Employee Recruitment

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Abstract

The way an organization recruits can influence the type of employ-
ees it hires, how they perform, and their retention rate. This article
provides a selective review of research that has addressed recruitment
targeting, recruitment methods, the recruitment message, recruiters,
the organizational site visit, the job offer, and the timing of recruitment
actions. These and other topics (e.g., the job applicant's perspective)
are discussed in terms of their potential influence on prehire (e.g., the
quality of job applicants) and posthire (e.g., new employee retention)
recruitment outcomes. In reviewing research, attention is given to the
current state of scientific knowledge, limitations of previous research,
and important issues meriting future investigation.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

Regardless of the type of organization, it is generally accepted that an employer's success is closely tied to the type of individuals it employs (Dineen & Soltis 2011). Given that the way an employer recruits affects the type of individuals who are hired, it is not surprising that the topic of employee recruitment has attracted considerable attention. The goals of this review are to provide a sense of the current state of scientific knowledge on major recruitment topics, point out limitations of previous research, and highlight important issues meriting future investigation.

    This is the first article on employee recruitment to appear in the *Annual Review of Psychology*. Therefore, for most topics, this article provides an overview of early research that has been conducted (arbitrarily defined as studies published prior to 2000) before more recent research is addressed (for some topics such as Web-based recruiting, there is no pre-2000 research to discuss). The first recruitment topic examined is the most fundamental issue an employer faces—the type of individuals to target for recruitment. Having decided on the type of individuals to recruit, an organization needs to determine the method to use to reach these individuals, the recruitment message to convey, and the type of recruiters to use. Following a review of studies on these three topics, this article examines research on a job

Recruitment method: an approach (e.g., job advertisements, job fair) used by an employer to publicize a job opening

applicant's organizational site visit, the job offer, and the timing of recruitment actions. Finally, this article reviews studies that have focused on the recruitment of members of underrepresented groups. This research is addressed in a separate section at the end of this article so that the multitude of issues involved can be more easily integrated. Prior to reviewing research on these recruitment topics, a number of basic issues (e.g., boundaries for this review) are addressed.

Employee Recruitment: A Definition and the Scope of This Review

The breadth of recruitment research necessitated that choices be made concerning the topics covered in this review. In this regard, given that Ryan & Delaney (2010) recently examined research relevant to recruiting in an international context, this article does not address this topic. Because little research on internal recruitment (i.e., an employer recruiting its own workers for new positions) exists, this review focuses on research concerning external recruitment, which is defined as "an employer's actions that are intended to (1) bring a job opening to the attention of potential job candidates who do not currently work for the organization, (2) influence whether these individuals apply for the opening, (3) affect whether they maintain interest in the position until a job offer is extended, and (4) influence whether a job offer is accepted" (Breaugh 2008, pp. 103–104).

Recruitment Criterion Measures

Several criteria have been utilized in recruitment studies (Carlson et al. 2002).[1] Prehire outcomes (e.g., number of applicants, job offer acceptance rate) involve information concerning job applicants. Posthire outcomes (e.g., job performance, employee turnover) involve

behaviors and attitudes of new employees. To date, posthire outcomes have been the primary focus in most areas of recruitment research. In contrast, little attention has been given to prehire variables such as attracting the attention of the type of individuals targeted for recruitment.

As will become apparent from this review of the recruitment literature, it is important for researchers to expand the range of criterion measures they include in future studies. In particular, more attention needs to be given to job applicant perceptions of and reactions to specific recruitment actions (e.g., timely job offers) given that they likely mediate the relationships between an organization's recruitment actions and outcomes in many situations. Several aspects of the job applicant's perspective are discussed after the topic of theory development in the context of recruitment research is addressed.

THEORY DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF RECRUITMENT RESEARCH

Despite the sizable amount of research that has been conducted, no general theory of employment recruitment (i.e., a theory that addresses the relationships among various recruitment variables and how these variables interact with job applicant attributes and organizational attributes in affecting recruitment outcomes) has been offered. Instead, some researchers (e.g., Dineen & Soltis 2011, Saks 2005) have provided incomplete models of the recruitment process (e.g., relationships between key variables are not fully explicated, important variables are not included), and other researchers (e.g., Allen et al. 2004, Breaugh 2010) have offered theoretical models that focused on a specific aspect of the recruitment process (e.g., communication media, the recruitment message) in isolation from other recruitment variables. These more micro-oriented theories are discussed in the relevant sections later in this review.

The failure of researchers to develop a general theory of recruitment that integrates various aspects of the recruitment process has

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[1]In this article, causal terms such as "influences" and "outcomes" are used to reflect hypothesized relationships and to simplify the presentation of results even though in many cases the study being discussed did not use a research design that allows for the drawing of causal inferences.

Heuristic: "a strategy that ignores part of the information, with the goal of making decisions more quickly, frugally, and/or accurately than more complex methods" (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier 2011, p. 454)

resulted in a research literature that offers a fragmented treatment of topics. For example, separate theoretical treatments (i.e., Breaugh 2008, Earnest et al. 2011, Zottoli & Wanous 2000) of using current employees to recruit (a recruitment method), providing a realistic job preview (a recruitment message), and recruiting individuals who have held jobs similar to those being filled (recruitment targeting) all hypothesize an effect on the accuracy of recruits' job expectations. Yet, these three topics have been treated individually in studies rather than examined in combination as ways to influence job expectations.

Applicable Psychological Theory

As an initial step in developing a general theory of employee recruitment, it is useful to conceptualize much of what occurs during the recruitment process as reflecting an attitude formation/change process that involves individuals forming an impression of what working for an organization would be like. Viewing the recruitment process in this manner allows one to draw upon principles derived from psychological research on persuasion.[2] A useful starting point for introducing relevant research on attitude formation and change is a brief review of three models (i.e., Hovland et al. 1953, McGuire 1968, Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) followed by a discussion of several principles derived from these and other theories. The material presented in this section is largely drawn from Albarracin & Vargas (2010), Bohner & Dickel (2011), Kruglanski & Sleeth-Keppler (2007), and Maio & Haddock (2007). Readers interested in a more nuanced treatment of the persuasion process are referred to these sources.

Hovland et al.'s (1953) model of persuasion emphasizes the importance of the source of a message (e.g., credible?), the audience for the message (e.g., personality?), the message itself (e.g., perceived as threatening?), and the sequence in which the persuasion process unfolds (i.e., a message is attended to, comprehended, and accepted). McGuire's (1968) information processing model highlights six stages, which occur in the following sequence: "presentation of the message, attention to the message, comprehension of the message, yielding to the argument, retention of the changed attitude in memory, and behavior relevant to the attitude" (Maio & Haddock 2007, p. 570). One implication of this information-processing sequence is that behavior relevant to an attitude will only occur if the prior stages occur. McGuire did not solely focus on the persuasion process from the perspective of an agent who is trying to influence attitudes. He also addressed the target of the persuasion effort. For example, he suggested intelligent message recipients are more likely to comprehend a message but less likely to be persuaded by it.

The third theory of persuasion addressed is Petty & Cacioppo's (1986) elaboration likelihood model (ELM), which describes when message processing is likely to be deliberative and when more superficial processing is likely. These authors suggested that a peripheral route to processing information is likely to be used when message recipients lack the motivation or the ability to carefully process (i.e., scrutinize and think about) a message. According to ELM, when an individual reflects carefully on message content (i.e., central route processing), the strength of the argument made is likely to be determinative of attitude change. In contrast to central route processing, Petty & Cacioppo posited that such factors as perceived communicator trustworthiness, message length, and the number of arguments presented are likely to be influential if peripheral processing occurs. The issue of information processing has been addressed in similar yet distinct ways by others (e.g., Kruglanski & Thompson 1999). For example, Chaiken (1987) discussed such processing as being either systematic or heuristic. Heuristic processing, which is similar to ELM's

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[2]The relevance of research on persuasion for employee recruitment is reflected in the following statement by Allen et al. (2004, p. 144): "a core activity of recruitment, particularly in the early stage of the recruitment process, is communicating information about jobs, working conditions, expectations, values, and climate in order to persuade prospective employees to consider joining the organization."

peripheral processing, is thought to be based on the use of cognitive shortcuts such as the consensus heuristic—"if other people believe the message, it is likely to be true."

In terms of generalizing from basic research on persuasion to an employee recruitment context, of central importance is the fact that how carefully a message is scrutinized depends on factors related to a message recipient's attention, motivation, and ability. Having introduced three theories of persuasion (admittedly in a cursory fashion), the relevance of principles derived from these and other theories of persuasion to recruitment is addressed.

Examples of the Application of Psychological Principles to the Recruitment Process

A key issue in the recruitment process is bringing a job opening to the attention of individuals an employer would like to recruit. In this regard, the concept of goal-directed attention merits consideration. As discussed by Bohner & Dickel (2011), individuals have limited cognitive resources. Therefore, selective attention to environmental stimuli is needed for a person to function effectively (i.e., not be overwhelmed with information). One factor that has been shown to influence what stimuli a person attends to is his or her goals (Dijksterhuis & Aarts 2010). This selective attention effect suggests that although active job seekers are likely to attend to messages publicizing job openings, individuals who are not actively looking for a job may not be so attentive. As discussed later in this review, such selective attention has implications for recruiting individuals who are not searching for a job.

In terms of attitude formation, direct experience with an attitude object has been shown to have a great effect (Albarracin & Vargas 2010). Generalizing to a recruitment context, this direct experience effect suggests that such things as having had an internship with an employer is likely to have considerable influence on a person's initial attitude about the employer. A person's initial attitude also can be affected by

experiences that are not firsthand. For example, a prospective applicant may receive information about an employer as a result of his or her efforts (e.g., Web-based research). The effect of such secondhand information has been found to depend on its perceived credibility, which research has shown to be related to communicator expertise and trustworthiness (O'Keefe 2002). In turn, trustworthiness has been linked to whether a message is two-sided (e.g., presents positive and negative attributes of a job opening) rather than presenting information that only supports the sender's position (Chaiken & Stagnor 1987).[3] Research also has shown that receiving a consistent message from multiple sources results in an attribution of credibility (Harkins & Petty 1981).

In terms of information processing, most researchers have viewed job applicants as being quite deliberative given the consequences of the job search and the job choice processes. Thus, in going through the recruitment process, an applicant is generally viewed as using the central processing route. Given the importance of the job choice decision, it seems likely that most individuals do carefully consider the attributes of a job offer. However, the possibility of peripheral processing, especially in earlier stages of the recruitment process (e.g., forming an initial impression of an employer), also merits consideration. In this regard, research (e.g., Zajonc 1968, 2001) has demonstrated that attitudes can become more favorable with increasing exposure to an attitude object (e.g., an employer) even if a person is not consciously focusing on the stimulus. Research suggests this mere exposure effect occurs due to a twofold process: Repeated exposure facilitates ease of processing, and "any mental process that is fast and effortless engenders a positive affective response" (Albarracin & Vargas 2010, p. 404). One implication of the mere exposure effect for recruiting is that advertisements geared toward presenting

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[3] In terms of attitude change, in contrast to increasing credibility, a two-sided message that includes a refutation of opposing arguments has been shown to be more persuasive than a two-sided message without refutation (O'Keefe 1999).

a positive image of an organization (i.e., image advertising) may prove beneficial for making an employer more attractive to potential job applicants even if the individuals are not consciously attending to the ads and even if the individuals are not actively looking for a job.

Once an initial attitude is formed, research has shown that this attitude can be hard to change. Three explanations for this phenomenon are particularly relevant for the recruitment process: selective exposure, confirmation bias, and initial impressions resulting in information-processing bias. With regard to selective exposure, the results of several studies suggest that, having formed an initial opinion, individuals are motivated to defend the attitude (Albarracin & Vargas 2010). One way for an individual to do so is to avoid information that is discrepant with the initial attitude. The tendency to avoid attitude-incongruent information has been shown to be more pronounced when a person's attitude is stronger (Brannon et al. 2007). The concept of confirmation bias is based on the assumption that people seek to avoid internal psychological conflict. To avoid such conflict, there is an inclination to "seek information that confirms our preexisting beliefs, feelings, and behaviors" (Maio & Haddock 2007, p. 566). In addition to initial attitudes being difficult to change due to the tendencies of individuals to avoid contradictory information and to seek out information that is supportive of them, the way information is processed contributes to attitude stability. Specifically, research suggests that an individual's initial attitude leads the person to process new information in a biased manner so as to alleviate cognitive inconsistency. Such bias may occur because "early information may increase the accessibility of certain inferences that then serve as a basis for interpreting subsequent information" (Bohner & Dickel 2011, p. 404). In the context of employee recruitment, one implication of the tendencies of selective exposure, confirmation bias, and biased information processing is that an organization may benefit from targeting individuals for recruitment who either have yet to form a strong opinion concerning the

organization as a place of employment or who are favorably disposed toward working there.

Although other principles concerning persuasion could have been discussed [e.g., Cialdini's (2008) concept of social proof], it suffices to state that research on the persuasion process has direct relevance for the employee recruitment process and merits more attention than it has received. Before discussing research on specific recruitment topics, it is beneficial to address the job applicant's perspective, given that how an applicant reacts to various recruitment actions can moderate their effectiveness.

THE JOB APPLICANT'S PERSPECTIVE

Attracting the attention of potential job applicants is the first step in the recruitment process. It is useful to distinguish two aspects of this variable: persons becoming aware of a job opening and their actively processing the information presented. With regard to whether individuals targeted for recruitment are made aware of a job opening, researchers largely have ignored this variable. This is surprising given that for 50 years research dealing with persuasion (e.g., Hovland et al. 1953) has highlighted the importance of attracting the attention of intended information recipients. In terms of information that is noticed being actively processed, interviews with applicants suggest that job advertisements are often "skimmed" as opposed to being systematically processed (Jones et al. 2006). To generate deeper processing, recruitment research (Allen et al. 2004) suggests that job-related information that is unexpected, of personal relevance to the recipient, and is delivered in person is more likely to be carefully considered.

Considerable research has established that whether an individual applies for a job opening is strongly related to its perceived attractiveness (Ehrhart & Ziegert 2005). Not surprisingly, job and organizational attributes are key factors in determining a position's attractiveness (Chapman et al. 2005). In this regard, a key

attribute is an employer's reputation. Studies have shown reputation to be important both because individuals want to impress others with their affiliation with a respected organization (e.g., Highhouse et al. 2007, Turban & Cable 2003) and because an organization's reputation is interpreted as a signal of positive job attributes (Cable & Turban 2003). In terms of a position's attractiveness, two other important factors are a person's expectancy of receiving a job offer and his or her having alternative opportunities such as another job offer (Chapman et al. 2005, Chapman & Webster 2006). That is, research has found that individuals tend to downgrade positions they are not likely to get, and they tend to have a higher threshold for what is an acceptable position if they have other opportunities.

In considering the perspective of a job applicant, researchers (e.g., Dineen & Noe 2009) frequently have assumed that an applicant possesses self-insight concerning his or her abilities, needs, etc. Based on this assumption, it has been suggested (e.g., Breaugh 2010, Earnest et al. 2011) that by providing accurate information about a job to an applicant, an employer enables the person to make an informed job choice decision (e.g., to withdraw as an applicant if a job is not perceived as a good fit). However, psychological research suggests that assuming self-insight may not always be reasonable. For example, studies have shown that individuals often have an inflated view of their abilities (see Dunning 2007). If this is true for recruits, and interviews with new employees suggest it is (e.g., Billsberry 2007, Louis 1980), then despite recruits possessing accurate information about a position, they may think they are capable of handling job duties they actually lack the ability to master. This issue of self-insight (or the lack thereof) has relevance for targeting individuals for recruitment and drafting a recruitment message, two topics discussed later in this review.

It is generally accepted that most individuals make decisions about a prospective job (e.g., whether to apply, whether to accept a job offer) using a noncompensatory decision-making approach initially followed by a compensatory approach (Highhouse & Hoffman 2001). That is, certain attributes must be present (e.g., a job is located in a certain city) for a position to be considered as a viable option [e.g., Osborn (1990) found that approximately 90% of the participants in his study reported that some minimum or special requirement was necessary in order for them to consider a job opening]. Once these threshold factors have been met, researchers generally assume that an applicant will consider other job attributes in a compensatory fashion. Although Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier (2011) did not address the topic of job applicant decision making, their discussion of the use of heuristics applies to a recruitment context. For example, research on the recognition heuristic suggests that in forming a consideration set (i.e., a subset of job openings that are carefully evaluated) from several advertised positions, job seekers would place a higher value on easily recognized alternatives. A key factor with regard to applicant decision making is the timing of recruitment activities, a topic discussed later in this review. For example, reflecting a desire for uncertainty reduction, there is evidence that a recruit is likely to accept the first job offer that exceeds his or her threshold for job and organizational attributes (Becker et al. 2010).

Given the importance of job applicant variables, it is surprising that they have not played a central role in most recruitment studies (e.g., an applicant's expectancy of receiving a job offer being tested as a mediating variable). One reason for this lack of attention may be that researchers have not given sufficient consideration to the type of individuals targeted for recruitment (e.g., whether they are likely to have self-insight), the next topic addressed.

TARGETING INDIVIDUALS FOR RECRUITMENT

In beginning the recruitment process, an organization needs to decide what type(s) of individuals to recruit (e.g., retirees, military veterans). In addressing the issue of whom

Noncompensatory decision making: a process in which the absence of a particular attribute (e.g., employer health insurance) eliminates the decision alternative from further consideration

to target, authors (e.g., Billsberry 2007) have highlighted such factors as (*a*) what type of individuals will be attracted to a job with an organization, (*b*) whether they will possess the personal attributes (e.g., job experience) needed to be hired, (*c*) whether job offers are likely to be accepted, and (*d*) if hired, whether targeted individuals will remain with the employer for a reasonable length of time. Although these factors have been highlighted by authors, little empirical research directly relevant to the topic of recruitment targeting exists (Dineen & Soltis 2011). For example, researchers have not compared different groups of recruits in terms of their receptivity to job offers. However, a few studies have been published that are tangentially related to the issue of targeted recruitment.

In terms of a group to target, former employees have traditionally been thought to be a beneficial group based on the assumption that they would have more accurate job expectations, and thus if hired would be more satisfied with their jobs and therefore less likely to leave them. To test such conventional wisdom, Taylor & Schmidt (1983) used data from personnel files to compare employees who found their jobs by means of newspaper ads or employment agencies against individuals who previously had worked for the employer. As hypothesized, Taylor & Schmidt found rehires were less likely to quit their jobs. This study shares three limitations with many of the studies that have focused on former employees as a group to target for recruitment. First, it failed to examine assumed job applicant mediator variables (e.g., did former employees have more accurate job expectations?). Second, the sample used was composed of new employees rather than applicants. This focus on new employees may mask applicant differences (e.g., an employer's selection system may reduce differences in applicant quality). Third, Taylor & Schmidt confounded the types of individuals recruited (i.e., former employees) with how they heard about a job opening (i.e., a newspaper ad is a recruitment method that may bring an opening to the attention of several different

types of individuals, including former employees). In a study that involved nurses who applied for jobs at several hospitals, Williams et al. (1993) gathered data on job applicants and those applicants who were hired. With regard to applicants, in comparison to persons recruited from colleges and newspaper ads, former employees had a higher level of education, greater prehire knowledge of the hospital to which they applied, and were more likely to accept job offers. No group differences were found for employee performance or turnover (the lack of posthire outcome differences could be due to differences linked to hospitals not being considered in data analysis). Taken as a whole, earlier research on recruiting former employees suggests that doing so may be beneficial. However, conclusions should be viewed as tentative due to methodological limitations in the studies conducted.

Recent studies suggest that certain types of individuals are more likely to be interested in a job opening and thus are relevant to the issue of targeted recruitment. In a study conducted with students, Devendorf & Highhouse (2008) investigated whether individuals would be more attracted to places of employment in which coworkers were seen as similar to themselves in terms of personality characteristics. They found support for a similarity-attraction relationship. In explaining their results, Devendorf & Highhouse noted that this relationship could be due to individuals feeling more comfortable working with people who are similar to themselves and/or the fact that individuals believe they are more likely to receive a job offer if an employer has hired people who are similar to themselves. In a study by Becker et al. (2010) that involved job applicants, individuals who had to relocate for a new job were found to be less likely to accept job offers. The results of these studies suggest that employers may benefit from targeting individuals for recruitment who are similar to current employees and/or will not need to relocate.

Although authors have noted the importance of an employer's decision with regard to the type of individuals to target for recruitment

(e.g., unless an applicant pool is generated that possesses the personal attributes sought by an organization, the ability of its selection system to choose individuals who possess such attributes is limited), there is a lack of research comparing different groups. In terms of future research, studies are needed that examine whether some of the hypothesized advantages of certain groups really exist. For example, it has been suggested (Ryan et al. 2005) that individuals who have a family member who works for an organization should have a better understanding of what a job opening involves and thus be less likely to submit an application unless they perceive good person/job-organization fit. However, the merits of targeting family members have yet to be investigated. Similarly, Breaugh (2008) presented a theoretical rationale for why recruiting individuals who have worked in jobs similar to an advertised position should result in applicants who possess more realistic job expectations and greater self-insight. However, these ideas have not been formally tested.

Particularly valuable would be future studies that consider some of the theoretical principles derived from research on attention and persuasion. For example, research on goal-directed attention suggests it would be beneficial for an organization that is interested in recruiting individuals who are not actively looking for a job to go beyond relying on such commonly used recruitment methods as job advertisements and its Web site. If noticed at all, job openings publicized by such methods are likely to be processed in a peripheral manner (Jones et al. 2006, Rafaeli 2006). Research on selective exposure and confirmation bias also merits future study. For example, generalizing from psychological research on these topics, it seems likely that an employer would benefit from targeting individuals who have an initially positive view of working there or who have yet to form an initial attitude. Recruiting such individuals eliminates the challenge of having to overcome an established negative attitude toward the employer. The relevance of these basic psychological principles for future research is further discussed in subsequent sections concerning recruitment methods and the recruitment message.

RECRUITMENT METHODS

Having decided on the type of individuals to target for recruitment, an employer needs to select one or more recruitment methods to use to bring a job opening to their attention. In this section, two explanations for why recruitment methods are thought to be important are presented, an overview of two representative studies that compared recruitment methods is provided, research on four popular recruitment methods (i.e., current employees, college placement offices, an employer's Web site, and job boards) is reviewed, and future directions for research are noted.

Although several explanations (see Zottoli & Wanous 2000) have been offered for why recruitment methods should affect certain prehire and posthire outcomes, two explanations (i.e., the realism hypothesis and the individual difference hypothesis) have attracted the most attention. The realism hypothesis suggests that persons recruited by certain methods (especially individuals referred by current employees) are likely to possess a more accurate understanding of what a job with an organization involves. Having such an understanding allows individuals to make an informed decision about whether a job is a good fit. The individual difference hypothesis assumes that different recruitment methods bring a job opening to the attention of individuals who systematically vary on personal attributes that are linked to recruitment outcomes. For example, it has been suggested that, in comparison to respondents to newspaper ads, direct applicants (i.e., persons who applied to an organization without knowing a job opening existed) would have greater motivation to work for an employer because they had put forward the effort to drive to a place of business to apply for a job with no assurance there was a job opening (this logic does not hold if applications are submitted online).

Job board:
a third-party Web site that enables employers to list job openings

Prehire recruitment outcomes: information concerning the consequences of recruitment actions on job applicants (e.g., number of applicants)

Posthire recruitment outcomes: information concerning the consequences of recruitment actions on the behaviors and attitudes of new employees (e.g., new-hire retention rate)

Employee referral: a recruitment method that involves an employee of an organization bringing a job opening to the attention of a prospective job candidate

Two Examples of Past Research Comparing Several Recruitment Methods

Over the years, there has been considerable research on recruitment methods. Some studies have examined recruitment outcomes across a variety of recruitment methods. Two of these studies (Breaugh et al. 2003, Kirnan et al. 1989) are reviewed in order to provide a sense of this type of research. Kirnan et al. utilized data on job applicants and new employees and focused on prehire recruitment outcomes (i.e., applicant quality, receiving a job offer, and accepting a job offer) and posthire recruitment outcomes (i.e., retention and job performance). Based on the assumptions that employee referrals (i.e., individuals who were referred for jobs by current employees of the organization) would be better able to self-select out of consideration for a job that was not a good fit (given they would have received accurate job information from the employee who referred them) and would be prescreened by the current employee (i.e., only individuals who were seen as qualified for a position would be referred), Kirnan et al. (1989) hypothesized that employee referrals would be superior in terms of prehire outcomes in comparison to individuals recruited by means of newspaper ads, college placement offices, or employment agencies. Their hypotheses were confirmed. In looking at recruitment method effects on posthire outcomes, Kirnan et al. created two composite groups. The informal group included referrals and direct applicants. The formal group included individuals who were recruited by other methods. Results showed a small employee retention effect favoring those in the informal group; no difference was reported for job performance. Utilizing archival data on job applicants, Breaugh et al. (2003) examined the relationships between five recruitment methods (i.e., current employees making referrals, direct applicants, college recruitment, job fairs, and newspaper ads) and six prehire outcomes. No group differences were found for education, test score, and interview score. Compared to the other groups, college recruits had less work experience. Unexpectedly, given the overall lack of applicant quality differences reported, employee referrals and direct applicants were more likely to receive job offers. Apparently, the organization had a positive view of employee referrals and direct applicants even if the objective selection data did not favor members of these groups. Employee referrals and direct applicants also were found to be more likely to accept job offers.

Employee Referrals

The use of current employees is generally viewed by employers as the best method for reaching individuals who possess desirable personal attributes (Breaugh 2009). Several studies have shown there is validity to this perspective and have increased our understanding of why using current employees to recruit can be advantageous. In the studies discussed, individuals recruited by current employees were compared against individuals recruited from all other recruitment methods combined.

Fernandez & Weinberg (1997) tested whether referred applicants for call center jobs had advantages at the interview and job offer stages of the recruitment process because they had been screened by the employees who referred them. Supporting their hypotheses, employee referrals were found to be superior to nonreferrals in terms of computer skills, language skills, education, and work experience. Given these advantages, it is not surprising that referrals were more likely to receive job offers. Castilla (2005) examined whether referrals were more likely to be hired and complete a training program than nonreferrals. As predicted, they were. Castilla also found the initial job performance of referrals exceeded that of nonreferrals, which he hypothesized was due to their receiving coaching and pressure to perform from the employees who referred them.

Based on their belief that researchers needed to be more nuanced in studying employee referral effects, Yakubovich & Lup (2006) investigated prehire differences for three groups of call center applicants (i.e., individuals who became

aware of job opening by means of the Internet, persons who were referred by employees who had been rated as high performers by the organization, and individuals who were referred by employees who had been rated as performing at a lower level). For several reasons (e.g., high performers should be more aware of what personal attributes are needed to perform a job well and thus be better able to refer individuals who are qualified for the job; high performers should value their reputations more and thus be less likely to refer poor prospects), Yakubovich & Lup hypothesized that individuals referred by high-performing employees should have higher scores on selection measures than individuals referred by lower-performing employees, who should have higher scores than individuals recruited via the Internet. These authors found support for their hypotheses.

In summary, there is substantial evidence that the use of current employees for generating job applicants is beneficial for employers. Specifically, studies have shown that, in comparison to nonreferrals, persons referred by current employees were superior in terms of application credentials, were more likely to be hired, and performed at a higher level.

College Campus Recruiting

The coverage of research on college campus recruiting in this section is abbreviated given a good deal of the research discussed in other sections of this review was conducted with college students and thus applies to college recruiting. However, a series of studies by Collins and his colleagues merits attention. These researchers were particularly interested in the influence of early recruitment actions by an employer on job applicants.

Collins & Stevens (2002) investigated the impact of three recruitment-related actions: sponsorship (e.g., an employer funds campus scholarships), advertising (e.g., students reported seeing job ads on campus), and word-of-mouth (WOM) endorsements (e.g., faculty had said an employer is a good place to work) on three prehire outcomes (i.e., student opinions

of an employer, intent to apply for a job with the employer, and submission of an application). They found that advertising and WOM endorsements were related to all three outcomes, and sponsorship was linked to application intention. Collins & Han (2004) examined the effects of general recruitment advertisements, sponsorship, detailed recruitment ads, and employee endorsements on several prehire outcomes. They reported that the use of these recruitment practices was positively related to applicant grade point average and the percentage of positions filled. All of the practices except endorsements were related to the number of applicants. All of the practices except the use of detailed advertisements were predictive of the rated quality of applicants. Collins (2007) studied whether the same four recruitment practices examined in his research with Han predicted student intentions to apply for jobs and whether they subsequently did. All four practices predicted both outcomes. In summary, the studies by Collins and his associates suggest that, by taking a number of recruitment-related actions prior to visiting a college, an organization may influence the number of job applicants, applicant quality, and their interest in an employer.

Several variables (e.g., products, lawsuits) can affect an organization's general reputation (Highhouse et al. 2009). Therefore, research on this topic is not addressed in detail in this review. However, given that an organization's reputation and visibility have been shown to be important in terms of college recruitment, a couple of research results merit mention. One finding of interest was reported by Collins & Stevens (2002). In addition to studying recruitment variables, they examined the effects of general publicity concerning an organization (e.g., being familiar with a news story about an employer's products). They not only found general publicity to be related to individuals' attitudes and application intentions, but such publicity also predisposed students to more carefully process recruitment information. Turban & Cable (2003) looked at organizational reputation effects in two studies (reputation ratings were based on external sources such

as *Fortune* magazine). In study 1, which was conducted with undergraduate students who applied for interviews through a college placement office, employer reputation was found to be related to the number of applications submitted and the quality of the applicants (rated in terms of academic performance, work experience, and extracurricular activities). In study 2, which was conducted with MBA students, employer reputation was shown to predict the number of students who attended on-campus information sessions held by an employer. Such sessions are important because they allow for an in-person two-way exchange of information, which research by other researchers has shown to be linked to central route processing of information and greater message credibility.

The Use of an Employer's Web Site

Because the use of employer Web sites for recruiting is a relatively new phenomenon, there is no pre-2000 research to review. More recently, there has been considerable research on this topic in an effort to understand whether Web site characteristics have a meaningful influence on job applicants. Most of this research has involved studies that either analyzed existing employer Web sites or manipulated Web site characteristics of hypothetical employers in experimental simulations in which students played the role of a job applicant.

In terms of the first type of study, research conducted by Cober et al. (2004) is representative. These researchers analyzed the ease with which a Web site could be navigated, aesthetic features of its design, and the positivity of the information provided. Each of these factors was shown to be important to potential recruits. Braddy et al. (2006) had students visit Web sites of large corporations. In addition to replicating the results of prior studies concerning the importance of Web site design, they found that providing information about awards an employer had won had a positive impact on student impressions. This impact likely resulted from awards being perceived as reflecting an objective judgment of an

employer by a third party and thus their having greater credibility than employer-generated information. Research also has documented that employer Web sites that provided more information concerning a job opening were viewed more positively by students and resulted in their expressing a greater likelihood of applying for a job (Allen et al. 2007).

Because past research (e.g., Cable & Yu 2006) has shown that employer Web sites are sometimes viewed as lacking in terms of providing useful and credible information, researchers have investigated ways that Web site effectiveness might be increased. For example, Walker et al. (2009) used a simulation study to manipulate the presence/absence of employee testimonials and the richness of the media used to present a testimonial (i.e., a video with audio versus a picture with text). The inclusion of a testimonial was found to be positively related to the amount of time a student spent on a Web site, employer attractiveness, and information credibility. Presenting a testimonial via a richer medium was linked to greater employer attractiveness and information credibility. Braddy et al. (2009) had students view fictitious Web sites in order to determine whether four Web site attributes (i.e., employee testimonials, awards received, pictures of employees, and stated organizational policies) would influence perceptions of organizational culture. They concluded that all four attributes were useful in communicating information about culture. Thus, the findings of this study parallel those reported by Walker et al. (2009) with regard to the value of including employee testimonials in a Web site and the results reported by Braddy et al. (2006) in terms of including information concerning awards received.

A concern with using a Web site for recruiting is that an employer will be inundated with applications, many from individuals who are not qualified for an advertised position. As a way to deal with this issue, Dineen et al. (2002, 2007) investigated the utility of providing information to applicants concerning person-organization fit (i.e., a score was provided that reflected the

similarity between what a person sought in an employer and what the employer was like) in simulation studies with students. Their results suggest that providing individualized feedback concerning fit has beneficial outcomes. For example, students receiving feedback that they were a good fit were more attracted to an organization, spent more time viewing a Web site, and were better able to recall Web site information. Although the interactive capability of using a Web site to provide information concerning person-organization fit is intriguing, it remains an open question whether real job applicants will provide accurate information about themselves (e.g., their values and skills) so that valid fit information can be provided by an organization.

To date, most studies have involved students who evaluated the Web sites of actual employers or took part in simulation studies in which Web site characteristics were manipulated. Therefore, a study by Selden & Orenstein (2011) that examined the use of Web sites by state government agencies for recruiting provides a novel perspective. The results of this study support the findings of many of the studies conducted with students. For example, Selden & Orenstein found that Web sites that were rated as being easier to navigate generated more applicants. They also reported that sites with higher-quality content (e.g., more detailed job information) received fewer applications, which they interpreted to mean that such content allowed individuals to screen themselves out if they did not perceive a good fit with the job and/or the employer.

In terms of research on Web sites, one final issue deserves attention. Although most researchers have focused on main effects, two recent studies have reported interesting interaction effects. Assuming that individuals with greater work experience and job search experience would have a higher level of ability to process recruitment information, based on Petty & Cacioppo's (1986) ELM, Walker et al. (2008) hypothesized that information concerning a job opening (e.g., training provided) would have a greater impact on the organizational

attractiveness ratings of more experienced individuals than on the ratings of those with less work and job-hunting experience. Alternatively, given their lower level of ability in terms of a job search, Walker et al. hypothesized that individuals with less experience would be more affected by peripheral Web site characteristics (e.g., the physical attractiveness of the individuals portrayed). Both hypotheses were supported. In a latter study, Walker et al. (2011) examined whether the effects of Web site characteristics on ratings of organizational attractiveness varied depending upon how familiar a site visitor was with the organization. Specifically, they investigated whether the technological sophistication of a Web site (e.g., including video testimonials from employees) had a greater effect if individuals lacked familiarity with an employer. They found it did. It appears that being unfamiliar with an employer made it more likely for individuals to draw inferences about unknown job-related characteristics from the Web site.

Job Boards and Other Nonemployer Web Sites

Given their inherent advantages (e.g., low cost compared to college recruitment), many employers use their Web sites to recruit. However, for an organization that does not have great visibility, sole reliance on its Web site could result in a small pool of job applicants. Therefore, many employers use job boards to publicize job openings. To date, only a few studies have examined their use.

Jattuso & Sinar (2003) investigated differences in the type of applicants generated by general job boards (e.g., Hotjobs.com) and industry/profession-specific job boards (e.g., SalesJobs.com). They found that applicants from more focused job boards were rated as having better educational credentials and a higher level of skill but less work experience. A concern with using job boards is that they often result in an overwhelming influx of applications. A study by Backhaus (2004) of job advertisements placed on Monster.com

may explain why this can occur. He discovered that the great majority of ads presented very favorable information and failed to provide information that would help a job seeker to differentiate one organization from another. As a way to affect both the number of applications received and the quality of the applicants, Dineen & Noe (2009) used a simulation study involving students in which customized person-job fit information was provided by a fictional job board. Their findings suggest that providing fit information can result in a smaller applicant pool and one that is of higher quality.

In addition to using employer Web sites and job boards in a job search, individuals may use other Web sites. Two recent studies have addressed such sites. Cable & Yu (2006) randomly assigned MBA students who were on the job market to one of three conditions: spend five minutes talking to an assigned company's representative at a career fair, spend five minutes on an assigned company's Web site, or spend five minutes studying postings about an assigned company on Vault.com (an electronic bulletin board on which company employees can share their perceptions). Cable & Yu predicted that information provided by a company representative or a company Web site would be rated as less credible than information presented by a bulletin board, given that the company controls the information provided by the first two sources. Surprisingly, they found just the opposite. Cable & Yu speculated that a bulletin board being rated as a less credible source of information may be due to individuals discounting negative comments as coming from disgruntled employees and positive comments as being testimonials that may be company initiated (data that might support this speculation were not gathered). Utilizing similar logic to that of Cable & Yu (2006), Van Hoye & Lievens (2007) hypothesized that information provided on an employer's Web site would be rated as less credible than information provided via a company-independent Web site and therefore have less impact on organizational attractiveness. The results of their simulation study supported their hypothesis.

Future Research Directions

In terms of future research on recruitment methods, three issues merit particular attention. First, it is important that more field research be conducted with actual job applicants. In this regard, researchers might be able to cooperate with organizations in conducting studies that involved manipulating characteristics of their Web sites and examining whether recruitment outcomes are affected. Second, more attention needs to be given to mediating variables that explain why recruitment methods may matter. For example, although it has been assumed that current employees making referrals provide realistic job information to individuals they refer and do preliminary screening (i.e., only refer good candidates), data have yet to be gathered from those making referrals on whether this occurred. In this regard, researchers also might examine whether the advantages linked to the use of current employees is at least partially due to their ability to bring job openings to the attention of talented individuals who are not actively looking for a job. A third issue for future research is to broaden the range of the recruitment methods examined. In recent years, employee referrals, college recruiting, and the use of an employer's Web site have drawn the majority of the attention. Given the increasing use of social networking sites and job boards, these and other methods of generating applicants merit attention.

RECRUITMENT MESSAGE

The way a recruitment message is worded has long been thought to be important both in terms of attracting job applicants and in subsequently filling job openings (Wanous 1992). Therefore, it is not surprising that the effects of conveying different types of recruitment messages have been extensively studied by researchers. Much of this research has focused on the wording of job advertisements. As will become apparent from the review of the research conducted, several findings from research on the persuasion process are applicable to the recruitment message.

The Amount and the Specificity of the Information Conveyed

One aspect of a recruitment message that has received attention is the amount of information communicated. In this regard, it has been well documented that recruits often lack information about a position being considered, and that this lack of information makes them less likely to accept job offers (e.g., Barber & Roehling 1993). Researchers have offered two explanations for negative reactions to a lack of information. One explanation is that individuals may perceive the failure of an employer to provide sufficient information as a signal of its lack of interest in them. A second explanation is that a lack of information creates a state of uncertainty for individuals, which they would prefer to avoid in making a job choice decision. In two studies that manipulated the amount of information provided, Allen et al. (2007) replicated the finding that providing a greater amount of job-related information is linked to position attractiveness, and Allen et al. (2004) showed that a recruitment message that provided more information was viewed as more credible.

A number of researchers have examined the effects of the specificity of a recruitment message in studies with college students. For example, research (Mason & Belt 1986) has shown that a job advertisement that provided specific information about the type of personal attributes (e.g., work experience) sought in an applicant reduced the percentage of unqualified individuals who applied. Providing more specific information also has been found to create a higher level of interest in a job opening and result in more attention being paid to the recruitment message (Barber & Roehling 1993). Providing a more detailed recruitment message also can result in individuals perceiving better person-organization fit (Roberson et al. 2005). In this regard, the results of a study by Stevens & Szmerekovsky (2010) are of interest. These researchers provided students with job advertisements that differed in terms of the personality characteristics sought in applicants. They reported that students expressed greater interest in job openings that included personality-related wording that matched their personality as assessed by a personality test (e.g., outgoing students were more attracted to a job opening that required outgoing applicants).

The Realism of the Information Provided

An aspect of a recruitment message that has received substantial attention is the realism of the information communicated. Most of this research has involved the use of a realistic job preview (RJP), which involves "the presentation by an organization of both favorable and unfavorable job-related information to job candidates" (Phillips 1998, p. 673). Theory (Breaugh 2010) suggests that providing realistic information about a job during the recruitment process should result in new employees being more likely to have their job expectations met based on the assumption that an RJP allows individuals who do not perceive good person-job/organization fit to withdraw as job candidates. In turn, met expectations have been shown to be related to lower employee turnover and higher job satisfaction (Wanous et al. 1992). It also has been hypothesized that providing an RJP can result in greater role clarity (which should affect job performance), an enhanced ability to cope with job demands (e.g., being forewarned of unpleasant interactions with customers allows a person to rehearse how to respond), and perceptions that an organization is honest. From this abbreviated description of why RJPs should "work," it should be apparent that several moderating and mediating variables may influence the relationship between receiving an RJP and outcomes such as voluntary turnover. In terms of moderators, Breaugh (2010) noted that RJPs should have larger effects when provided prior to hiring, when recruits have inaccurate information about a job, and when applicants have other job opportunities. In terms of mediators, variables such as job performance and employee turnover should be influenced through an RJP's impact on met

Realistic job preview (RJP): communication by an employer during the recruitment process of accurate information concerning a job opening

expectations, role clarity, coping ability, and perceptions of employer honesty.

In the 1970s and 1980s, several RJP field experiments (e.g., Ilgen & Seely 1974, Suszko & Breaugh 1986) were conducted. Most of these studies reported positive RJP effects. The results of Phillips's (1998) meta-analysis support many of the hypothesized relationships between RJPs and prehire (e.g., accurate initial job expectations) and posthire (e.g., job performance) outcomes. Although many of the overall RJP effect sizes Phillips reported were modest, her moderator analyses showed stronger effects. For example, as one would expect from the theory underlying their use, Phillips found RJPs to have greater impact on such variables as voluntary turnover and job satisfaction if they were provided prior to hiring rather than posthiring. Recently, Earnest et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis that incorporated several RJP studies published since Phillips's meta-analysis into her data set. They found similar results to those reported by Phillips. For example, RJPs were associated with higher ratings of role clarity and organizational honesty and with less voluntary turnover.

Other Areas of Research on the Recruitment Message

In addition to examining the effects of the amount of information, its specificity, and its realism, research on the recruitment message has investigated a number of other factors. For example, Highhouse et al. (1998) examined whether describing job openings as being scarce (i.e., few in number) would affect ratings of job and organizational attributes. They reported a number of scarcity effects. For example, their position scarcity manipulation resulted in pay being estimated as being $1.70 higher than in the nonscarcity condition, suggesting that individuals may infer certain information from the wording of an ad (e.g., if an employer has several openings, it must not pay well). Thorsteinson & Highhouse (2003) examined the framing of a job advertisement. They found that, in comparison to an ad that was phrased in terms of

what was lost by not applying, an ad phrased in terms of what is gained by applying resulted in higher ratings of organizational attractiveness.

Buckley et al. (1998) experimented with an expectation-lowering procedure (ELP) that reminded individuals that they "typically develop unrealistic expectations, which may result in mismatches of individual expectations and what an organization may realistically provide" (p. 453). They randomly assigned newly hired workers during a company orientation program to either an ELP group or a group that received a traditional orientation message. The ELP was effective in lowering job expectations and employee turnover. In a follow-up study with applicants for telemarketing jobs, Buckley et al. (2002) reported similar results.

Van Hoye & Lievens (2005, 2007, 2009) conducted a series of studies that examined the impact of WOM information (i.e., information about an employer that is independent of its recruitment efforts). Their first two studies involved simulations with students acting as recruits. The results of these studies suggest that compared to employer-provided information (e.g., Web-based testimonials), WOM information had a stronger effect on perceptions of organizational attractiveness. These WOM effects seem to be largely due to nonemployer sources having greater credibility, especially if the WOM source was a friend. Van Hoye & Lievens (2009) conducted a field study that involved potential applicants targeted by the Belgian Defense (i.e., persons who had visited its Web site). Among their findings were that the submission of a job application was predicted by organizational attractiveness and the amount of time spent receiving positive WOM information. The amount of time spent receiving negative WOM information was unrelated to the submission of an application. This finding may be explained by two factors. First, individuals reported they spent less time receiving negative WOM information compared to positive WOM information. Second, the positive WOM information was frequently received from friends or relatives (rather than acquaintances) and from individuals who were

perceived as having greater expertise (e.g., persons who worked for Belgian Defense). The final WOM study reviewed was carried out by Jaidi et al. (2011). For their sample, receiving positive WOM information from alumni was positively related to the job pursuit of graduating master's students, and negative WOM information from alumni was inversely related to job pursuit behavior.

Future Research Directions

In terms of future research on the recruitment message, an issue that merits attention is how to effectively convey to job applicants information concerning how they are likely to react to various attributes of a position. In this regard, RJPs are deficient because they provide descriptive information. Although sharing factual information (e.g., a job requires working rotating shifts) is beneficial, it may not convey a complete picture of a job because many applicants "do not have the ability to interpret the meaning of purely descriptive information" (Wanous 1992, p. 129). To address this issue, Wanous recommended that, in addition to descriptive information, evaluative information should be communicated in order to provide a more visceral understanding of what a new position involves. Such evaluative information could address how new employees typically react to job attributes. Conveying evaluative information is likely to result in job applicants viewing an employer as being honest with them and should result in better person-job/organization fit.

RECRUITERS

The effects of using different types of recruiters have drawn considerable attention from researchers (e.g., Carless & Wintle 2007, Connerley 1997). Many of the early studies looked at recruiter demographic characteristics and tested whether recruiters who were similar in race or gender to an applicant would be viewed more favorably. For the most part, such recruiter/applicant similarity effects have not been found (for a review of this research, see

Breaugh 2008). More recently, researchers have focused on the influence of recruiter behavior. A meta-analysis by Chapman et al. (2005) provides a good summary of the results of these studies, most of which were conducted with college students. They reported that individuals who rated recruiters as being personable, competent, informative, and trustworthy also rated a job opening as being more attractive and expressed a higher probability of accepting a job offer.

Taken as a whole, research suggests the type of recruiter used may matter (*a*) because recruiters vary in the amount of job-related information they possess and thus can share (e.g., in comparison to a corporate recruiter, an employee in a department with a position to fill likely will be more informative concerning job duties), (*b*) because they differ in terms of their credibility (e.g., a corporate recruiter may be viewed as more interested in selling a position than in conveying a realistic job preview), and (*c*) because of inferences drawn by a recruit (in the next section, research is reviewed that shows that interacting with a higher-level employee may signal that the position is of greater significance to the organization).

The preceding three factors suggest that future research on recruiters needs to be more nuanced. For example, with regard to Chapman et al.'s (2005) finding that a recruiter's being viewed as competent has beneficial effects, an open question is—what factors result in being viewed as more competent? As another example of the need for more fine-grained research, it has been commonly assumed that current employees will screen individuals before referring them and that they will also provide realistic job information. However, if an employee receives a sizable bonus for making a referral, screening and providing a realistic job preview may not occur.

RECRUITMENT MEDIA

Media richness theory (Daft & Lengyl 1984) suggests that in conveying information, especially complex information, not all

communication media are equally effective. Rather, face-to-face communication is seen as superior, followed by video, audio, and text. This rank-ordering is based on the following properties of in-person communication: A two-way interaction attracts greater attention from an information recipient, and it allows for questions to be answered, facial cues and tone of voice can be considered, information can be personalized, etc. The basic tenets of media richness theory clearly apply to recruitment research. For example, in considering recruitment methods, a current employee contacting a potential referral may involve an in-person two-way communication, whereas the use of a job advertisement would typically involve either audio (e.g., a radio ad) or text (e.g., a job board listing). However, it is difficult to compare recruitment methods in terms of media richness theory because the recruitment message is not standardized. Allen and his associates (e.g., Allen et al. 2004, Otondo et al. 2008) are among the few researchers who have investigated the effects of utilizing different media to convey the same recruitment message. Although results are not entirely consistent, initial findings suggest potential benefits of utilizing face-to-face communication as a recruitment media. In future studies, the psychological factors (e.g., physical presence attracting greater attention) comprising media richness theory need to be examined in order to better understand both recruitment method and recruiter effects.

THE JOB APPLICANT SITE VISIT

A job applicant's visit to an organization's headquarters has received relatively little attention from researchers. This is surprising when one considers that, in comparison to other recruitment activities (e.g., an interaction with a recruiter at a job fair), a site visit generally provides a "longer and more intense applicant-company interaction" (Taylor & Bergmann 1987, p. 273) and therefore should have a significant influence on a recruit. For example, during a site visit, a job candidate should get a firsthand view of an employer's work force (e.g.,

diversity) and location (e.g., safety of the neighborhood). Likely of greater importance, during a site visit an applicant generally has the opportunity to interact for the first time (or more intensively) with prospective coworkers and his or her potential supervisor and view the immediate work environment (e.g., spaciousness of cubicles). In summary, a site visit affords an employer the opportunity to provide more information about a job, more specific information, more realistic information, and more credible information (e.g., firsthand knowledge typically has more credibility than being informed by others). Acquiring such information has the potential to considerably modify an applicant's initial view of a job with an organization. In addition, being invited for a site visit often is viewed by an applicant as a signal that he or she has a good likelihood of receiving a job offer.

In one of the first studies to focus on the applicant site visit, Rynes et al. (1991) found it to have a sizable impact. For example, approximately 30% of their interviewees (i.e., college students seeking jobs) said they rejected job offers from organizations to which they had originally been attracted after their site visits (this suggests that initial attitudes can be changed by the firsthand experience of a company visit). Three factors were cited as being important by these interviewees: whether the employer was flexible in scheduling a visit, whether the applicant was treated in a professional manner, and whether the applicant met high-status individuals. In another early study, Turban et al. (1995) reported that applicants' ratings of site host likability were associated with their decision to accept a job offer. This finding may be due to the fact that the person hosting the visit would be a coworker of the recruit if the person were to be hired. In a more recent study, Boswell et al. (2003) found that applicants were positively influenced by having the opportunity to talk with current employees who held the same job for which they applied, to meet employees who had similar backgrounds to theirs, and to interact with high-level managers. They also reported that site arrangements (e.g., a well-organized schedule, an impressive hotel room)

made a favorable impression on applicants. A simulation study conducted with college students by Saks & Uggerslev (2010) found effects similar to those of Boswell et al. (2003) with regard to being able to interact with prospective coworkers as well as higher-level managers.

In terms of future research, three issues are highlighted. First, more attention needs to be given to exactly what occurred during a visit and the effect it had. Second, more attention needs to be given to the effect of an employer providing information concerning the local community. In terms of a community, the following characteristics could be important to an applicant: (*a*) ethnicity (e.g., will an applicant's children be able to be raised in a diverse environment?), (*b*) religion (e.g., will an applicant be able to locate an acceptable religious community?), (*c*) employment opportunities (e.g., will a spouse or a significant other be able to find suitable employment?), and (*d*) community values (e.g., are dominant political beliefs compatible with those of the applicant?). The inferences that an applicant may draw about unknown job and/or organizational attributes based on a site visit is another topic in need of more research. For example, a poorly organized visit might be seen as an indicator of how other aspects of the business are run or how interested the employer is in the recruit.

THE JOB OFFER

Three types of research have been conducted concerning the job offer. Some researchers have focused on attributes of a position (e.g., location) that are predictive of job offer acceptance. Because this type of research was discussed previously in the context of job applicant decision making, it is not addressed here. The relationship between the timeliness of a job offer and its being accepted also has drawn research attention. This research is addressed in the next section. In terms of research on the effects of specific aspects of the job offer, very little research has been conducted. Two studies that are representative of this research are briefly reviewed.

Utilizing a sample of college students drawn from two universities, Barber et al. (1999) found that job offers that allowed applicants a degree of flexibility with regard to the start date for beginning employment were more likely to be accepted than offers with a fixed start date. Boswell et al. (2003) reported that, for a sample of college students, an employer's including a deadline for job offer acceptance did not result in negative reactions (these authors reported that several individuals in their sample asked for and received extensions to their deadline).

Given that the primary purpose of recruiting is to fill job openings, it is remarkable that so little research has focused on job offer acceptance as an outcome variable. In terms of future research, studies of all types are needed. However, research that addresses how the nature of a job offer may affect inferences drawn by applicants about a job with an organization seems particularly important. For example, what inferences might job applicants draw if required to sign an employment-at-will contract? Do recruits view having to sign a noncompete agreement or receiving a lowball salary offer as a signal of undesirable organizational attributes?

THE TIMING OF RECRUITMENT ACTIVITIES

Several studies have documented the importance of when recruitment activities occur. A key issue with regard to scheduling is when to begin recruiting. For jobs with a distinct hiring season, beginning to recruit late in the season can result in a job applicant pool that is lacking, as was demonstrated by Turban & Cable (2003), who found that employers that began interviewing college students later in the year received fewer job applications. Of potentially greater importance, the applications received were of lower quality. One explanation for why it can be advantageous for an employer to begin the recruitment process in a timely fashion is that individuals want to reduce the uncertainty involved in finding a job (Becker et al. 2010). If this explanation is accurate, one would

expect that when an employer begins recruiting may be less important if it is trying to recruit persons who are already employed.

A number of studies have investigated the importance of an employer acting in a timely manner after applications have been submitted. For example, Rynes et al. (1991) documented that delays in replying to job applicants resulted in their viewing potential employers as being less attractive and sometimes in applicants eliminating them from consideration as a place of employment. Interestingly, these effects were stronger for higher-quality job applicants. Boswell et al. (2003) also found that recruits were positively disposed toward employers who responded to their inquiries promptly. More recent studies also have shown the importance of prompt recruitment actions. For example, Schreurs et al. (2009) measured the time lag between a person's date of application and the date the person was scheduled to take an employment test. They found that the longer the delay, the less likely an applicant was to show up for testing. Becker et al. (2010) investigated the influence of a time delay on the likelihood of a job offer being accepted. For samples of new college graduates and more experienced individuals, the longer the time lag between a job candidate's final interview and a job offer being extended, the less likely an offer was to be accepted (statistical analyses showed that differences in applicant quality did not explain this time lag). Carless & Hetherington (2011) focused on recruitment timeliness both in terms of an objective and a subjective indicator. Using a sample of applicants for jobs at a university, they measured the actual time that elapsed between the submission of a job application and an invitation for an interview, and they measured an applicant's perception of the timeliness of this invitation. In terms of perceptions of organizational attractiveness, the number of days that had elapsed was not a valid predictor. However, an applicant's perception of timeliness was a good predictor of attractiveness. Carless & Hetherington's findings suggest that objective timeliness should not be the sole focus of attention in future studies.

In summary, there is persuasive evidence that delays at various stages of the recruitment process can have an adverse effect on several recruitment outcomes, including the number of applicants and the quality of applicants. In terms of future research, investigations of the explanations that have been offered by researchers for why delays matter are needed. For example, although it has been hypothesized that recruits make attributions about what a delay signals (e.g., no job offer is likely to be forthcoming, a recruit was not the organization's first choice for filling a job opening), data to verify the accuracy of such attributions are lacking.

RECRUITING MEMBERS OF UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS

In the past decade, considerable research has addressed the recruitment of members of underrepresented groups (e.g., racial minorities, women). Much of this research has focused on the effects of communicating information about the diversity of an employer's workforce or its affirmative action/diversity policy. In addition to addressing research on these two topics, in this section two recent studies that have significance for the recruitment of minorities and women are reviewed. Before addressing these topics, two common findings from pre-2000 research merit mention. First, as previously discussed, researchers (e.g., Chapman et al. 2005) have found a recruiter's race or gender to have little impact on job applicants. Second, studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s often reported that minorities were less likely to be made aware of job openings if current employees were used as a recruitment method (for a review of this research, see Peterson et al. 2000).

With regard to recruitment communications that convey information about the diversity of an employer's workforce, several studies have been conducted, most with college students. For example, Avery et al. (2004) found that including pictures of minorities in a recruitment brochure increased the ratings of organizational attractiveness made by blacks and had no impact on the ratings of whites.

Avery (2003) showed that including pictures in a recruitment brochure had a greater impact on minorities if some of the minorities portrayed were in supervisory positions (whites were unaffected by the different portrayals of blacks). In their study 1 (study 2 is discussed shortly), Walker et al. (2012) examined whether diversity cues affected the way individuals processed information. They found that in the diversity cue condition (i.e., two of the four individuals pictured were black), more time was spent viewing a Web site and there was better recall of the information viewed than in the no-diversity cue condition (none of the four employees pictured were black). These effects were significant for black and white students but stronger for blacks.

In recent years, several researchers (e.g., McKay & Avery 2006) have investigated the effects of communicating variations in the strength of an organization's diversity/affirmative action policy. For example, for members of the Society of Black Engineers, Slaughter et al. (2005) found that, compared to an affirmative action program geared toward bringing job openings to the attention of minorities, a program involving preferential treatment was viewed as less fair and more likely to result in the stigmatization of new hires. Williamson et al. (2008) documented the complexity that can be involved in designing a diversity-oriented message. They reported that individuals' responses to identity-conscious diversity policies were influenced by their race and the explanation provided for the diversity policy (e.g., a moral obligation versus to improve business results). Specifically, blacks viewed the ideological explanation as signaling they would be less likely to face discrimination, whereas whites and Asians viewed the business explanation as less threatening to their careers.

Walker et al.'s (2012) study 2 addressed both the communication of information about the diversity of an organization's workforce and its diversity policy. In this study, students were randomly assigned to visit the Web site of one of two actual organizations. One Web site included pictures of a diverse workforce and information on diversity goals and initiatives;

the other did not. In addition to being selected because of their difference on diversity cue information, these organizations were chosen because they were equivalent on other important dimensions (e.g., organizational attractiveness). Approximately two weeks after viewing the assigned Web site, student recall of Web site information was assessed. Walker et al. (2012) reported that recall was better for the Web site that provided diversity-related information, and this effect was stronger for blacks.

In terms of the recruitment of minorities and women, two recent studies merit attention. Newman & Lyon (2009) investigated whether the way an organization recruits can reduce the conflict that employers frequently face in trying to meet the dual goals of hiring individuals who will be most productive and hiring a diverse group of individuals. The first study they conducted, a simulation with college students, examined the effects of targeting groups for recruitment based on demographic characteristics. Newman & Lyon found that such targeting can increase adverse impact (i.e., members of minority groups being hired at a lower rate than nonminorities) because it can result in job applications from minorities who are not qualified for advertised positions. In a second study, Newman & Lyon (2009) examined the influence of how a job advertisement was worded. Specifically, they assessed whether emphasizing the importance of an applicant being smart or conscientious resulted in self-selection and/or adverse impact. These authors found that students who were higher on the attribute sought were more likely to apply for a position seeking that attribute and that no adverse impact resulted. They also found that minority students had a higher application rate across jobs, which may reflect the fact that they perceived they would have a harder time finding a job than would nonminority students.

The results of a series of studies by Gaucher et al. (2011) that focused on the wording of job advertisements raise a number of important issues for recruitment. In their study 1, Gaucher et al. analyzed actual job advertisements using an established list of masculine

and feminine words. Results showed that masculine words were more common in ads for male-dominated jobs (e.g., engineer), but feminine words were equally likely to appear in ads for male-dominated and female-dominated (e.g., nurse) jobs. Similar results were found for Gaucher et al.'s study 2, which involved job postings at a university. In their study 3, these authors had students read several job ads that were constructed to be masculinely or femininely worded. For male-dominated, female-dominated, and gender-neutral jobs, both male and female students perceived there were fewer women within the occupations advertised with more masculine wording. In their study 4, Gaucher and her colleagues examined whether masculine wording resulted in women having less interest in a job because such wording suggested they do not belong. Masculine wording was found to result in both less interest and perceptions of not belonging in the job. Gaucher et al.'s study 5 replicated these results and extended them by showing that masculine wording in ads did not affect women's perceptions of their having the skill needed to perform the job. Taken as a whole, Gaucher et al.'s results suggest that gendered wording is common in job ads and that this wording can result in women believing they do not belong in an occupation, but not because of a lack of skill.

From the research reviewed, it is apparent that the wording of a recruitment message can influence the interest of minorities and nonminorities in a job opening. It also is apparent that effectively disseminating a diversity-oriented message is a delicate issue. In concluding this review of research on the recruitment of members of underrepresented groups, two additional findings should be noted. First, McKay & Avery (2005) have discussed how many minorities report that the information they received during the recruitment process concerning diversity initiatives did not correspond to the reality they experienced once hired. Second, in terms of the impact of a diversity-oriented recruitment message, an employer's reputation vis-à-vis diversity is likely to be more important (Avery & McKay 2006).

In terms of future research, two areas seem particularly important. The first area concerns ways for an organization to persuade individuals of its commitment to diversity. Generalizing from the results reported concerning awards received by an employer, it is likely that publicizing awards received from reputable sources for diversity-related outcomes should be beneficial, but this has yet to be demonstrated. Research is also needed on subtle ways by which an employer may discourage members of underrepresented groups from applying for jobs. In this regard, Gaucher et al.'s (2011) research on the gendering of job advertisements provides a starting point.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article provides a selective review of research that has been conducted on employee recruitment, especially studies that have been published since 2000. This research demonstrates the importance of the recruitment actions taken by employers. In particular, recruitment methods (e.g., using current employees), the recruitment message (e.g., its specificity), recruiters (e.g., their being informative), the organizational site visit (e.g., meeting with high-level employees), and the timing of recruitment activities (e.g., timely job offers) have been shown to be linked to important prehire (e.g., quality of job applicants) and posthire (e.g., employee retention) outcomes. In discussing recruitment studies, this article noted a number of methodological limitations (e.g., failure to test for mediator variables) in hopes of stimulating and improving future research. In addition, this review highlighted several topics (e.g., attracting the attention of potential job applicants) that have received insufficient attention from researchers. A theme that ran throughout this review was the applicability of basic psychological research (e.g., findings concerning selective exposure) to recruitment topics. Drawing more heavily on such research is likely to improve future empirical investigations of recruitment topics and future theory development.

SUMMARY POINTS

1. An employer's recruitment actions can influence the interest of prospective job applicants in a job opening and the ability of the individuals it hires, their diversity, their job performance, and their retention.

2. Deciding whom to recruit is the most important question an organization needs to address, given that the target population should influence the recruitment method an employer uses to reach these individuals, the recruitment message it conveys, and when it begins recruiting.

3. Insufficient research attention has been given to the topics of targeted recruitment and attracting the attention of prospective job applicants.

4. Research supports the use of current employees as being an effective recruitment method.

5. The wording of a recruitment message (e.g., its specificity, realism) has been linked to several prehire and posthire recruitment outcomes.

6. In investigating recruitment issues, researchers have relied heavily on the use of college students.

7. The findings of basic psychological research (e.g., selective exposure, confirmation bias) apply to many recruitment topics and should be considered in designing future studies.

FUTURE ISSUES

1. In making decisions about job openings, applicants often lack information about important job and organizational attributes. Several researchers have suggested that applicants use information acquired during the recruitment process as an indicator of unknown attributes. What information received about a job or organization is likely to be used as a signal of unknown aspects of a job opening? Under what conditions are such inferences likely to be made?

2. At present, no general model of the recruitment process (one that addresses interactions among recruitment variables and their relationships with job and organizational attributes and recruitment outcomes) exists. Can such a model be developed?

3. Most researchers seem willing to assume that the results of studies using college students will generalize to individuals with more job search and work experience. Do they?

4. Theory suggests that targeting certain types of individuals for recruitment (e.g., those with family members working for the organization, those who have previously worked in jobs similar to the job opening) should be beneficial for an employer. Do empirical studies support such hypothesized relationships?

5. It has been hypothesized that employee referrals tend to be more qualified applicants and make better employees because they have received realistic job information from the employee who referred them and because they have been prescreened by the current employee of the organization. However, data have not been gathered from current employees concerning whether such events occurred. Do future studies support the realism and prescreening hypotheses?

6. Very little attention has been given to the recruitment of so-called passive job seekers (i.e., individuals who would consider taking a new job but are not actively looking for one). What issues should be considered in recruiting such individuals?

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