .64. Additionally the final two items served as a reliability check of the seven items used to assess *willingness to progress,* and were significantly correlated with the willingness to progress items, $r(167) = -.22$, $p < .01$, indicating that as online information was less reliable, a participant's willingness to hire the target applicant reduced, supporting the validity of the *willingness to progress* items.

Previous Use. Prior use with a technology can influence an individual's familiarity and self-efficacy of that technology, as well as the integration of information obtained via that technology (Cotton, 1999; Torkzadeh & Van Dyke, 2002). To account for participants' previous use of the particular Internet sources used for the stimuli material for this study, two items asked participants to indicate how frequently they use Facebook (M = 3.63, SD = 1.37) and LinkedIn (M = 2.41, SD = 1.23), respectively. Responses to each item were provided on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *Never* (1) to *Often (more than once a day)* (5).

Demographics. Additionally, participants were asked to indicate their age (M = 27.13, SD = 7.73), gender (38.3% female), academic program, and months of current work experience (M = 22.18, SD = 34.89). These items were measured with single items, allowing either bivariate or interval-level responses as appropriate.

ANALYSIS

Study 1 examined the influence of positively- and negatively-valenced comments about an applicant's KSAs or personality on perceptions of PJ and PO fit. Study 2 examined the influence and interaction of negatively-valenced self- and other-generated KSA-related statements in social, professional, or mixed relational contexts online on perceptions of PJ fit. Using the data provided from participants, quantitative analysis was used to test *a priori* hypotheses. Table 3 presents descriptive data and correlations between variables in the following analyses. Tests of specific hypotheses are presented below.

Study 1

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis predicted that individuals presented with online information about a target have more attributional certainty about a target than when no online information is present.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test this hypothesis, using contrast coefficients. As group sizes were comparable between conditions, contrast testing is appropriate to for focused comparisons of differences between groups (Hayes, 2005; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1985). Contrasts were assigned to reflect the predicted directional increase in attributional certainty in experimental conditions. Each of the four experimental conditions of Study 1 was assigned a contrast coefficient of +1 to reflect greater attributional certainty, while the control condition was assigned a contrast coefficient of -4, reflecting an orthogonal test. Table 4 presents contrast weights and descriptive statistics for this and subsequent hypothesis tests.

Three separate contrasts tests were conducted to test for differences in groups. The first contrast test, using the CL7 scale as a dependent variable, did not reveal significant differences in *general certainty* between conditions where subjects viewed online information and those only viewing an applicant's cover letter, application, and resume, $t(84) = 1.06$, $p = .15$, one-tailed, $d = .08$. The second contrast test, using the Person-Job Fit Certainty scale as a dependent variable, did not reveal significant differences in *person-job fit certainty* between conditions where subjects viewed online information and those only viewing an applicant's cover letter, application, and resume, $t(84) = .33$, $p = .37$, one-tailed, $d = .05$. The third contrast test, using the Person-Organization Fit Certainty scale as a dependent variable, revealed no significant differences in *person-organization fit certainty* between conditions where subjects viewed online information and those only viewing an applicant's cover letter, application, and resume, $t(84) = -1.15$, $p = .13$, one-tailed, $d = -.26$. Taken together, these three tests do not support H1, with attributional certainty not statistically greater when online information is presented in addition to a cover letter, application, and resume. These results are depicted in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis predicted that perceivers presented with positively-valenced online information about a job applicant report perceptions of more positive perceptions (a) person-job fit and (b) person-organization fit than when the positively-valenced information is not present. To test initial differences in perceptions of fit, two contrast tests were used to test the hypothesis by comparing perceptions of PJ fit and PO fit between the control condition and conditions in which positively-valenced information (either KSA or personality in nature) were presented. Each of the two experimental conditions of interest was assigned a contrast coefficient of +1 to reflect more positive perceptions of fit, while the control condition was assigned a contrast coefficient of -2, creating an orthogonal test. The first contrast test did not reveal significant differences in *perceived person-job fit* between conditions, $t(51) = 1.24$, $p = .11$, one-tailed, $d = .35$, so that perceptions of PJ fit were not more positive when subjects viewed positively-valenced online information than when subjects viewed only an applicant's cover letter, application, and resume. The second contrast test also did not reveal significant differences in *perceived person-organization fit* between conditions, $t(51) = -1.15$, $p = .13$, one-tailed, $d = -.31$, so that perceptions of PO fit were not more positive when subjects viewed positively-valenced online information than when subjects viewed only an applicant's cover letter, application, and resume. More focused tests were used to assess the validity of the directional effects predicted in H2a and H2b.

To test H2a, that PJ perceptions were more positive when participants were presented with positively-valenced online information about an applicant's KSAs than the perceptions of participants in the control condition, a *t*-test was conducted using the PJ fit scale as a dependent variable. The result of the *t*-test did not support H2a, $t(51) = 1.02$, $p = .16$, $d = .29$. Perceived PJ

fit was not significantly different when presented with positively-valenced online information about the applicant's KSAs (M = 3.48, SD = .74) than in the control condition where no online information was present (M = 3.26, SD = .63).

To test H2b, that PO perceptions were greater when participants were presented with positively-valenced online information about an applicant's personality than the perceptions of participants in the control condition, a t-test was conducted using the PO fit scale as a dependent variable. The result of the t-test did not support H2b, $t(51) = -.79$, $p = .22$, $d = -.22$. Further, contrary to expected effects, trends in the data indicated perceived PO fit was less when presented with positively-valenced online information about the applicant's personality (M = 3.13, SD = .74) than in the control condition where no online information was present (M = 3.30, SD = .63). These results, as well as those of the following analysis of H3, are represented in Figure 2.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis predicted that perceivers presented with negatively-valenced online information about a job applicant report more negative perceptions of (a) person-job fit and (b) person-organization fit than when the negatively-valenced information is not present. To test initial differences in perceptions of fit, a contrast test was used to test the global hypothesis by comparing perceptions of PJ fit and PO fit between the control condition and conditions in which negatively-valenced information (either KSA or personality in nature) were presented. Each of the two experimental conditions of interest was assigned a contrast coefficient of -1 to reflect more negative perceptions of fit, while the control condition was assigned a contrast coefficient of +2, creating an orthogonal test. To test initial differences in perceptions of fit, two contrast tests were used to test the hypothesis by comparing perceptions of PJ fit and PO fit between the

control condition and conditions in which positively-valenced information (either KSA or personality in nature) were presented. Each of the two experimental conditions of interest was assigned a contrast coefficient of +1 to reflect more positive perceptions of fit, while the control condition was assigned a contrast coefficient of -2, creating an orthogonal test. The first contrast test did not reveal significant differences in *perceived person-job fit* between conditions, $t(55) = -.21$, $p = .42$, one-tailed, $d = -.06$, so that perceptions of PJ fit were not more negative when subjects viewed negatively-valenced online information than when subjects viewed only an applicant's cover letter, application, and resume. The second contrast test also did not reveal significant differences in *perceived person-organization fit* between conditions, $t(55) = .92$, $p = .18$, one-tailed, $d = .25$, so that perceptions of PO fit were not more negative when subjects viewed negatively-valenced online information than when subjects viewed only an applicant's cover letter, application, and resume. More focused tests were used to assess the validity of the directional effects predicted in H3a and H3b.

H3a predicted that PJ fit perceptions are more negative when participants were presented with negatively-valenced online information about an applicant's KSAs than the perceptions of participants in the control condition. A *t*-test was conducted to determine whether perceptions of PJ fit were different when participants were presented with negatively-valenced online information about the applicant's KSAs ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .53$) than in the control condition where no online information was present ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .63$). The result of the *t*-test was not significant, $t(55) = -.19$, $p = .43$, $d = -.05$, not supporting H3a.

H3b predicted PO fit perceptions are more negative when participants were presented with negatively-valenced online information about an applicant's personality than in the control condition when participants were only presented with applications, cover letters, and resumes. A

t-test was conducted to determine whether perceptions of PO fit were different when participants were presented with negatively-valenced online information about the applicant's personality (M = 3.00, SD = .73) than in the control condition where no online information was present (M = 3.20, SD = .58). The result of the *t*-test was not significant, $t(55) = .98$, $p = .17$, $d = .26$, not supporting H3b.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis predicted that online information about a job applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities influences perceivers' perceptions of an applicant's person-job fit more than the perceiver's perceptions of an applicant's person-organization fit. To test this hypothesis, a *z*-test was used to test differences in correlations between variables of interest across conditions by using a *z*-test. To begin testing this hypothesis, two *t*-tests were used to test differences in perceptions of an applicant's fit across conditions. The first *t*-test revealed perceptions of PJ fit were more positive when participants were presented online information addressing an applicant's KSAs than when presented online information addressing an applicant's personality, $t_1(62) = 1.70$, $p < .05$, $r = .19$. The second *t*-test revealed perceptions of PO fit were not significantly different when participants were presented online information addressing an applicant's KSAs than when presented online information addressing an applicant's personality, $t_2(62) = .16$, $p = .44$, $r = .02$. Next, the effect sizes (*r*s) of these results were transformed into Fisher *z'* scores using an online statistic calculator (Preacher, 2010) to compute a Fisher's *r*-to-*z'* transformation (Hayes, 2005), $z'_1 = .196$ and $z'_2 = .002$. A *z*-test revealed effects of KSA-related information were not statistically greater than effects of

personality-related information on participants' perceptions of an applicant's PJ fit, $z(61) = .93$, $p = .35$. Consequently, H4 was not supported.

Hypothesis 5

The fifth hypothesis predicted that online information about a job applicant's personality influences perceiver's perceptions of an applicant's person-organization fit more than the perceiver's perceptions of an applicant's person-job fit. To test this hypothesis, again, two *t*-tests were used to first test differences in perceptions of an applicant's fit across conditions. The first *t*-test revealed perceptions of PO fit were not significantly different when participants were presented online information addressing an applicant's than when presented online information addressing an applicant's KSAs, but not statistically so, $t_1(62) = .30$, $p = .38$, $r = .04$. The second *t*-test revealed perceptions of PJ fit were not significantly different when participants were presented online information addressing an applicant's personality than when presented online information addressing an applicant's KSAs, $t_2(62) = 1.44$, $p = .08$, $r = .17$. Effect sizes (*r*s) of these results were then transformed into Fisher *z'* scores, $z'_1 = .04$ and $z'_2 = .17$. A *z*-test between the two Fisher *z'*-scores did not reflect a significant difference in effect size $z(61) = -.74$, $p = .47$, so that effects of personality-related information were not statistically different than effects of KSA-related information on participants' perceptions of an applicant's PO fit. Consequently, H5 was not supported.

Hypothesis 6

The sixth hypothesis predicted relative positive attributions regarding an applicant's employability based on the positivity and type of online information obtained by a perceiver. Specifically, H6 predicted that perceivers are more willing to offer a job interview: a) when a

job applicant's online information positively addresses the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities more than when a job applicant's online information positively addresses the applicant's PJ fit; b) when a job applicant's online information positively addresses the applicant's PJ fit more than when a job applicant's online information negatively addresses the applicant's PO fit; and c) when a job applicant's online information negatively addresses the applicant's PO fit more than when a job applicant's online information negatively addresses the applicant's PJ fit. The applicant's perceived employability across conditions is depicted in Figure 2.

To initially test this directional hypothesis, a contrast analysis was conducted. Contrasts were assigned to reflect the predicted differences in participants' perceptions of a target applicant's employability in experimental conditions. Specifically, because it was expected to result in the most positive perceptions of an applicant's employability, the condition reflecting positive PJ information about an applicant was assigned a contrast weight of +2, the condition reflecting positive PO information about an applicant was assigned a contrast weight of +1, the condition reflecting negative PO information was assigned a contrast weight of -1, and the condition reflecting negative PJ information was assigned a contrast weight of -2, reflecting an orthogonal test of the fully-crossed experimental design. Perceptions of an applicant's employability were consistent with the expected pattern, $t(62) = 3.44$, $p < .001$, $d = .98$) so that participants viewed the target applicant's employability most positively in the positive-PJ information condition ($M = 4.85$, $SD = 1.01$), with decreasingly positive perceptions in the positive-PO information condition ($M = 4.27$, $SD = .90$), the negative-PJ condition ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.27$), and the negative-PO information condition ($M = 3.49$, $SD = .80$) respectively. This significant result generally supports H6.

To confirm the sub-hypotheses, several *t*-tests were conducted to test differences between specific conditions. To test H6a, a *t*-test revealed more positive perceptions of an applicant's employability in the positive-PJ information condition than in the positive PO-information condition, $t(28) = 1.67$, $p = .05$, one-tailed, $d = .63$, confirming H6a. To test H6b, a *t*-test revealed more positive perceptions of an applicant's employability in the positive-PO information condition than in the negative PO-information condition, $t(30) = 2.60$, $p < .01$, 1-tailed, $d = .95$, confirming H6b. Finally, to test H6c, a *t*-test revealed no differences in perceptions of an applicant's employability in the negative-PO information condition than in the negative PJ-information condition, $t(33) = -1.16$, $p = .26$, $d = -.40$, not supporting H6c. Taken together, these *t*-tests and the contrast analysis provide empirical support for two of the three predicted directional effects predicted in H6.

Study 2

Hypothesis 7

The seventh hypothesis predicted that online information about a target from a single, social context results in greater uncertainty reduction than when a perceiver has online information about a target from a single, professional context. Contrast tests were used to test this hypothesis. Contrast coefficients were assigned to reflect the predicted directional increase in attributional certainty in experimental conditions. Experimental conditions providing supplemental online applicant information in only a single professional context were assigned a contrast coefficient of -1 to reflect lower expected attributional certainty, while experimental conditions providing supplemental online applicant information from only social contexts were assigned a contrast coefficient of +1, reflecting an orthogonal test.

Three separate contrast tests were then conducted to test for differences in groups. The first contrast test, using the CL7 scale as a dependent variable, did not reveal significant differences in *general certainty* when subjects viewed online information from only a social context than when subjects viewed online information from only a professional context, $t(52) = -.07$, $p = .47$, $d = -.02$. The second contrast test, using the Person-Job Fit Certainty scale as a dependent variable, did not reveal significant differences in *person-job fit certainty* between conditions when subjects viewed online information from only a social context than when subjects viewed online information from only a professional context, $t(52) = -.54$, $p = .33$, $d = -.15$. The third contrast test, using the Person-Organization Fit Certainty scale as a dependent variable, did not reveal significant differences in *person-organization fit certainty* between conditions when subjects viewed online information from only a social context than when subjects viewed online information from only a professional context, $t(52) = .18$, $p = .43$, $d = .05$. Taken together, these three tests do not support H7. These results, as well as those of the following analysis of H8, are represented in Figure 3.

Hypothesis 8

The eighth hypothesis predicted that online information about a target from a multiple sources reflecting both professional and social context results in substantial uncertainty reduction greater than when a perceiver has online information from either single context. Planned contrast tests were used to test this hypothesis, using contrast coefficients. Contrasts were assigned to reflect the predicted directional increase in attributional certainty in experimental conditions. The four experimental conditions providing supplemental online applicant information in only a single context (either social or professional) were each assigned a contrast coefficient of -1 to reflect lower expected attributional certainty, while the two experimental conditions providing

supplemental online applicant information from both a social context and a professional context were each assigned a contrast coefficient of +2, reflecting an orthogonal test.

Three separate contrast test were then conducted to test for differences in groups. The first contrast test, using the CL7 scale as a dependent variable, did not reveal significant differences in *general certainty* between conditions when subjects viewed online information from both a social context and a professional context and when subjects viewed online information from only a social context or a professional context, $t(72) = -.24$, $p = .41$, $d = -.04$. The second contrast test, using the Person-Job Fit Certainty scale as a dependent variable, did not reveal significant differences in *person-job fit certainty* between conditions when subjects viewed online information from both a social context and a professional context and when subjects viewed online information from only a social context or a professional context, $t(72) = -.45$, $p = .33$, $d = -.11$. The third contrast test, using the Person-Organization Fit Certainty scale as a dependent variable, revealed significant differences in *person-organization fit certainty* between conditions $t(72) = -2.31$, $p < .05$, 1-tailed, $d = -.55$, contrary to the expected direction, so that participants had less person-organization fit certainty when viewing online information from both a social context and a professional context than when viewing online information from only a social context or a professional context. Taken together, these provide partial support for H8, so that online information decreased perceiver's person-organization fit certainty about a target applicant when drawn from a multiple relational contexts rather than either a social or a professional context, but did not significantly affect general attributional certainty or person-job fit certainty.

Hypothesis 9

The ninth hypothesis addressed the warranting effect of online information predicting that perceivers see a target as having greater knowledge, skills, and abilities when presented with online information created by third-parties about the target's knowledge, skills, and abilities then when seeing information about the target's knowledge, skills and abilities created by the target. A *t*-test was used to test for differences in perceived Person-Job Fit between experimental conditions in Study 2. Because all information was negatively-valenced in Study 2, *stronger effects* would manifest as more negative perceptions of PJ fit. A one-tailed did not demonstrate significantly different perceptions of PJ fit between conditions based on authorship $t(76) = -.23$, $p = .41$, one-tailed, $d = .05$. Results indicated that perceptions of PJ fit were not significantly different when participants were presented with third-person information about the target applicant ($M = 2.91$, $SD = .82$) than when presented with first person information ($M = 2.87$, $SD = .80$). These results are depicted in Figure 4.

Research Question

Though the previous nine hypotheses addressed specific *a priori* predictions of the effect of online information, the research question sought to better understand the complex interaction between information's warranting value and the relational contexts from which information is obtained. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was initially conducted to determine the main effects and interaction of the independent variables of interest on the dependent variable, perceived PJ fit. Dummy codes were used for the ANOVA, so that conditions in which participants viewed information authored by a third party and in which they viewed information from multiple contexts were coded as values of 1, while conditions in which participants viewed information authored by the applicant and in which they viewed information from a single (either

a social or professional) context were coded as 0. Results of ANOVA was not significant, $F(3, 77) = .75$, $p = .34$, $\eta^2 = .03$.

Next, a second analysis was conducted to account for the potentially confounding influence of homophily on the main and interaction effects of authorship and context of online information. A correlation test between the dependent variable, perceived PJ fit, demographic, variables, and homophily (see Table 3) revealed that demographic variables were not significantly correlated with perceived PJ fit; however homophily was significantly correlated with PJ fit, $r = .40$, $p < .001$. Consequently, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to assess the main and interaction effects of those independent variables on the dependent variable, perceived PJ fit, accounting for the covariance of homophily. The resulting ANCOVA was significant, $F(4, 73) = 6.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$. Results of the ANCOVA indicated that although homophily accounted for a significant amount of variance in predicting PJ fit, $F(1, 73) = 22.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta_{partial}^2 = .21$, the experimental conditions did not account for significant variance in perceived PJ fit. The main effects of first or third person authorship, $F(1, 73) = .17$, $p = .69$, $\eta_{partial}^2 = .01$, main effect of observation in multiple as compared to a single context, $F(1, 73) = 2.41$, $p = .31$, $\eta_{partial}^2 = .02$, and interaction effect, $F(1, 73) = .06$, $p = .81$, $\eta_{partial}^2 < .01$, were statistically non-significant. Taken together, these analyses indicate the warranting effect and observation across multiple contexts do not significantly interact to influence perceptions of PJ fit, even after controlling for the effect of homophily.

DISCUSSION

General Overview

These studies address the influence of online information about job applicants on employers' perceptions of specific applicant characteristics: Person-job and person-organization fit. Job applicants are increasingly motivated to compete for limited job openings by selectively presenting (or misrepresenting) themselves to employers via materials traditional required by hiring employers, such as resumes and cover letters (Posthuma et al., 2002). One way employers are enhancing their hiring processes is through the integration of online information seeking to learn about applicants. Employers turning to the Internet to obtain information about applicants may either be seeking to confirm the veracity of applicants' self-presentation or to discover additional information about the applicant beyond that required of or volunteered by the applicant (Carr, Klautke, Miller, & Walther, 2011). Although the motivations and processes behind such searches are interesting, this research has focused on the effect of online information on employers' perceptions of an applicant once that information has been obtained. Assuming that information is available, what effect (if any) would online information have on a hiring employers' belief in an applicant's ability to execute required job duties or to compliment the personalities of the existent workforce? The two studies reported represent related yet distinct looks at the effect of online information on perceptions of a target individual and two psychological mechanisms particularly salient to online information that may explain how online information influences perceptions within a hiring context.

A substantive challenge of this research stems from the complexity of many statistical results presented in the previous Results section. As noted by Levine (2011), drawing conclusions solely upon obtained statistical *p*-values can present a limited and myopic view of

experimental results, further noting that when data are complex and involve low statistical power and very small effect sizes (see Limitations section) a careful examination of trends in the descriptive data may aid in interpreting findings. Following Levine's suggestion of considered data interpretation, this section uses three specific terms to discuss data and interpret results. First, the phrase *support the hypothesis* is used to indicate statistically significant differences in the predicted directions within a test. Second, *do not confirm the hypothesis* is used to acknowledge and reflect findings within the data whose descriptive results trend in the predicted direction but did not achieve statistical significance. Finally, *reject the hypothesis* is used to acknowledge and reflect findings within the data that do not match the expected patterns of relationships, regardless of statistical significance.

Given the breadth of studies and results, the following discussion first addresses specific results within each study. Next, this chapter addresses broader implications of findings across studies. Finally, the discussion identifies limitations in the present work and opportunities for future research based on its findings.

Study 1

Of primary interest in the results is support for hypothesis H6, and its sub-hypotheses H6a, and H6b. The sixth hypothesis predicted specific directional interaction effects between the valence and focus of online information on participants' perceptions of an applicant's employability. Support for the overall test of H6 indicates that the nature of online information can influence perceivers' intention to hire a job applicant, and specific tests supported the hypotheses that positive personality-related online information favorably influenced participants' willingness to hire the applicant and positive KSA-related online information most favorably influenced participants' willingness to hire the applicant. Practically, support for H6 and H6b

suggest that applicants are most favorably considered by recruiters when the recruiter is exposed to positive information regarding the applicant's KSAs, and slightly less (but still positively) favorably considered when the recruiter is exposed to positive information regarding the applicant's personality.

However, the findings become more complex when considering the rejected H6c, addressing conditions in which online information is negatively valenced. One potential explanation for the rejection of H6c is employers may perceive negative KSAs as trainable whereas negative personalities are not malleable, causing negative personality-related online information to more strongly influence perceptions of employability regardless of when the information is obtained. Cable and Judge (1997) found that while an employer can train or retrain an employee to develop a necessary skill set, it is costly and often implausible to alter an applicant's dissonant personality, leading to personality-related information to often play a larger role in determining an applicant's employability. For example, an applicant acknowledging a certification on a resume may be considered to possess that required skill, even if an online statement identifies the applicant may be weak in that particular skill set, or at least be trained to ultimately possess the requisite level of proficiency. More concretely, an employer may seek a certified C++ programmer, and be willing to train a programmer discovered to be unknowledgeable of the C++ language, more so than a programmer whose personality is discovered to not compliment the existent programming workgroup. Other programmers can always help develop an applicant's absent or insufficient C++ skills, but may not be willing to work to influence the personality of an acerbic new hire.

Statistical analysis did not confirm two hypotheses in Study 1: H2 and H3. The second hypothesis predicted perceivers presented with positively-valenced information about an

applicant have more positive perceptions of the applicant's fit—both PJ and PO. The third hypothesis similarly predicted perceivers presented with negatively-valenced information about an applicant have more negative perceptions of the applicant's fit—both PJ and PO. Tests of both hypotheses and their sub-hypotheses generally did not reveal statistically-significant differences in perceptions of fit between experimental conditions; however, examination of means revealed non-significant differences in the predicted directions. Although analyses did not support H2 and H3, it may be due to small effect sizes of experimental manipulations. Effect sizes of Cohen's *d* ranged from .06 and .35 in the analyses of H2 and H3. Cohen (1988) suggested values of *d* ranging from .2 to .3 as reflective of a small effect. It is possible that stronger effects from the experimental manipulations may have resulted in statistically significant differences between conditions; however, additional research will be necessary to further explore this potential.

Three hypotheses in Study 1 were rejected: H1, H4, and H5. The first hypothesis predicted greater attributional certainty in conditions where participants were presented information from online sources in addition to the cover letter, resume, and application information sources presented in the control condition. In conditions where participants received additional online information about the job applicant, attributional certainty actually decreased (or, alternately, uncertainty increased) from the control condition, in the opposite direction as predicted by H1. That additional information from an online source did not significantly influence perceivers' attributional certainty in any conditions (as compared to the control condition) is particularly interesting, particularly with regard to its implications for URT. Although scholars have disagreed about the effect of additional information on the valence of interpersonal perceptions (Berger, 1979, 1987, 1997; Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Sunnafrank,

1986), they have generally agreed that additional information about a target should have some effect on attributional certainty regarding that individual. Results of Study 1 indicate no gain in attributional certainty from online information, violating both propositions of URT (Berger & Calabrese, 1975) and expectations of OVT (Sunnafrank, 1986). A question then becomes, what is it about the online information provided in this research that may have actually reduced attributional certainty beyond that derived from the resume, cover letter, and application provided in the control condition? One potential explanation is that the information, even from a novel source, duplicated (or at least was not significantly disparate from) information already addressed in the traditional information sources provided. It may be that one type of KSA-related information (such as that provided on a resume) is just the same as another (such as that posted in a SNS profile). In this case, although more data were provided to perceivers, no unique information was actually presented online to result in gains in attributional certainty. Alternately, obtaining additional information from online sources may increase uncertainty about a target individual by increasing uncertainty about the veracity of the information—although additional data may be obtained, uncertainty may be reduced should the source's credibility be ambiguous or questionable to the perceiver. Given the relative ease with which information can be posted and edited in many online sources, information from extractive strategies may provide less uncertainty-reduction value than information obtained from interactive, active, or passive strategies.

The fourth and fifth hypotheses predicted that the focus of online information would have greater influence on a specific perception of fit, and both hypotheses were rejected. A large body of literature (cf., Kristof-Brown, 2000; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) has reliably indicated that specific types of information guide particular impressions of applicants: KSA-related

information guides perceptions of PJ fit more than perceptions of PO fit, and personality-related information guides perceptions of PO fit more than perceptions of PJ fit. Results of H4 and H5, respectively, rejected these theoretically-derived hypotheses, suggesting that the focus of online information may not be as readily distinguishable or perceivable as the focus of information from offline counterparts, resulting in unexpected perceptual effects. One potential for the rejection of both hypotheses is the potentially confounding interaction between the context of information presented in Study 1 and the focus of the information. Stimuli in Study 1 used Facebook (a popular social network site) profiles to present participants with the online information specified by each condition. Although the actual messages were pre-tested to influence perceptions of either KSAs or personality, it is possible that information gleaned from an online service used for predominantly social interaction may be taken as addressing an individual's personality, regardless of the focus of that information. By situating the stimuli within a SNS profile, it is possible that information was contextualized so that even KSA-related statements regarding accounting and management procedures were still interpreted by perceivers as speaking to the target individual's personality. The validity of this potential methodological and instrumental concern could be assessed in future research, and future research may require the abandonment of issues related to the focus of information on specific perceptions of fit should they be able to systematically account for differences in the social context from which information was obtained.

Study 2

Statistical analysis did not confirm two hypotheses in Study 2: H9 and H7. The ninth hypothesis tested the warranting effect in online information, predicting more negative impression of an applicant's PJ fit when participants were presented with negative KSA-related

information authored by a third party than when presented with identical information authored by the applicant. One potential explanation for the lack of support of H9 is that perceivers may not believe online acquaintances to not be fully aware of or qualified to address the applicant's KSAs. For example, a coworker in accounting may not be able to knowledgably speak to the colleague's abilities as a production worker, as the accountant has few standards by which to objectively judge the applicant's performance, and therefore is not a credible source from which recruiting organizations may assess the veracity of the applicant's production line skills.

Alternately, it is possible that the lack of significant results exploring the warranting effect is closely tied to the lack of significant results between relational contexts (see the discussion of H8 in the next paragraph). The warranting value of online information is premised on the notion that, "in cyberspace, the connection between the self and self-presentation becomes mutable" (Walther & Parks, 2002, pp. 551-552). Particularly as individuals may present multiple selves across online contexts or interact with different social groups (Parks & Floyd, 1996; Turkle, 1995), much of the existent research on warranting has assumed that individuals are less engaged in self-presentation management online than offline. However, if perceivers believe that individuals are following the suggestions of the popular press, career counselors, and job placement offices to engage in self-presentation management techniques, the warranting value of any online information (and particularly that which can be controlled or censored, such as SNS posts and others' comments) may be lessened as perceivers believe that any online information may be strategically managed. Even a negative comment like, "You did a bad job at work today," may be taken as an in-joke between friends rather than a condemnation of the individual's work ethic and ability.

The seventh hypothesis predicted perceivers presented with online information from a single, social context experience greater attributional certainty regarding a job applicant than perceivers presented with online information from a single, professional context. Although data trended in the expected direction, the hypothesis and sub-hypotheses were not statistically supported. However, given the close ties between predictions offered in H7 and H8, the lack of statistical significance in H7 may be best explained by considering its lack of support concomitantly with the rejected hypotheses constituting H8.

Hypothesis 8, predicting greater attributional certainty regarding an applicant when online information was obtained from multiple relational contexts than when online information was obtained from a single relational context, was rejected. One possible explanation for the rejected effects of observation across multiple contexts, as well as the lack of support for effects of observation between single contexts, is that of context collapse. Marwick and boyd (2011) argued that due to their accessibility, online presentations of a self result in *context collapse*—the flattening of audiences. Individuals presenting themselves online are doing so with increasing awareness of the diversity of audiences who may be accessing their self-presentation, and may be presenting a single self across online relational contexts rather than presenting unique selves to separate online audiences as Turkle (1995) argued earlier. Consequently, it could be that the manipulation was not sufficient to differentiate between 'professional' and 'social' relational contexts, with participants only perceiving an 'online' relational context.

Berger and Douglas' (1981) original formulation of the benefit of observation across multiple contexts in reducing relational uncertainty stemmed from the likelihood that individuals were less-likely to self-monitor across interactions beyond the context in which they expected future interaction. In offline interactions, distinguishing between professional, social, familial,

and other relational contexts may be very helpful in assessing a target individual who may not self-monitor uniformly across those contexts. However, particularly given the popular press' recent demonization of the use of online information for identity theft, scams, and employment decisions, individuals may be expected to be more careful of their online self-presentation across contexts. Emergent research is beginning to substantiate this expectation, as more users are beginning to enable privacy setting in SNSs (Joinson, 2008) and sanitizing or minimizing the amount of information posted online as they become more aware of the publicness of their presentations (DiMicco & Millen, 2007; Joinson, 2001). The collapse of relational contexts online may negate the gains in attributional certainty from multiple observations between or across contexts, and (at least with regard to relational contexts) all online information may be created equally, or at least affect impressions equally.

Finally, the research question asked about the interaction between the two mechanisms (warranting and multiple contexts) commonly expected in online information seeking. Results of the analysis rejected a strong interaction between these two mechanisms. Moreover, non-significant results of main effects confirm earlier hypotheses, reinforcing the suggestion that relational contexts may collapse online so that information obtained from a single online relational context may convey similar impression-formation value as information obtained from multiple online relational contexts. Taken together, lack of support for hypotheses in Study 2 suggests online comments may be processed independently of the context from which comment is obtained, with the nature of the message conveying more impression-guiding information than the relational context from which the message is gleaned.

General Discussion

Implications for Practice

The finding that negative KSA-focused information may not be as damning as suggested by the popular press highlights a critical practical implication of this research, and particularly Study 1. Although negative information has a negative and measurable effect, the effect of negative information is not as strong as the effect of positive online information within the hiring context. Such a finding has implications for both hiring managers and for applicants.

As hiring managers turn to the Internet to seek information to supplement traditional hiring practices, they should be aware of the effect of specific information on perceptions of applicants. For those going online to seek information to eliminate applicants (Carr et al., 2011), attempts to seek negative information as a screening tool may be a witch-hunt, in that only extremely negative information may influence actual applicant perceptions, and that the majority of only mildly negative information employers are likely to find online may have little actual influence on their perceptions of an applicant's qualifications. As such, employers purposely seeking online information to screen applicants may not receive the intended return on applicant perceptions based on the time spent searching for such information. However, employers finding confirmatory, positive information may find great benefit by either validating or supplementing information from requested information sources, significantly enhancing impressions of qualified candidates.

Applicants seeking to manage their online impression should similarly take note of the findings of the present work. Though many college job placement offices and career counselors advise job seekers to make sure they are managing their online self-presentation to minimize negative self-presentation (Gilmore, Stevens, Harrell-Cook, & Ferris, 1999), job seekers may be

better-served by seeking to maximize positive self-presentation online. Given the stronger effects of positively-valenced information, job applicants may more strongly influence a potential employer's perceptions of particularly PJ fit by using online tools to demonstrate and articulate KSAs desirable to the position to which they are applying. Particularly if online information more strongly enhances perceptions of an applicant than it reduces perceptions, seeking to maximize the amount of positive information encountered by a recruiter may increase the likelihood of the applicant being considered for the position.

Implications for Warranting in Organizational Contexts

The present findings extend warranting theory into organizational relationships. Previous research into warranting theory has primarily looked at the effect of cue veracity within dyadic, interpersonal contexts like dating (Ellison et al., 2006; Gibbs, Ellison, & Lai, 2011) and the development of interpersonal affect (Walther et al., 2009). The results of this study, and specifically H9, address similar effects within the employer/employee contexts, specifically in a zero-history condition. However, analysis of H9 indicates that warranting value of information may not play as large a role in impression formation within the hiring process as in previously-studied interpersonal processes.

In many hiring scenarios, employers have never met the applicants they are considering for a job opening. With applicants motivated to unfaithfully represent themselves to obtain a desired job (Posthuma et al., 2002), employers are faced with a difficult challenge of quickly and assessing the veracity of applicant claims. However, information validating the applicant's KSAs and personalities may not be effectively culled online from third parties.

Warranting was initially offered as a theoretical mechanism to address the veracity and influence of information within interpersonal contexts, and has received increasing support in

studies of interactions between potential dating partners (Toma et al., 2008) and among college classmates (Walther et al., 2009). Results of the present work extend the application of warranting beyond friendship or romantic relationships to additionally include professional relationships, and as such represent a theoretical extension of Walther and Parks' (2002) warranting theory into organizational relationships. This extension suggests that warranting effects may not be as strong (or even exist) outside of interpersonal contexts, or at least have different thresholds for what constitutes warranted information. A criminal background check offers information from a third party and is a common practice with strong effects in hiring—ex-felons are often unable to be hired for many types of jobs. While information from third-parties such as law enforcement or credit bureaus may provide significant warranting value within a hiring context (a potential to be explored), information from personal acquaintances or pseudonymous online sources may not provide the warranted information and corresponding effect in an organizational context as in an interpersonal context. Whether this is a result of the nature of the third-party or the context of the applicant-other relationship is certainly an interesting avenue for future research to address to further understand the mechanism of warranted information within impression formation in organizational contexts.

Implications for Online Impression Formation

The findings of the present research also help unpack the complex process of impression formation from online information. Previous research has addressed how online sources are used to obtain information about others, including potential dating partners (Ellison et al., 2006) and existent relational partners (Antheunis et al., 2010; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011). However, such research has typically been conducted within a single relational context: Information about dating partners was obtained from an online dating site, or information about a

social connection was obtained from a SNS. The present research extends existent literature beyond impression formation within a single relational context to explore how online information helps guide impressions of a target individual. The number of non-supported hypotheses addressing the influence of relational contexts from which information was obtained suggests a complex relationship between the context from which information is gleaned online and the effect of such information on impression formation.

A common theme in the discussion is the importance and influence of context on impression formation. The lack of confirmation of H2, H3, and H7 suggest that the social context from which online information is obtained may significantly alter how that information is assimilated by a perceiver into the impression of a target individual's self. The present results do not clearly indicate the role or interaction of context in affecting how data regarding an individual are incorporated into one's perception of another. However, considering the non-significant main effects of context in H7 and analysis of the research question, it seems that the context in which information was obtained online does not play a strong role in influencing perceptions of an individual. Previous discussions in this manuscript have suggested the potentially explanatory role of context collapse or the ability of a particular web service to convey meaning beyond the actual content. It may be that all online information is perceived as social or targeted at a general audience, and as such relational contexts are collapsed online and perceivers are uniformly influenced by online information regardless of the relational context from which the information was obtained. Alternately, services may carry innate impressions that convey more meaning than content posted to that site; a work-related posting to Facebook may be viewed and interpreted as a comment regarding the target individual's social experience because Facebook is perceived as an innately social service, even though the post itself was a

professionally-oriented content. This later explanation harkens McLuhan's seminal (1994) "The medium is the message," and suggests that the sources of online information may convey as much meaning as online information itself. Both of these potential explanatory scenarios indicate that future research into online impression formation should carefully and particularly consider the nature of online information being presented and interpreted. The concern of online social context playing a more significant role in impression formation than message content offers a cautionary caveat, suggesting care should be used in study design and when considering the appropriateness and magnitude of experimental manipulations.

Limitations and Future Research

These findings, while illuminative of the effects and mechanisms of online information on perceptions within the hiring process, should be cautiously interpreted with respect to design and methodological limitations. The following section details three significant limitations of these studies which may have board implications for the findings and theories tested. However, these limitations also present challenges and opportunities for future research to redress and extend the present findings to create a more robust understanding of the processes and theories being tested in the present work. The following section also attempts to identify future lines of research which may stem from the present results to more fully understand the ideas and mechanisms at play in the present work.

Sample, Size, and Resulting Statistical Power

Perhaps the largest concern for this research is tied to the relatively low sample size in each condition, particularly in Study 2. Initially, this research had intended to obtain at least 320 participants to be split across its eleven conditions, ensuring at least thirty participants per condition. Although determining the requisite sample size to ensure sufficient statistical power is

difficult *a priori*, a common convention is to have at least thirty participants per condition for between-condition analysis in social science experimental research (Lipsey, 1990; Olejnik, 1984). Due to challenges in finding MBA students willing to participate in this study, only at total of 167 could be obtained over three months of participant recruitment from across twelve institutions. As a result, there were approximately fifteen participants per condition, which may have reduced the statistical power to be able to detect significant effects (Cohen, 1988; Smith, Levine, Lachlan, & Fediuk, 2002).

Post hoc analysis of several hypotheses with the G*Power program (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2008) revealed a low statistical power statistical tests, which increased the probability of Type II errors (cf., Smith et al., 2002). Given this likelihood of Type II errors and errant rejection of many hypotheses in this research due to false non-significant statistical tests, much of the discussion has followed the suggestion of Levine (2011) by interpreting data based on descriptive statistics. Given the low sample sizes within conditions, increasing sample sizes would be expected to increase the variance of participant responses, but not the direction—if the measures are reliable (as suggested by reliability analysis) than small, non-significant differences should trend toward statistical significance as more variability is introduced through the addition of more participants. Future work may address this limitation through simple replication of each study to assess the validity of hypotheses with additional participants. Such a replication could be used to support the descriptive trends and interpretation presented here and to statistically validate these findings.

An additional potential limitation related to the sample used in this research is the generalizability of findings to actual workplace behaviors. Although previous works (e.g., Elliott et al., 2006; Gordon et al., 1986) have indicated that perceptions of MBA students are highly

reliable with perceptions of actual human resource employees, it is possible that the MBA students in this sample may not as accurately reflect perceptions occurring *in situ* in modern hiring practices. One cause for such concern is the relatively little HR experience of many participants, contrary to previous studies (Crant, 1996; Dreher & Ryan, 2004). Only 11 participants indicated previous or current HR experience. Although HR coursework and exposure to current theories and laws regarding hiring practices are extant in MBA programs, such experiences may not fully replicate the situational constraints on current HR practices and perceptions. For example, in a recent study, Carr et al., (2011) found that approximately a third of organizations have organizational policies explicating how employees may integrate online information searches into their hiring practices. Although this study did not focus on the nature of online information to which individuals are exposed, it may be that, in practice, recruiters and HR employees are unwilling or unable to access certain types of information online. While this potential would not affect the present findings, they may limit the degree to which findings may actually occur in practice.

Validity of Stimuli

A second potential limitation of this research is the validity of stimuli material, which may have influenced both the internal and external validity of the results.

Internal Validity. Although the online information materials used for the experimental stimuli were based on presentations obtained from actual online postings and were pretested to be believable disclosures within the respective online services, participants reported the online material as only moderately naturalistic ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.18$), and the items used to assess naturalism had a lower than desired inter-item reliability, $\alpha = .65$. One potential explanation for the moderate perceptions of stimuli naturalness is the format used to present materials to

participants – either digital or printed screen shots. Static images were used for stimuli material to ensure consistency of data across conditions, although may have necessarily reduced the naturalness of dynamic, hyperlinked information typically found online. It is possible that were different stimuli used that were highly (rather than moderately) naturalistic of actual online information obtained by recruiters, results may have differed.

External Validity. An additional concern is the external validity of the present results across professions and individuals. For purposes of generalizability, this research used the profile of a typical graduating senior for an entry-level management position. Although results may speak to this common scenario, results may not generalize to other job categories or industries. One way this limitation may manifest is in the influence of specific statements. While negative statements regarding an applicant's budgeting skills may be a salient concern for a management position, similar statements may not have similar effects when the applicant is applying for a job whose KSAs do not require financial management. Consequently, applicants seeking a position in the fine arts or secretarial fields may not find hiring employers' perceptions affected in the same way as reflected in this study.

A second potential manifestation of external validity concerns is in the broad search process used for entry-level positions rather than the assessment of select, previously-known job candidates. In entry-level positions, applicants are typically unknown to the employers; however, in upper-level positions, there is typically a much smaller candidate pool and hiring processes may not reflect a zero-history relationship. For example, when seeking a new CEO, most firms have only a limited number of candidates whose experience, knowledge, and availability meet the necessary job criteria (Zhang & Rajagopalan, 2003). In these examples, the small pool of job candidates is likely known to the organization, as CEO candidates have likely interacted with the

organization as either a industry competitor or associate. In these circumstances, in which initial attributional certainty is much greater than in zero-history relationships, does online information exert a similar influence or is its role minimized in favor of previous offline uncertainty-reduction strategies? Future research should seek to address these two external validity concerns and identify how different industries or prior knowledge regarding an applicant map to the present findings.

Initial Attributional Certainty

An additional point of interest in the present research is the attributional certainty of participants toward the applicant. While the stimuli material provided applicants with information about the applicant, attributional certainty was surprisingly high across conditions considering that no interaction occurred between the zero-history dyad of the participant and applicant, with a mean certainty of 50.32 (*SD* = 19.17) reported across all eleven experimental conditions. Previous research from Westerman and Tamborini (2008) had experimental dyads indicate their attributional certainty regarding their communicative partner prior to interaction and with no information regarding their participatory partner. Participants in the study still indicated a degree of relational certainty that was significantly greater than zero. The present study further indicates remarkably high perceptions of attributional certainty even in zero-history employer-applicant relationships. As perceivers had never met the fictitious applicant, what was it participants felt they were certain about regarding the applicant? Findings of the present study replicate findings from Westerman and Tamborini (2008), and strengthen their call to understand what pre-interaction impressions may exist that enable a degree of certainty about a relational partner with whom one has never interacted with nor seen. Is high pre-interaction relational certainty due to some sort of social categorization used to guide initial interactions (e.g., "I

assume the applicant has met certain criteria based on the fact an application was submitted for the job posting.") or as a result of an artifact of individual's understanding and response to attributional certainty measures (e.g., "Marking '0%' certainty would make me look stupid, so I will mark something higher.")? Future research should address pre-interaction impressions to understand the baseline certainty that seems to exist even between individuals who have no knowledge of each other, or alternately to validate the CL7 as a measure for initial interactions of unacquainted parties.

Conclusion

This research was conducted to begin to understand the effect of online information on perceptions of job applicants. Given the rash of popular press and trade articles (e.g., Brandenburg, 2008; Searcey, 2009) forwarding anecdotes of employers' human resource decisions based on information obtained online regarding job applicants and current employees, and the growing ubiquity of information amassed and searchable on the Internet, to what degree are such anecdotes generalizable to not only perceptions in hiring practices but to impression formation in general? The present work empirically suggests a more reserved influence of online information on employers' perceptions of job applicants, and likely of relational partners in general, than inferred by the popular press. Although information obtained online has an effect on how a target individual is perceived, such effects do not seem to be enough to contradict information obtained from other sources. Moreover, such effects may be moderated by various mechanisms at play, particularly perceived homophily between the recruiter and job applicant. Taken together, these findings suggest a complex yet interesting process of within an organizational hiring context deserving of additional study to further understand the intricacies involved in reducing uncertainty and forming impressions of job applicants.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table 1

Study 1 Research Design Matrix and Contrast Weights

		Valence of Information	
		Positive Information	*Negative Information*
		(X+1)	*(X-1)*
Focus of Information	*Information addressing KSAs (PJ fit)* *(+2)*	++ (2)	-- (-2)
	Information addressing personality (PO fit) *(+1)*	+ (1)	- (-1)

Table 2

Study 2 Research Design Matrices

		Context of Information Obtained		
		Professional Context	*Social Context*	*Multiple Contexts*
Source of Information	*Self-Generated (1st Person)*	1st Person Professional	1st Person Social	1st Person Multiple
	Other-Generated (3rd Person)	3rd Person Professional	3rd Person Social	3rd Person Multiple

Table 3

Descriptives and Correlations (r) Among Independent and Dependent Variables of Study 1 and Study 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Study Variables

Variables	***Mean***	***S.D.***	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**
1. General Attributional Certainty	50.32	19.17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
2. Person-Job Fit Certainty	52.36	19.72	.63***	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
3. Person-Organization Fit Certainty	43.81	22.07	.71***	.75***	-	-	-	-	-	-		
4. Person-Job Fit	3.12	.75	.05	.30***	.26***	-	-	-	-	-		
5. Person-Organization Fit	3.02	.71	.01	.15	.13	.48***	-	-	-	-		
6. Naturalness of Online Information	2.69	11.12	.07	.11	.10	.06	.10	-	-	-		
7. Credibility of Online Information	3.00	1.01	.03	.05	.02	.01	-.01	.53***	-	-		
8. Homophily with Applicant	3.30	.84	.02	.13	.13	.40***	.22***	.04	-.08	-		
9. Age	27.13	7.73	.08	.18*	.04	-.01	.12	-.08	.06	-.12	-	
10. Any HR Experience	.07	.25	.18*	.08	.12	.09	.10	-.09	-.01	-.06	.01	-
11. Gender (1 = Female, 0 = Male)	.57	.76	.05	-.06	.02	-.02	.01	.16*	-.05	.13	-.29***	.01

N = 137

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Table 4

Contrast Effects for Producing Hypotheses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 Contrast Weights, and Descriptive Statistics for Positive/Negative Information Valence, KSA/Personality-Focused Information, 1st/3rd Person Authored Information, and Social/Professional/Mixed Online Context.

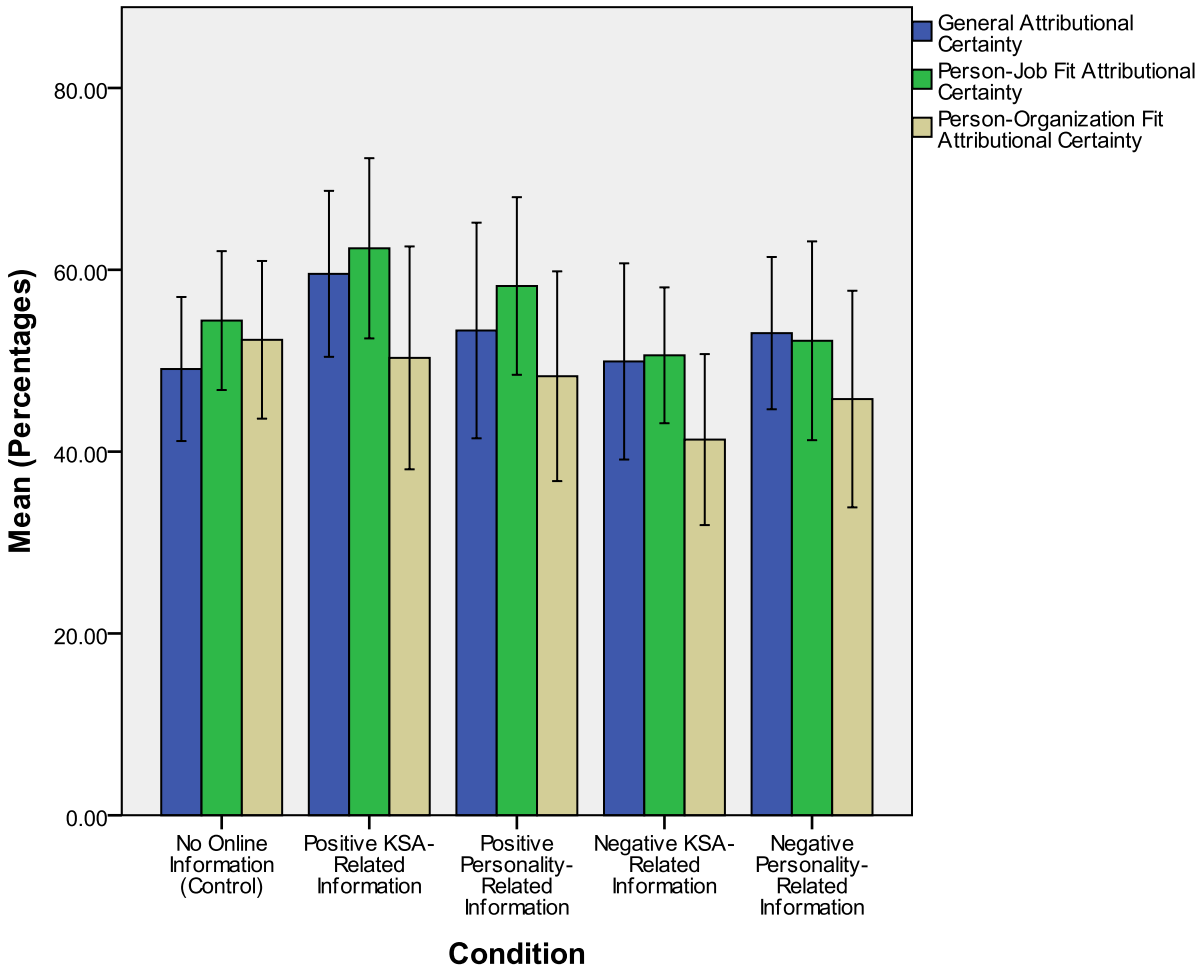
	Study 1				
		1st Person		3rd Person	
Hypothesis	Control	KSA-Focused Information	Personality-Focused Information	KSA-Focused Information	Personality-Focused Information
H1	-4	1	1	1	1
H2	-2	1	1	0	0
H3	2	0	0	-1	-1
H4	0	2	1	-1	-2
H5	0	1	2	-2	-1
H6	0	2	1	-2	-1
H7	0	0	0	0	0
H8	0	0	0	0	0
CL7 *Mean*	49.09	59.55	53.32	49.92	53.03
CL7 *SD*	18.32	17.17	21.42	21.70	16.29
PJ7 *Mean*	54.42	62.37	58.22	50.60	52.19
PJ7 *SD*	17.66	18.60	17.64	5.02	21.26
PO7 *Mean*	52.30	50.31	48.30	41.33	45.78
PO7 *SD*	20.05	23.00	20.83	18.81	23.17
n	23	16	15	18	17

Table 4 (Cont'd)

	Study 2					
	1st Person Information			3rd Person		
Hypothesis	Social Context	Professional Context	Mixed Context	Social Context	Professional Context	Mixed Context
H1	0	0	0	0	0	0
H2	0	0	0	0	0	0
H3	0	0	0	0	0	0
H4	0	0	0	0	0	0
H5	0	0	0	0	0	0
H6	0	0	0	0	0	0
H7	1	-1	0	1	-1	0
H8	-1	1	2	-1	-1	2
CL7 *Mean*	42.18	55.38	48.88	53.56	41.10	44.74
CL7 *SD*	21.23	12.61	24.81	24.19	17.94	17.94
PJ7 *Mean*	48.23	56.15	58.21	50.61	47.55	37.95
PJ7 *SD*	22.20	15.73	28.91	21.94	19.72	20.68
PO7 *Mean*	35.17	48.74	30.71	52.41	36.81	28.57
PO7 *SD*	23.03	14.34	28.89	22.72	24.78	20.41
n	14	19	6	10	13	16

Figure 1

Perceptions of Attributional Certainty by Condition in Study 1 (Hypothesis 1)



For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation.

Figure 2

Perceptions of Fit and Employability by Condition in Study 1 (Hypothesis 2, 3, and 6)

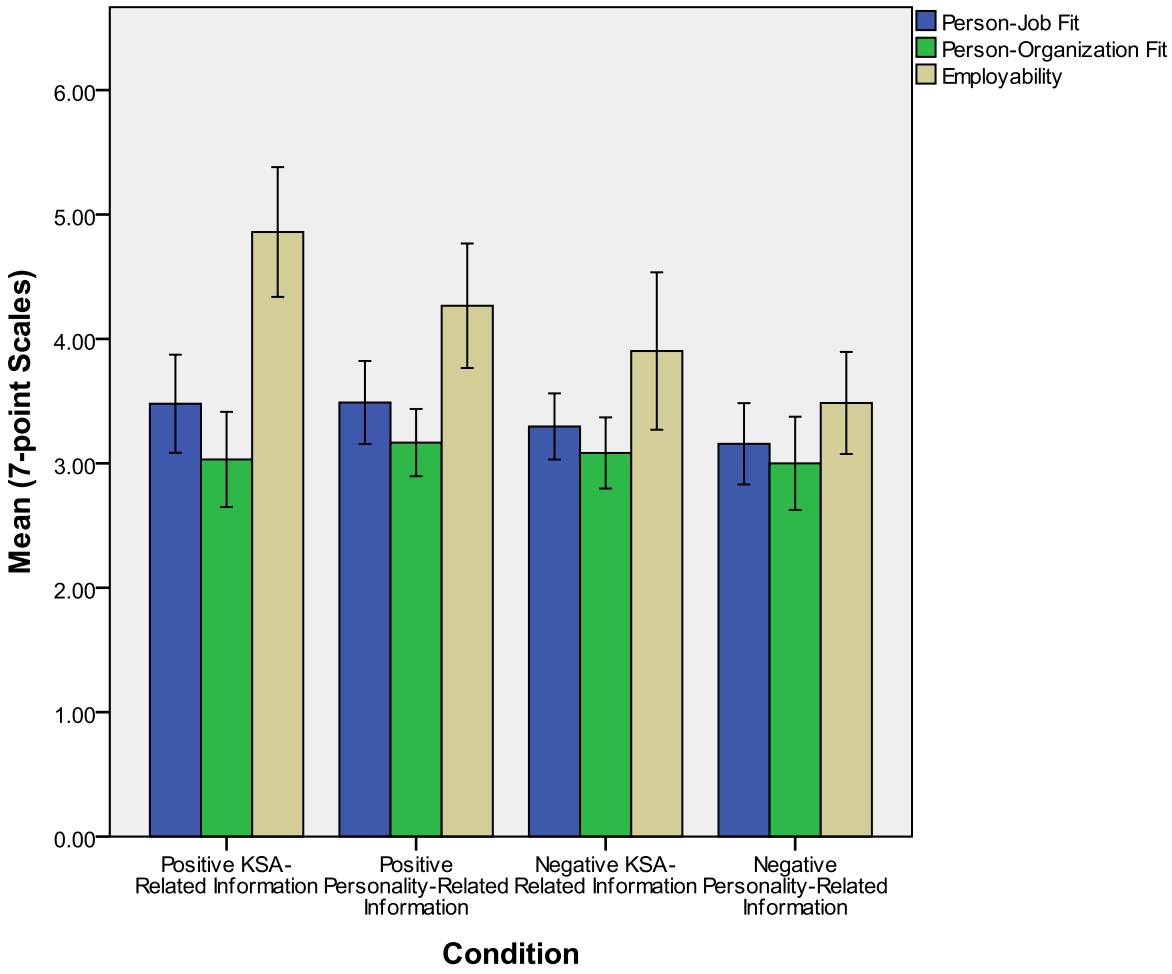


Figure 3

Perceptions of Attributional Certainty by Condition in Study 2 (Hypothesis 7 and 8)

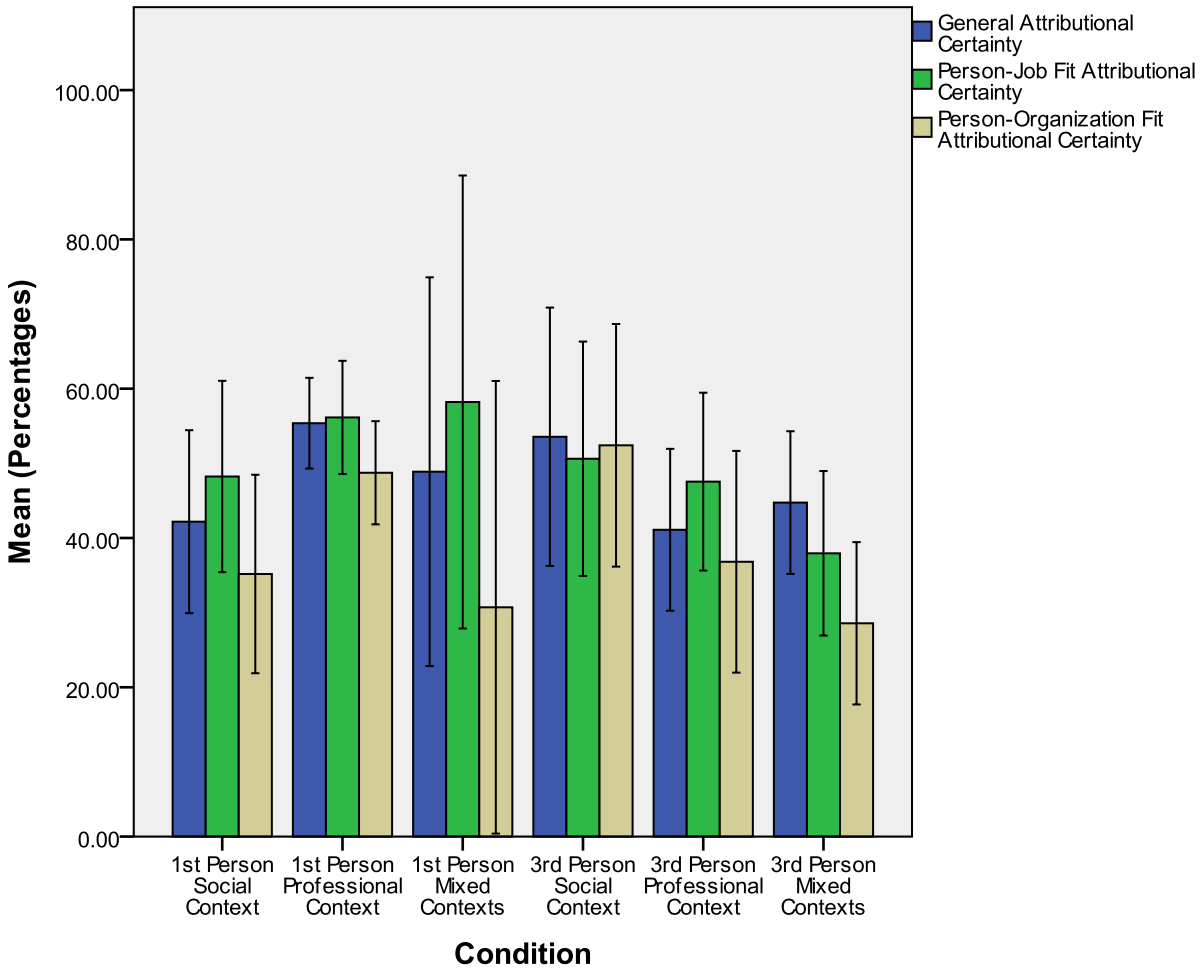
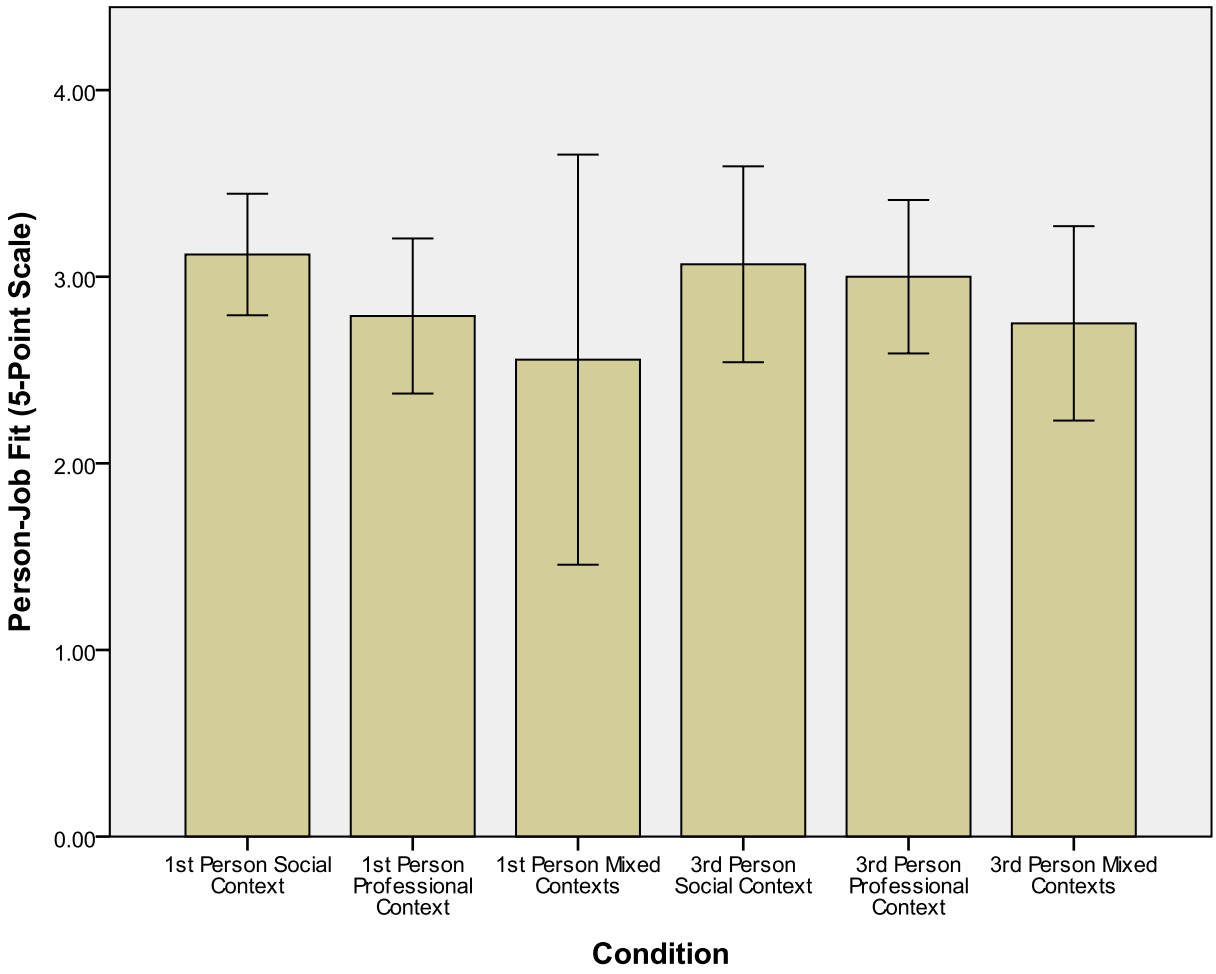


Figure 4

Perceptions of Person-Job Fit by Condition in Study 2 (Hypothesis 9)



APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument

For each of the items below, how confident are you that you could give the specified details about the job applicant in your packet? Do not actually answer the question, but rather indicate the confidence in your ability to provide the specified information**. Report the confidence of your impression based on a scale of 0% confidence (total guess) to 100% confidence (total certainty).**

1) How confident are you of your general ability to predict how this individual will behave? ___%
2) How certain are you that the applicant would like you? ___%
3) How accurate are you at predicting the values this applicant holds? ___%
4) How accurate are you at predicting the applicant's attitudes? ___%
5) How well can you predict the applicant's feelings and emotions? ___%
6) How much can you empathize with (share) the way the applicant feels? ___%
7) How well do you know the applicant? ___%

8) How well could you predict the applicant's goals and needs would be met by this job? ___% (Brkich et al., 2002)
9) How certain are you that this is the right kind of job for this applicant? ___% (Brkich et al., 2002)
10) How confident are you that you understand this applicant's previous work history and job duties? ___% (original)
11) How well can you predict this applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities? ___% (Higgins & Judge, 2004)
12) How well can you predict this applicant's ability to achieve a high level of performance in this particular position? ___% (Higgins & Judge, 2004)
13) How accurately can you predict the extent to which this job is a good match for this applicant? ___% (Saks & Ashforth, 2002)
14) How accurately can you predict the kind of work this applicant wants to do? ___% (Saks & Ashforth, 2002)

15) How accurately can you predict how well the applicant would fit in with other people who typically work for the type of workplace to which the applicant is applying? ___% (Piasentin & Chapman, 2006)
16) How well can you predict the qualities this applicant has will match those the organization seeks? ___% (Piasentin & Chapman, 2006)
17) How accurate are you at predicting that the culture of a firm like the one to which the applicant is applying highly fits the job culture the applicant believes in? ___% (Piasentin & Chapman, 2006)
18) How accurate are you at predicting how well the applicant's personality matches the 'personality' or image of the industry to which the candidate is applying? ___% (Piasentin & Chapman, 2006)

19) How closely can you predict how well people who typically work at the types of workplaces are similar to this applicant? ___% (Piasentin & Chapman, 2006)
20) How well can you predict this applicant's values? ___% (Piasentin & Chapman, 2006)
21) How well could you predict that the applicant's values "match" or fit a typical office and its current employees in the industry to which the individual is applying? ___% (Piasentin & Chapman, 2006)

The scales below address your perceptions of the applicant and your willingness to consider the applicant further for a position. Please indicate your perceptions of this applicant. **Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you: Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5**
22) This applicants' job performance would be hurt by a lack of expertise on the job. ®
1 2 3 4 5
23) The match is very good between the demands of the job and the applicant's personal skills.
1 2 3 4 5
24) The applicant's abilities and training are a good fit with the requirements of this job.
1 2 3 4 5
25) This applicant's personal abilities and education provide a good match with the demands that this job would place on them.
1 2 3 4 5
26) This applicant matches or fits the organization and the current employees in the organization.
1 2 3 4 5
27) The applicant's values reflect the own organization's values and 'personality.'
1 2 3 4 5
28) I would invite this job candidate for an initial on-site interview at an accounting firm.
1 2 3 4 5
29) I would be comfortable offering this individual a job at an accounting firm.
1 2 3 4 5
30) I would remove this job candidate from consideration for this position. ®
1 2 3 4 5
31) I would refer to the online information presented in a hiring decision. (Park & Lee, 2009)
1 2 3 4 5
32) Overall, I think the online information about This applicant is credible. (Park & Lee, 2009)
1 2 3 4 5
33) This online information would crucially affect my hiring decision about this applicant. (Park & Lee, 2009)
1 2 3 4 5

The items below address how employable you think this applicant would be for the position to which s/he is applying. **Please indicate how employable you consider the applicant for each item ranging from:**
Low Employability = 1; High Employability = 7

34) Given your overall impression of this candidate, how "employable" do you think this applicant is (i.e., how likely do you think this candidate is to receive other job offers)? (Adkins et al., 1994)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

35) Do you think people in the candidate's job field will feel this candidate is very employable (will receive many job offers)? (Adkins et al., 1994)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

36) Regardless of the candidate's qualifications, how likable is this applicant? (Adkins et al., 1994)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

37) Do you think people in an office like the one to which the candidate is applying would find the applicant likable? (Adkins et al., 1994)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

For some applicants, we were able to find additional information online about the applicant, often in the form of social network site (e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn) profiles. This section asks you to reflect on the information in your packet we found on a social network site. If no information was provided in your packet from a social network site, please skip this section and move on to "Your Similarities with the Applicant." **Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement by marking whether you:**
Strongly Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; Neutral = 3; Agree = 4; Strongly Agree = 5

37) The comment presented on the Facebook/LinkedIn page was very accurate.

1 2 3 4 5

38) The comment presented in the Facebook/LinkedIn page was very factual.

1 2 3 4 5

39) The comment in the Facebook/LinkedIn page was very believable.

1 2 3 4 5

40) When using Facebook/LinkedIn, I often see comments like the one posted on this applicant's Facebook/LinkedIn profile.

1 2 3 4 5

41) The comment in the Facebook/LinkedIn page is appropriate.

1 2 3 4 5

42) The comment in the Facebook/LinkedIn page is typical for interactions on that site.

1 2 3 4 5

On the scales below, indicate your feelings about the applicant. Numbers 1 and 7 indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers 2 and 6 indicate a strong feeling. Numbers 3 and 5 indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number 4 indicates that you are unsure or undecided. There are no right or wrong answers.

This applicant…

43) Is like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Is unlike me
44) Is different from me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Is similar to me
45) Thinks like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Does not think like m
46) Doesn't behave like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Behaves like me

47) Has a status like mine 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Has status different from mine

48) Is from a different social class 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Is from the same social class

49) Is culturally different 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Is culturally similar

50) Has an economic situation like mine 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Does not have an economic situation like mine

51) In what MBA program are you enrolled?

____OSU Full-Time MBA ____OUS Part-Time MBA ____ OSU Professional MBA
____MSU Full-Time MBA ____MSU Weekend MBA Other _____

52) Have you ever worked in an accounting firm or firms?

____Yes (Please answer questions 48a-c) ____No (Please skip to question 52)

52a) Are you currently employed at an accounting firm?

____Yes ____No

52b) Rounding up to the nearest month, how long did you work at the accounting firm(s)?

____Months

52c) How would you classify your position while at that accounting firm (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)?

1 Human Resources
2 Finance/Accounting
3 Marketing
4 Production
5 Clerical
6 Research & Development
7 Information Technologies
8 Customer Service
9 Purchasing
10 Other (please specify) _____

53) How many months have you been with your present company? ____ Months

53a) How would you classify the department to which you are primarily assigned currently (MARK ONE)?

1 Human Resources
2 Finance/Accounting
3 Marketing
4 Accounting
5 Clerical
6 Research & Development
7 Information Technologies
8 Customer Service
9 Purchasing
10 Other (please specify) _____

54) How often do you use Facebook?

1 Never
2 Rarely (about once a month)
3 Sometimes (about once a week)
4 Frequently (about once a day)
5 Often (more than once a day)

55) How often do you use LinkedIn?

1 Never
2 Rarely (about once a month)
3 Sometimes (about once a week)
4 Frequently (about once a day)
5 Often (more than once a day)

56) What is your age as of your last birthday? ____ Years
57) What is your biological gender?
____Female ____Male

APPENDIX C

Stimulus Materials for Study 1

Figure 5

Positive-Valence Information Regarding KSAs

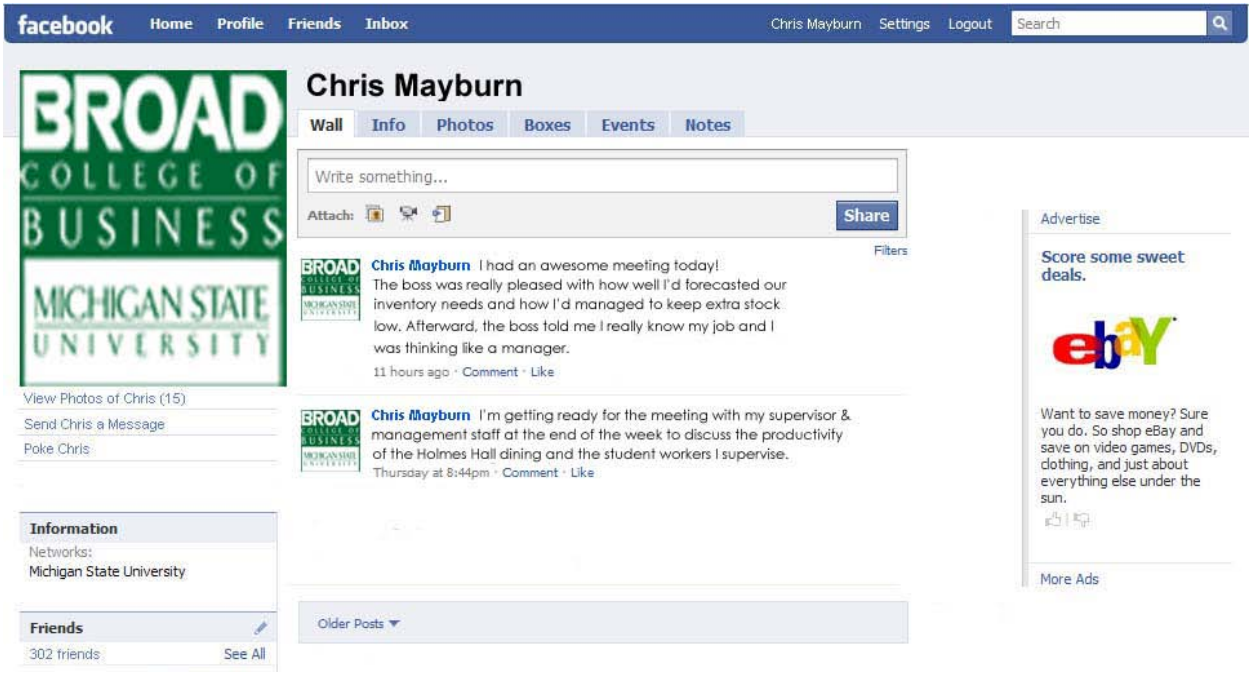


Figure 6

Negative-Valence Information Regarding KSAs

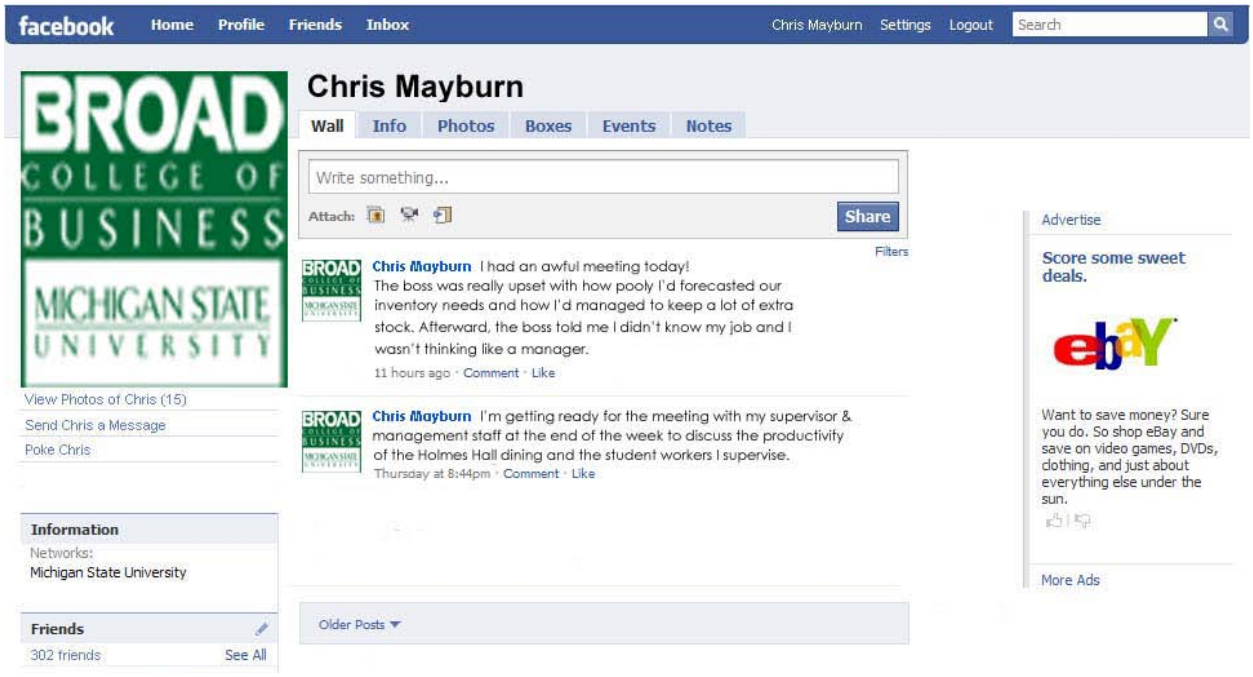


Figure 7

Positive-Valence Information Regarding Personality

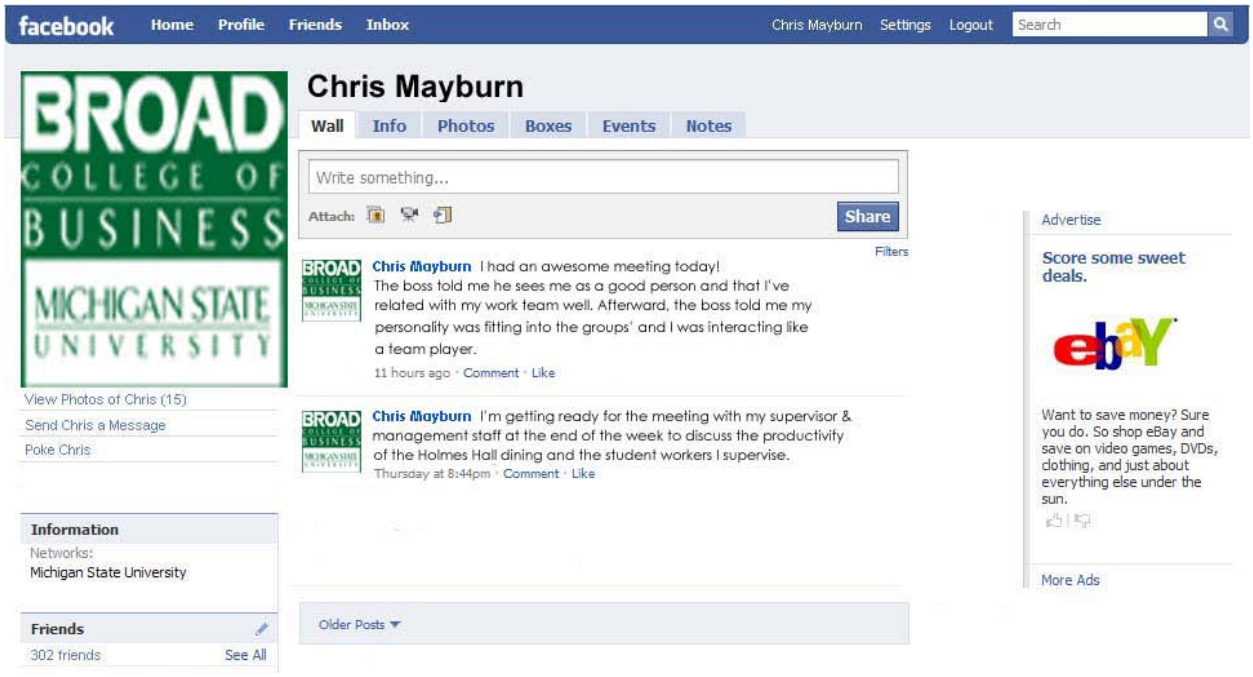
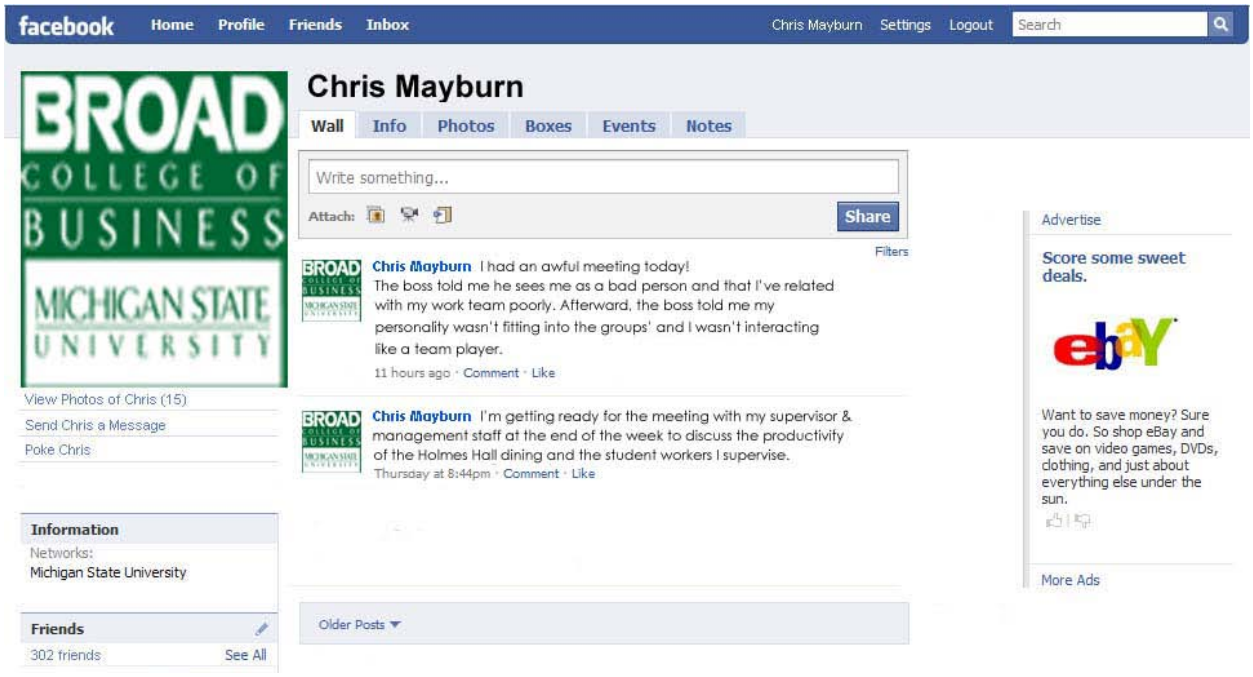


Figure 8

Negative-Valence Information Regarding Personality



APPENDIX D

Stimulus Materials for Study 2

1st Person Extracted Information in a Social Context

Figure 9

Stimuli 1.

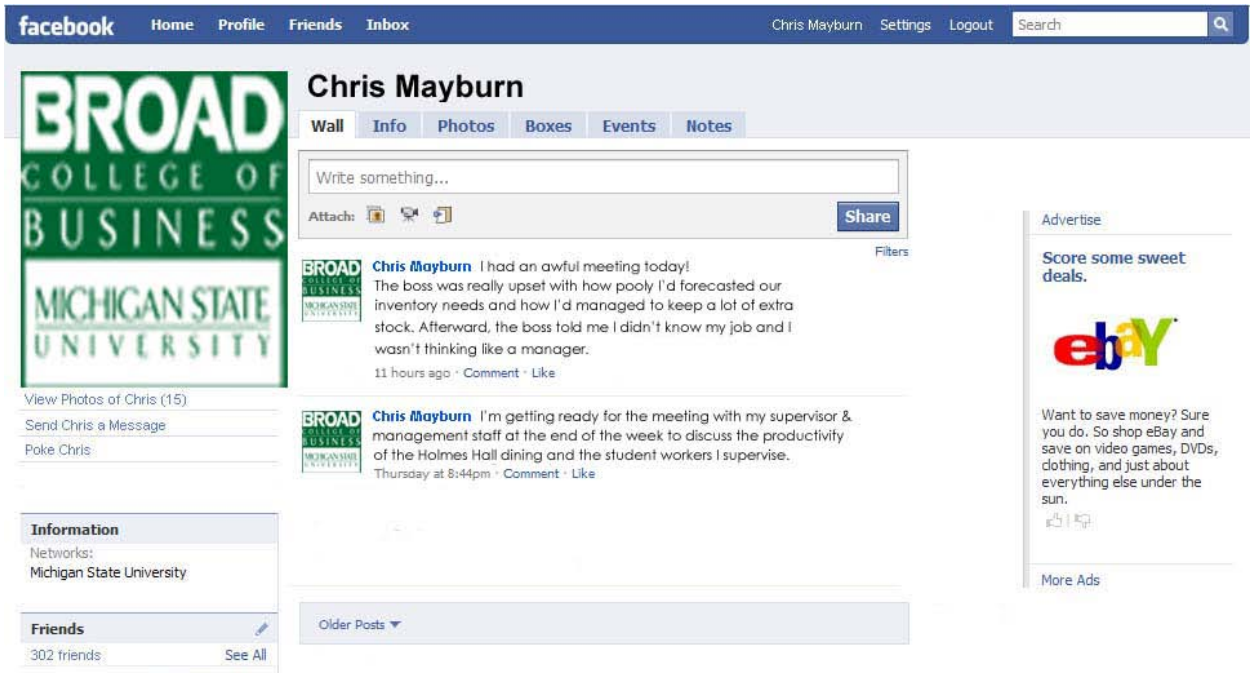


Figure 10

Stimuli 2.

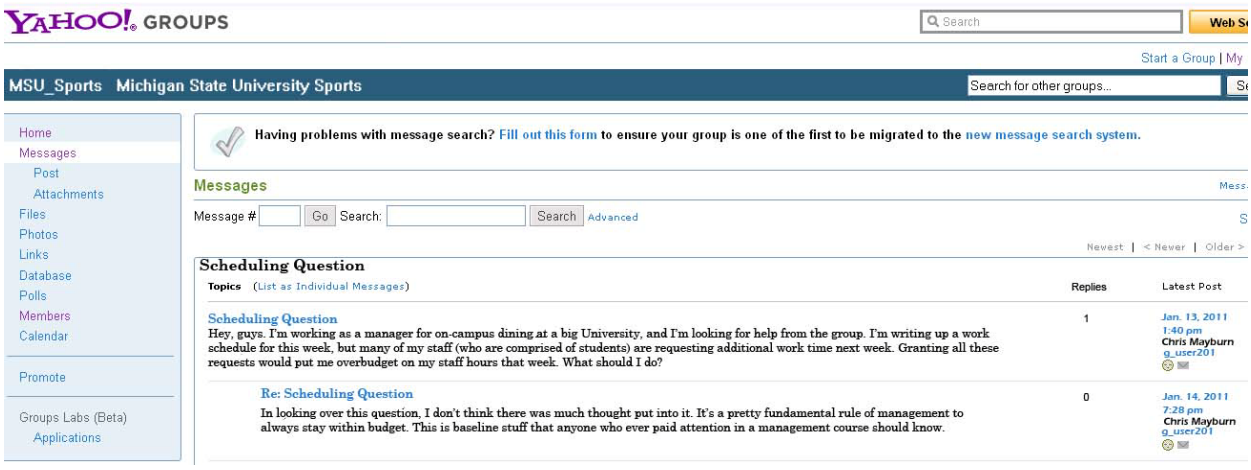


Figure 11

Stimuli 1.

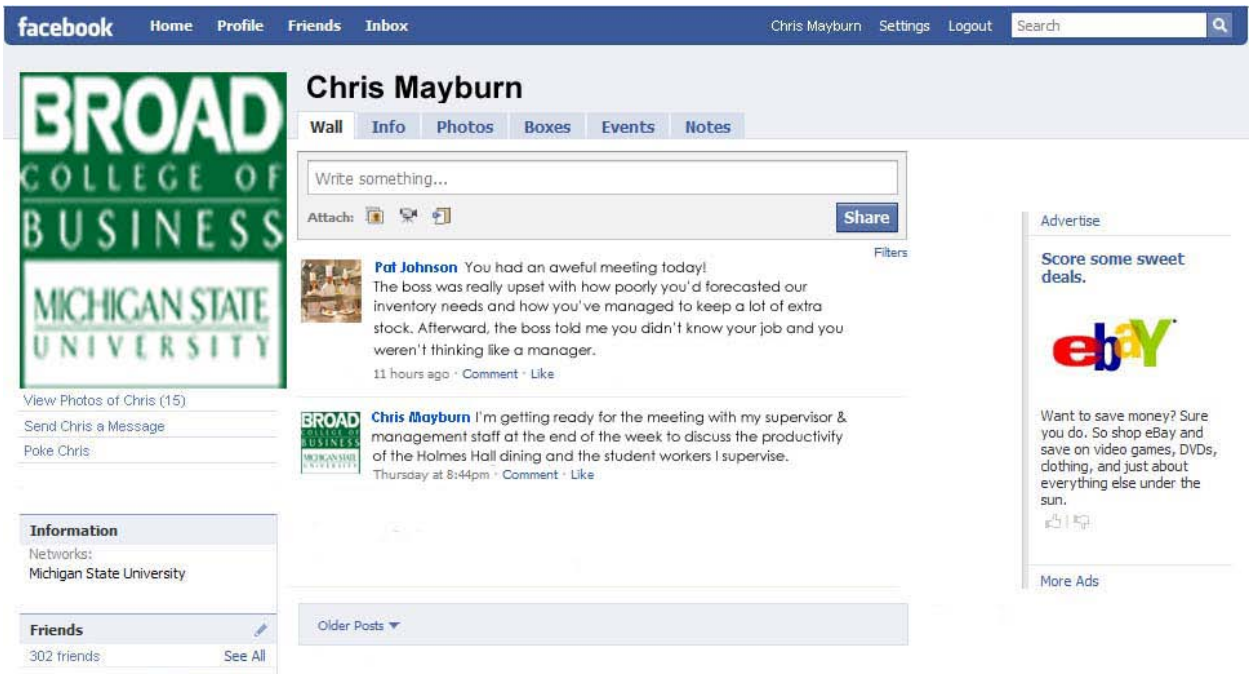
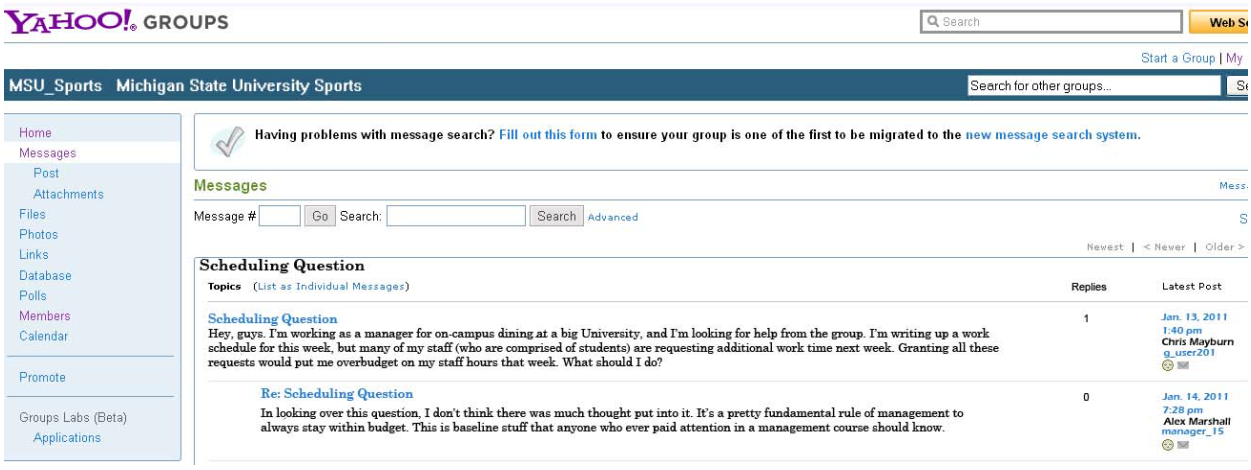


Figure 12

Stimuli 2.



1st Person Extracted Information in a Professional Context

Figure 13

Stimuli 1.

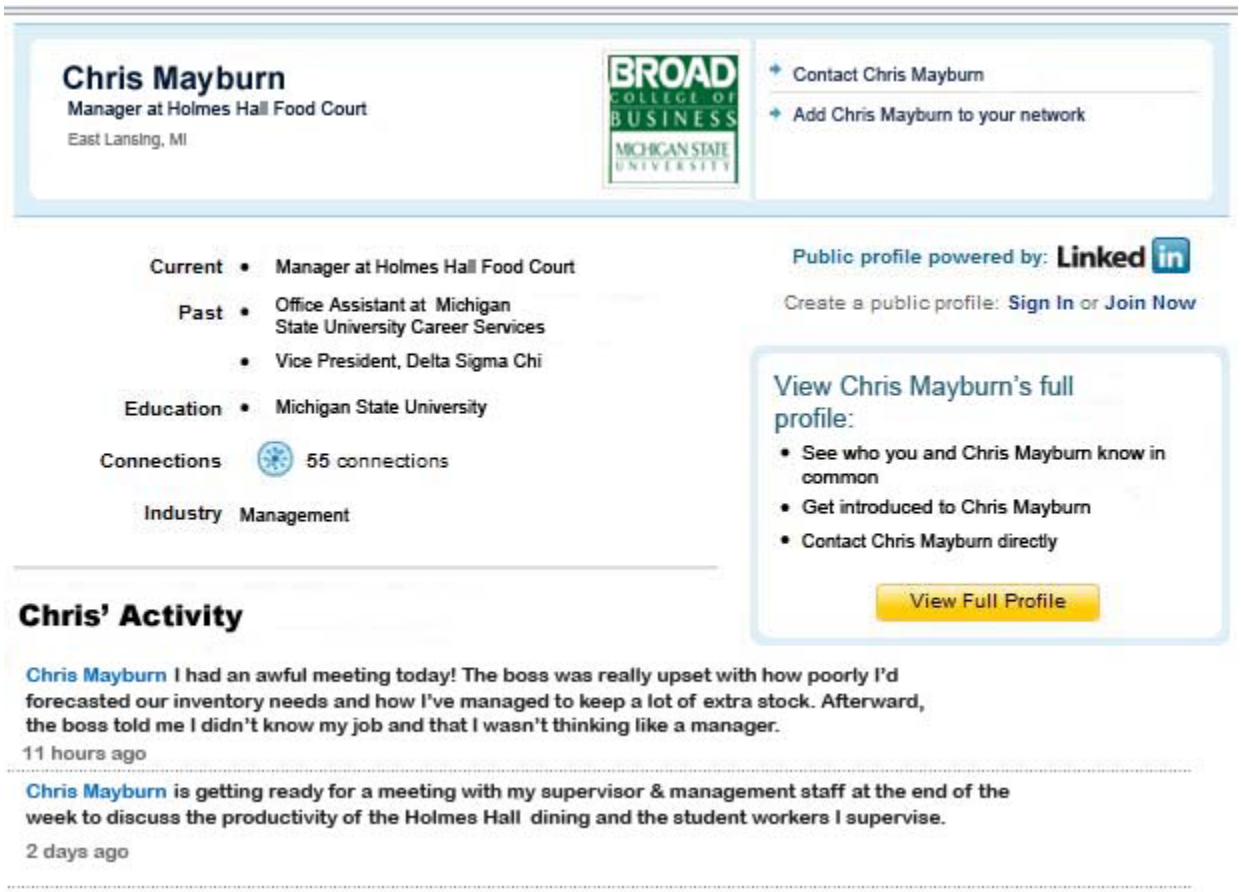


Figure 14

Stimuli 2.

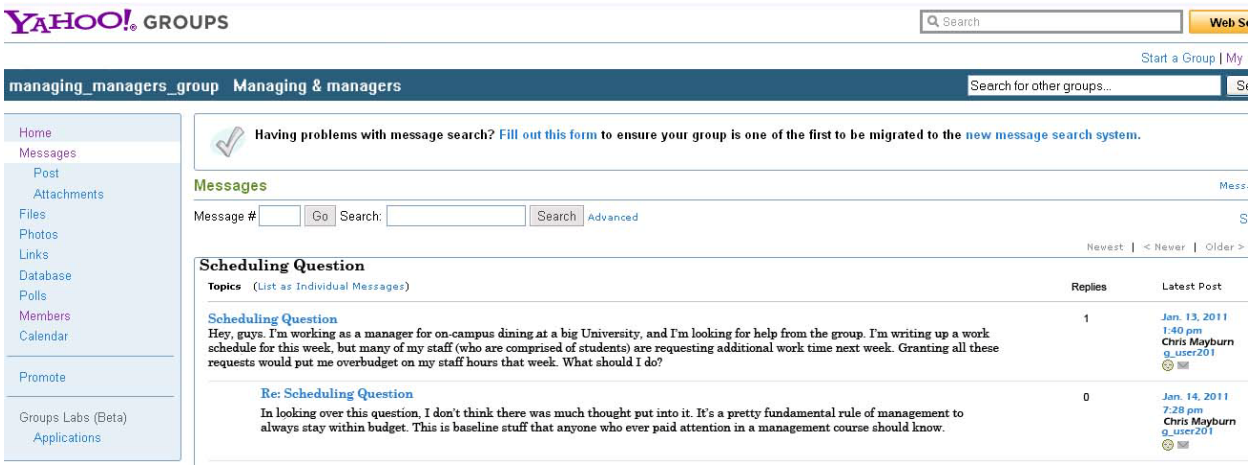


Figure 15

Stimuli 1.

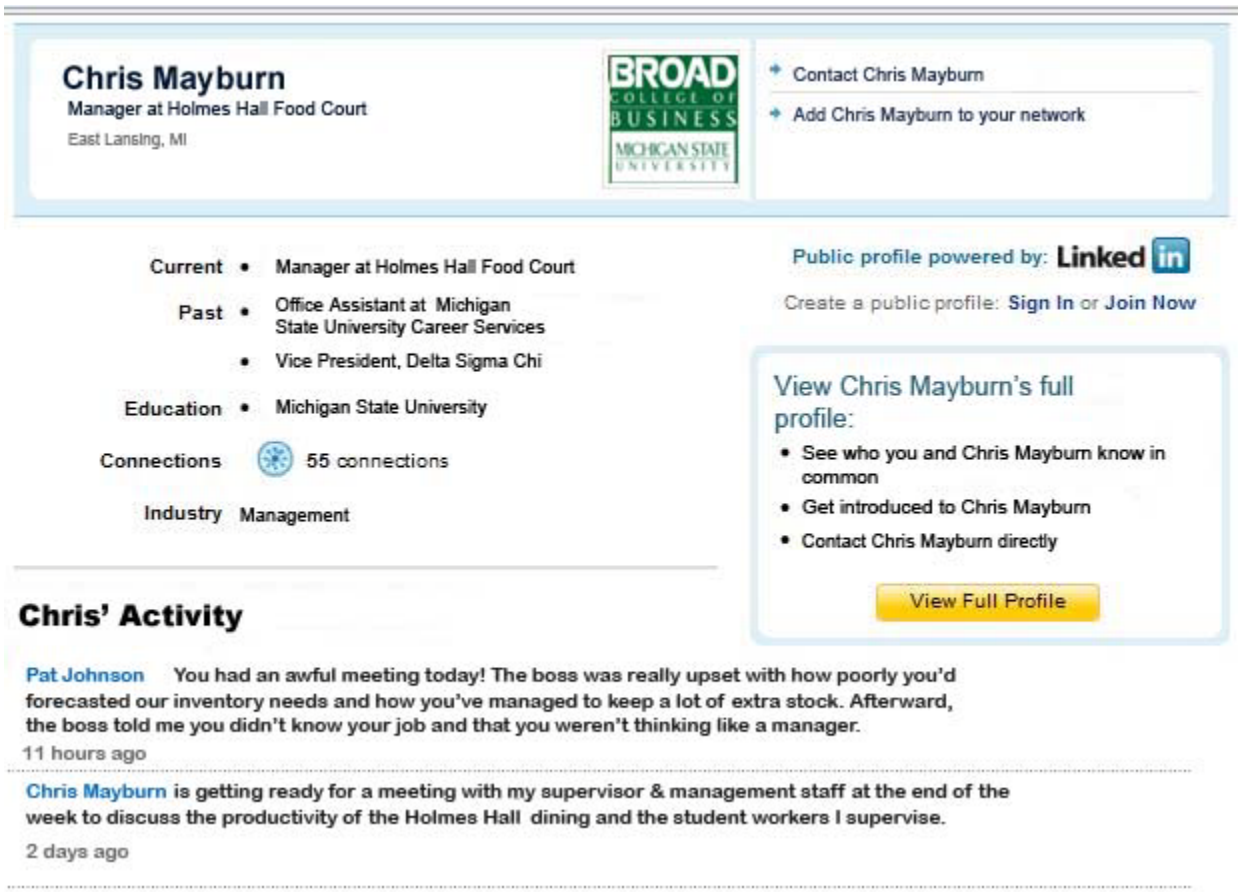
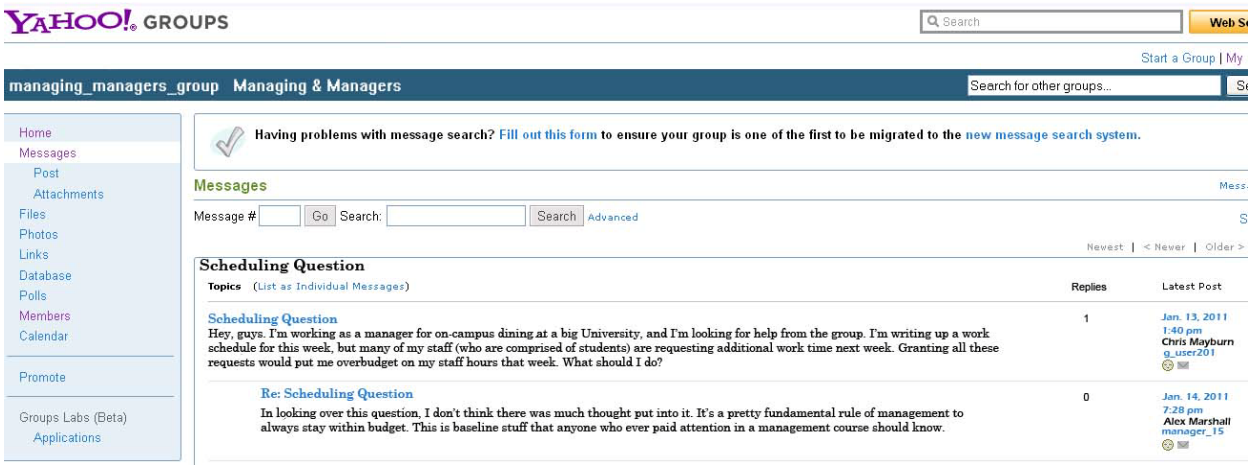


Figure 16

Stimuli 2.



Cover Letter

Chris Mayburn
413 Ridgeway Court #14
Lansing, MI 48911

February 15, 2011

Joe Smith
Human Resources Manager
Sherwin-Williams
101 Prospect Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44115

Dear Mr. Smith,

I am writing to apply for an entry level Manager-in-Training position with the Sherwin-Williams Company. My experience in management and the additional skills that I have obtained will make me an asset to your team. I have strong experience in staffing and payroll administration, as well as inventory management. I am thrilled to know that your industry's work is related to my interests.

As indicated in my resume, I will graduate this year with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Michigan State University. During my final year, I have had the opportunity to manage a group of student workers in the on-campus dining services, including responsibility for scheduling, ordering supplies, and working closely with upper management. I really believe that this experience has prepared me for the industry.

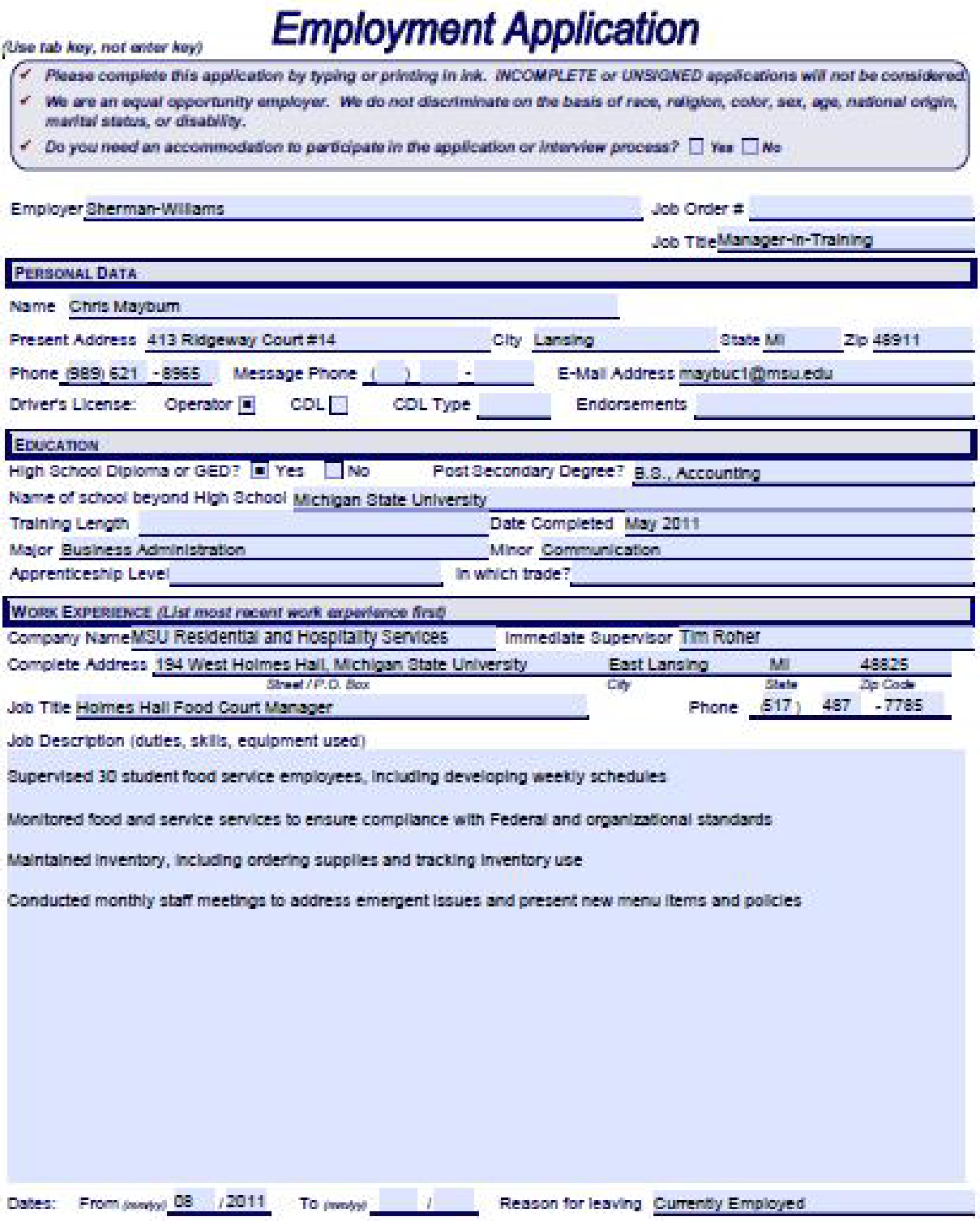
I am very interested in an opportunity and would enjoy meeting you to discuss possible positions. I believe that my previous experiences will benefit your company.

Sincerely,

Chris Mayburn

Figure 17

Application



Employment Application

(Use tab key, not enter key)

- ✓ Please complete this application by typing or printing in ink. INCOMPLETE or UNSIGNED applications will not be considered.
- ✓ We are an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin, marital status, or disability.
- ✓ Do you need an accommodation to participate in the application or interview process? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Employer: Sherman-Williams Job Order #:

Job Title: Manager-in-Training

PERSONAL DATA

Name: Chris Mayburn

Present Address: 413 Ridgeway Court #14 City: Lansing State: MI Zip: 48911

Phone: (989) 621 - 8965 Message Phone: ( ) - E-Mail Address: maybuc1@msu.edu

Driver's License: Operator ☑ CDL ☐ CDL Type: Endorsements:

EDUCATION

High School Diploma or GED? ☑ Yes ☐ No Post Secondary Degree? B.S., Accounting

Name of school beyond High School: Michigan State University

Training Length: Date Completed: May 2011

Major: Business Administration Minor: Communication

Apprenticeship Level: In which trade?

WORK EXPERIENCE *(List most recent work experience first)*

Company Name: MSU Residential and Hospitality Services Immediate Supervisor: Tim Roher

Complete Address: 194 West Holmes Hall, Michigan State University East Lansing MI 48825

(Street / P.O. Box) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

Job Title: Holmes Hall Food Court Manager Phone: (517) 487 - 7785

Job Description (duties, skills, equipment used)

Supervised 30 student food service employees, including developing weekly schedules

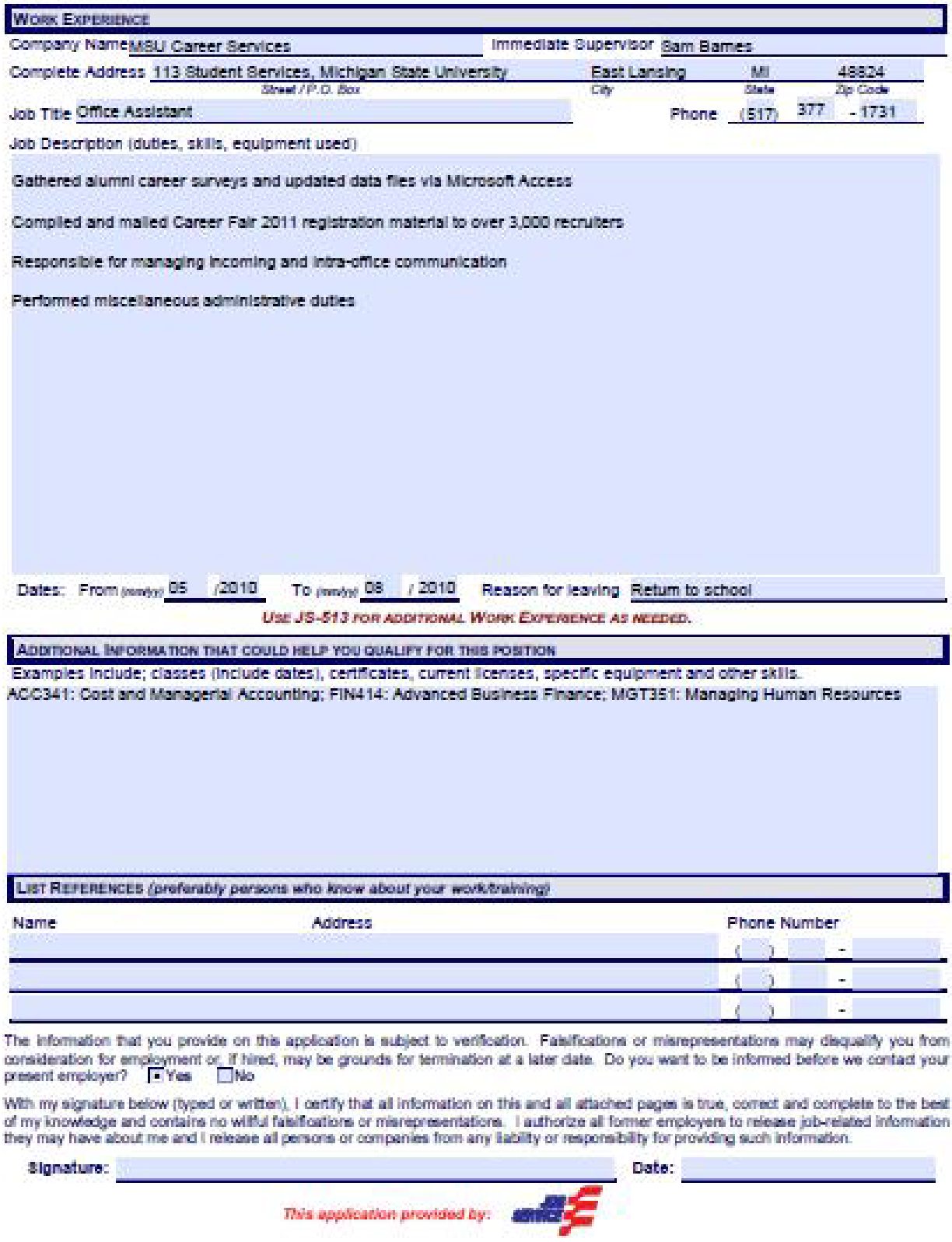
Monitored food and service services to ensure compliance with Federal and organizational standards

Maintained inventory, including ordering supplies and tracking inventory use

Conducted monthly staff meetings to address emergent issues and present new menu items and policies

Dates: From (mm/yy): 08 /2011 To (mm/yy): / Reason for leaving: Currently Employed

Figure 17 (Cont'd)



WORK EXPERIENCE

Company Name: MSU Career Services — Immediate Supervisor: Sam Barnes

Complete Address: 113 Student Services, Michigan State University (Street / P.O. Box) — East Lansing (City) — MI (State) — 48824 (Zip Code)

Job Title: Office Assistant — Phone: (517) 377 - 1731

Job Description (duties, skills, equipment used)

Gathered alumni career surveys and updated data files via Microsoft Access

Compiled and mailed Career Fair 2011 registration material to over 3,000 recruiters

Responsible for managing incoming and intra-office communication

Performed miscellaneous administrative duties

Dates: From (mm/yy) 05 /2010 To (mm/yy) 08 / 2010 Reason for leaving: Return to school

USE JS-513 FOR ADDITIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE AS NEEDED.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT COULD HELP YOU QUALIFY FOR THIS POSITION

Examples include; classes (include dates), certificates, current licenses, specific equipment and other skills.

ACC341: Cost and Managerial Accounting; FIN414: Advanced Business Finance; MGT351: Managing Human Resources

LIST REFERENCES (preferably persons who know about your work/training)

Name	Address	Phone Number
		( ) -
		( ) -
		( ) -

The information that you provide on this application is subject to verification. Falsifications or misrepresentations may disqualify you from consideration for employment or, if hired, may be grounds for termination at a later date. Do you want to be informed before we contact your present employer? [•] Yes [ ] No

With my signature below (typed or written), I certify that all information on this and all attached pages is true, correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and contains no willful falsifications or misrepresentations. I authorize all former employers to release job-related information they may have about me and I release all persons or companies from any liability or responsibility for providing such information.

Signature: Date:

This application provided by:

Figure 18

Resume

CHRIS MAYBURN
413 Ridgeway Court #14, Lansing, MI 48911
517.621.8965
MAYBUC1@MSU.EDU

EDUCATION

Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Management 2011
Minor: Communication

OBJECTIVE

Entry-level management position with a nationally-recognized corporation

EXPERIENCE

MSU Residential and Hospitality Services, East Lansing, Michigan
Holmes Hall Food Court Manager **August 2010 - Present**

- Supervised 30 student food service employees, including scheduling
- Monitored food and service services in compliance with Federal and organizational standards
- Maintained inventory, including ordering supplies and tracking inventory use
- Conducted monthly staff meetings to address emergent issues and present new menu items and policies

Michigan State University Career Services, East Lansing, Michigan
Office Assistant **May 2010 - August 2010**

- Gathered alumni career surveys and updated data files using Microsoft Access
- Updated literature, counseling, and recruiting literature for employers
- Compiled and mailed Career Fair 2011 registration material to over 3,000 recruiters
- Responsible for managing multi-line telephone system and coordinating incoming and intra-office communication
- Performed miscellaneous administrative duties

MEMBERSHIPS

Delta Sigma Chi Business Fraternity **January 2009 - Present**
Vice President, 2009-2010

REFERENCES

References available upon request

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

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