

EVALUATING WEB-BASED REALISTIC JOB PREVIEW FORMATS:
APPLICANT ATTRACTION, INTENTIONS TO PURSUE, AND JOB
ACCEPTANCE DECISIONS

A Thesis

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting a thesis written by Laure L. Rodebaugh entitled “Evaluating Web-Based Realistic Job Preview Formats: Applicant Attraction, Intentions to Pursue, and Job Acceptance Decisions.” I have examined the final copy of this thesis and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science with a major in Industrial / Organizational Psychology.

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ABSTRACT

A recent trend in organizational selection is the use of web-based job search engines to post current employment opportunities. This study utilized a sample of junior and senior level undergraduate business and psychology students expected to actively be searching for permanent employment within one year. Three different job advertisement/RJP conditions were employed: presentation of standard/general job and company information, a written RJP with general company information, and a video-formatted RJP with general information about the company. Each condition was formatted to resemble those job postings currently in use on the web. Corresponding scales intended to measure the participant's attraction to the organization, intentions to pursue, and job acceptance decisions were administered after the presentation of each condition. The written RJP condition resulted in higher rates of applicant attraction, intentions to pursue, as well as job acceptance decisions.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The process of recruiting, selecting, and retaining valuable and productive employees may be one of the most important keys to the survival of an organization. A primary goal of many human resource professionals is, therefore, to conduct these processes in the best manner possible in order to reduce turnover as well as minimize selection and training costs. One major component of a successful selection and socialization program may be providing prospective employees with a realistic job preview (RJP) (Buckley et al., 2002). Utilizing a RJP as an informational tool during recruitment may be helpful in keeping company costs and turnover low (Buckley et al.).

A RJP entails providing the prospective employee with a realistic glimpse of what the job will entail. This includes both positive and negative detailed information on the job tasks, environment, and workload (Adeyemi-Bello & Mulvaney, 1995). An obvious benefit of using this technique is that new hires know more precisely what to expect from a job and correspondingly acknowledge and accept those conditions upon entry (Buckley et al., 2002). A RJP can be utilized as a positive attraction tool while also grounding the employee by revealing the true reality of the workplace (Buckley, Fedor, Carraher, Frink, & Marvin, 1997). In order to aid in successful selection and placement of prospective employees, organizations can choose to implement a RJP at two different points in time. The RJP is sometimes utilized pre-employment, during the recruitment process, as part of the organization's attraction strategy. Alternatively, it can be administered to new employees (post-hire) as part of a socialization process (Buckley et al., 1997).

Although both RJP presentation options prove to be helpful, the use of these informational tools at different times in the recruitment process, yield different effects. The results and the following literature review discuss these findings and possible underlying reasons for them (Buckley et al., 1997). Accordingly, a review of existing RJP research regarding organization attraction, intentions to pursue, and job acceptance rates will be outlined in the following pages. However, it is important to first discuss the different formats of a RJP and sources of administration in order to better understand the impact that they may have when utilized during recruitment on web-based job search engines.

Channels of Communication

Because relevant job information can vary so widely from job to job, it may be that the method used to present the realistic preview, rather than the content of the preview itself, is responsible for whether an applicant received and retained enough accurate information to make an educated job acceptance decision and become a long-term employee with the company. A RJP can be administered in different ways to potential newcomers of an organization. Three common options of presenting a RJP are via: written brochures or booklets, audio-visual methods, or in-person interviews (Wanous, 1989). The following sections will highlight previous research comparing the advantages and disadvantages of these presentation formats.

Written vs. audio-visual presentation. Premack and Wanous (1985) conducted a study in which two administration methods of a RJP were examined. One group was presented with the realistic job information through the use of a

written booklet. The other group was presented with the material through an audio-visual video recording. Both groups were given the realistic information during the recruitment process. Premack and Wanous' major contribution is that they examined the effectiveness of the different administration methods with a measure of productivity as the outcome, which was a different criterion measure than what was considered in most previous research in this area (i.e., job satisfaction, turnover, socialization). The group that received the information from an audio-visual recording showed a greater rate of production than the group that was given the written booklet information (Premack & Wanous, 1985). One explanation for this finding was that the audio-visual recording provided a type of "behavioral model" for the applicants to follow after hire to the organization. It was discussed that these types of results might have been dependent on the information included in the visual aid. A visual format could also provide more accurate information in regards to the work environment by actually showing the office/work setting at some point in the video. Audio-visual methods may also be a chance for the organization to display characteristics of a diverse staff in order to appeal to more applicants.

Written vs. oral presentation. Saks and Cronshaw (1990) also considered two different forms of RJP administration (i.e., written booklet and oral interview presentation). One method within their study involved the realistic job information being presented to applicants during the recruitment process in the form of a written booklet or brochure. Historically, this method has been one of the most popular means of communicating a RJP. Simply giving each applicant a

copy of the book or brochure and allowing them to read it at their own leisure is an easy, hands-off approach for the organization (Saks & Cronshaw). The information is provided with little effort on behalf of the company after initial creation of the book or brochure. Saks and Cronshaw then presented the RJP orally through an interviewer personally presenting the job specific material face-to-face in an employment interview. Utilizing a one-on-one interview is a more costly technique to relay RJP information in terms of company resources and time. However, the increased ability to tailor information to specific applicants and respond to follow-up questions has resulted in its use in some organizations.

Results of the Saks and Cronshaw (1990) study suggested that both techniques significantly lowered subjects' job expectations, such as opportunity for promotion and work hours, as desired and increased role clarity in comparison to the control group. The group receiving the oral presentation of job information reported more positive perceptions of the interviewer and organizational honesty than both the written RJP and the control group, whom received only general job information (Saks & Cronshaw). Again, these results may be specific to the relevant job information needed to provide the realistic preview.

However, with the emergence of web-based recruitment and advertising, the written RJP format may need to be appropriately tailored to provide a more easily viewable display for relaying large amounts of information in a short amount of time, such as a printer friendly version that provides a table of contents or an audio-visual format playable or downloadable by potential web-surfing applicants. The source of a RJP administration can be dependent upon the specific

job or company being advertised and the effort and money that they are willing to put into the implementation of the material. Creating an audio-visual production would obviously be somewhat more costly for the organization. Once the decision of administration has been made it is important to then determine what variables are desired to be measured.

Applicant Attraction and Intention to Pursue

Aiman-Smith, Bauer, and Cable (2001) aimed at differentiating the constructs of organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions. Accordingly, they theorized that attractiveness and intentions to pursue are separate concepts that can be affected by different things. Intentions to pursue a job opening reflect an active phase of applicant-to-organization attraction in which an applicant makes an effort to contact an organization in an attempt to submit an application and secure an interview. Different individual needs are considered to have an effect on the aspects of an organization that individuals may find attractive and perceive as a good fit (Aiman-Smith et al.). The applicant's perceived image of an organization during the recruitment process is one factor that could influence attractiveness, fit, and intentions to pursue. Organizational pay and promotional opportunity in order to measure intentions to pursue were manipulated.

Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) hypothesized that among standard organizational attributes and benefits advertised during applicant recruiting, pay would be the strongest predictor of job pursuit intentions and that promotional opportunity would be the second strongest predictor of pursuit intentions. Indeed, it was found that pay had the biggest influence in intentions to pursue a job

supporting their first hypothesis. This finding may indicate that an organization could find it helpful to display some type of pay level within the RJP information in order to attract only serious applicants. Ensuring the attraction of only serious applicants with real intentions to actively pursue the position because of a perceived person-needs-organizational fit can help to reduce future turnover for the company involved. One major limitation of this study is that the researchers only considered the impact of financial job information on applicants' intentions to pursue. Other factors such as work schedule, flexibility, or the nature of the work could also be strong predictors of the applicant's intentions.

Bretz and Judge (1998) also focused on pre-hire outcomes, such as applicant attraction, utilizing a sample of undergraduate students. However, their study examined applicant attraction during recruitment in relation to the weight that the applicants placed on negative information presented in a RJP. The study defined applicant self-selection as part of the recruitment process. In applicant self-selection, realistic information, such as that presented in a RJP, affects recruitment outcomes by influencing the applicants informed decision to pursue a job or not (Bretz & Judge).

Bretz and Judge (1998) found that the amount of negative information presented in the RJP had a strong negative effect on organizational attractiveness and intentions to pursue. It was also found that the type of negative information is less important than the volume of the negative information. This study implemented several different types of negative information with the realistic job information, such as time pressures and difficult interactions with coworkers

(Bretz & Judge). Using negative information such as daily hassles is an important measure of organizational attractiveness and less general information than salary alone. This can be very influential on the applicant's self-selection during the recruitment phase. Perhaps the impact of financial attractiveness versus unattractiveness could be compared to these types of negative daily hassles in relation to perceived organizational attractiveness and intentions to pursue.

Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003) assessed organizational attractiveness, prestige, and behavioral intentions to organizational pursuit. The authors first discussed the possibility of using attitudes to predict applicant behavior during the recruitment process. Highhouse et al. assigned undergraduate students to one of five fortune 500 companies to view descriptive organizational information. The study focused on the measurement of corporate attraction rather than the attractiveness of the specific companies. It was reported that intentions to pursue seemed to mediate the effects of organizational attractiveness and prestige on organization choice. These results were consistent with Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action. The theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) has had a dominant presence in guiding this area of research. Highhouse et al. stated that this theory assumes that behavior is the collection of a rational sequence of cognitions. This theory suggests that the strongest determinant of behavior is a person's intention to engage in it and that intention is a function of attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms (Highhouse et al.). Therefore, attitudes influence behavior to the extent that they influence intentions to engage in that behavior. Highhouse et al. stated that certain elements

of a recruitment brochure may affect a company's attractiveness but may have no significant effect on intentions toward the company.

Cober, Brown, Keeping, and Levy (2004) examined the influence of organization web-site characteristics on applicant attraction for organizations that recruit using the internet. This study pointed out several features of organizational web-sites, such as colors, sound, images, and interactivity all ultimately influence the perceived attractiveness. However, the researchers indicated that the ultimate dependent variable was applicant attraction during the recruitment phase. Cober et al. proposed that the information obtained from the web-site would directly influence the organizational image and that the job seeker's web-site attitude will positively influence applicant attraction.

The implication of this research is that navigating an organization's web-site increases the applicant's knowledge of that organization. This increase in familiarity is positively related to applicant attraction to the organization (Cober et al., 2004). In addition, it was found that images portrayed by organizations through recruitment web-sites are positively related to applicant attraction and intentions (Cober et al.). Information regarding the affects of images viewed on an organizations website could be helpful in determining what type of images to include in an organizations audio-visual RJP message. This study contributed to the existing RJP literature concerning the recent advancements of web-based recruitment through organizational websites.

Job Acceptance Rates

Meglino, Ravlin, and DeNisi (1997) discussed the belief that presenting a RJP containing negative job information would drastically reduce the likelihood of job acceptance from prospective employees. Current literature has shown, instead, that this type of information actually has very little impact on an organization's ability to hire qualified applicants (Meglino et al., 1997; Premack & Wanous, 1985). Collectively, most literature has shown that studies of job acceptance rates have yielded mixed results more often than results in one direction (e.g., reduced job acceptance) or another (Meglino et al.).

Meglino et al. (1997) discussed mixed results reported among previous studies concerning the job acceptance rates of telephone service representatives and survey takers after exposure to realistic job information during the recruitment process. In one such study (Reilly et al., 1981), after exposure to the RJP, job acceptance rates were 11.8% higher than when a realistic information tool was not utilized among the telephone service representatives. Contradictorily, Suszko and Breugh (1986) found a job acceptance rate 26.7% lower was found among survey takers after exposure to realistic job information within a different company. An explanation for these findings is that realistic job information has different effects as a result of differing job situations and job content included in the recruitment process.

Saks and Cronshaw (1990) hypothesized that subjects receiving a RJP are more likely to reject a job offer than a control group not receiving any type of realistic information. However, they found that participants were not more likely

to reject a job offer after experiencing either a written or oral RJP. These types of findings, although not necessarily generalizable on an individual level, as a whole can be helpful in showing organizations that presenting negative or realistic job information during recruitment will not negatively affect the ability to acquire qualified applicants.

The Present Study

There has been a steady increase in the number of organizations that are currently using internet-based job boards, such as careerbuilder.com, monster.com, hotjobs.com, and craigslist.org, as well as in-house organizational web-sites to recruit applicants. This type of widespread exposure makes it possible for millions of job seekers to view a particular job posting every day. This easy and widespread accessibility is one of the main attractions of online job advertisements for organizations and applicants.

There is every reason to expect that the trend toward internet-recruitment will only increase in the future. This creates a need for organizational psychologists to understand what factors are having an influence on online applicant's perceived attractiveness of the organization and their intentions to pursue the job. Personal needs and financial factors have been heavily supported as influencers. Knowing the most effective ways to display realistic job information on a job search engine or company web-site could further help organizations to reduce later organizational turnover and recruitment costs. Reducing these company costs can help in significantly improving the overall operation and success of the organization.

Previously discussed literature has yielded inconclusive results concerning the effectiveness of realistic job information presented during the pre-hire recruitment phase. In an effort to further examine this relationship in combination with the use of web-based recruitment; this study employed three different RJP conditions: presentation of standard/general job and company information, a written RJP with general company information, and a video-formatted RJP with general information on the company. The following hypotheses were proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Participants will report higher levels of attraction to the organization when presented with the audio-visual RJP in comparison to the two other conditions.

This hypothesis is based on the concept that the subjects will be more attracted to the organization advertising the job position upon viewing visually specific information. Popovich and Wanous (1982) discussed a RJP as an information provider that allows the applicant to form a more complete kind of knowledge structure of the job. The increased level of knowledge is thought to result in more accurate job expectations and greater role clarity (Popovich & Wanous). Applicants are expected to find an organization more attractive when it extends the effort to relay this type of job-specific information to possible newcomers.

Hypothesis 2: Across conditions, participants indicating a strong response (strongly disagree or strongly agree) to the job acceptance, will indicate that their decision was most influenced by the job-specific content included in the RJP.

An increase in knowledge should enable applicants to form more concrete impressions of the organization and job being presented and result in a more informed decision on intentions to pursue. This hypothesis stems from the idea

that the applicants are well-equipped with enough job-specific information to make a decision on whether or not they would want to apply and accept a job offer. Because of the previously discussed findings by Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) that pay could be the strongest predictor of job pursuit intentions, it was decided not to include any type of salary and pay information among the RJP conditions. This was done to ensure that the actual RJP conditions themselves are responsible for the varying levels of intentions to pursue.

One possible advantage of a RJP is that it allows for applicants to self-select out of the application process once they have been given specific information pertaining to the job and do not perceive the job as desirable or being able to meet their needs. It may be the case that applicants not perceiving a good person-job-organization fit will not make the decision to pursue the job by submitting an application. Presenting a RJP to the mass amounts of online job seekers will aid in reducing the large influx of resumes to organizations by those who may not be serious about pursuing the job position. It is relatively quick and effortless to submit a resume or an application to an organization through the most common web-based job boards. This convenience tends to result in a very large number of applicants who may not be serious about pursuing the job but, instead, are taking on a “why not” approach simply to see if they receive a response from the organization. These situations result in a loss of time and money by the human resource department in an organization that handles these incoming applications.

However, after presentation of realistic information, if the applicant is attracted enough to make the decision to submit an application, they are most likely doing so with intentions to accept a possible job offer. This process is a way of weeding out the applicants that are not serious about accepting a job offer. In regards to the presentation of more detailed information, a third hypothesis was tested as well. It was the aim of this hypothesis to assess the level in retention of the job-specific information the applicant experiences immediately after viewing each research condition.

Hypothesis 3: Participants presented with the audio-visual RJP will display a better retention of job information, assessed by responses to the knowledge statement items, when compared to the other two conditions.

This was an attempt to determine if certain messaging strategies relay information to potential applicants in a manner that fosters better retention of specific material and allows a particular advertisement to “make a lasting impression” among others when searching through mass quantities of job postings on web-based job search engines.

II. METHOD

Participants

Participants were 258 students attending The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Data collection targeted junior and senior level undergraduates that are anticipated to graduate within one year and be actively searching employment. In total, there were 165 females (64%), 92 males (35.7%), and one participant that did not indicate their gender (.4%). The mean age of the participants was 22.53 ($SD=4.23$) with a range of 17 to 52. Of the responding participants, 205 reported being Caucasian (79.5%), 37 were African American (14.3%), 2 were Asian (.8%), 5 were Hispanic (1.9%), and 6 responded as being “other” (2.3%). There were a total of 95 Business majors (36.9%) indicating a range of five different minor concentrations (accounting, entrepreneurship, management, finance, and marketing). A total of 141 Psychology majors (54.6%) participated and reported a range of three different areas of minor concentration (general psychology, counseling, child psychology). The remaining 22 participants (8.5%) reported other areas of major concentration such as Communication, Religious Studies, Criminal Justice, Biology, Nursing, and Education.

A total of 119 participants (46.1%) reported having had work experience in their field of interest with 137 indicating that they have not. A total of 235 students (91.1%) indicated that they did intend to utilize their degree and seek employment in their field of interest upon graduation. One hundred and one participants (39.1%) indicated that they were currently seeking employment in comparison to 154 (59.7%) that were not. There were 46 participants (17.8%) that

indicated their current work status as being full-time, 142 part-time (55%), and 69 unemployed (26.7%).

Procedure

An upper-level student population was used because many organizations are currently using web-based advertising, as an active recruitment strategy, to target students in order to fill entry level positions. Many new graduates have not had much experience in a professional working environment and may be unaware of career options. Supplying detailed job-specific information to new job seekers may aid in preventing the submission of applications for positions that they are not qualified for or are unsure of what they would actually be doing on a daily basis. Presenting the information ahead of time may save time and money on behalf of the organization in regards to reviewing resumes, interviewing, and training. Because of the job-specific information presented in the written and audio-visual RJP, the goal was to utilize undergraduates from the Business and Psychology departments although other majors were not excluded from the analyses.

Initially, an on-campus classroom was reserved for eight days where recruited participants were administered the conditions. Participants were recruited from the departments of Business and Psychology through announcements placed throughout the departments and via e-mail to all undergraduate business and psychology majors. The announcements indicated that only juniors and seniors were wanted for participation. The primary researcher offered the incentive of assisting in the creation of or reviewing the

resume of anyone who voluntarily participated in the research study. This incentive was deemed as being attractive to junior and senior level students because of the likelihood that they will be graduating in the near future and actively seeking employment in their field of interest.

Some participants, but not all, also received course-related extra credit for participation, but this was determined by individual course instructors. The resume reviewing incentive was still offered to each classroom by the primary researcher when administering the study.

The informed consent form, including the IRB approval number, was first administered to each participant while the researcher briefly explained that participation would require the students to view certain job advertisement material displayed on the classroom projection screen for a duration of time before completing a three-page survey packet in response to the material that was viewed. The informed consent form provided contact information for the primary researcher for resume reviewing purposes as well as the contact e-mail address of the supervising faculty. Contact information, including hours of operation, for the campus counseling center was also provided in case the students began to experience any feelings of anxiety or stress regarding future job seeking following participation in the study. The students were allowed to keep the informed consent form for their records.

Because this was a between-subjects design, following the introduction to the study, the primary researcher displayed only one of the three advertisement conditions to each group of students. The students were allowed to view the job

advertisement for several minutes before the content was removed from the projection screen. Because of the presence of the knowledge assessment items, the survey was not administered to the students until the advertisement was removed from the view of the participants. In order to maintain complete anonymity, participants were instructed not to provide any identifying information, besides that being requested in the demographics section of the survey. Once the students finished the surveys, participation was complete.

Each time the study was administered to a class, the researcher asked for anyone who may have already participated in the research to inform the researcher so that their second response packets would not be included in the data. However, because some faculty members were offering extra credit for in-class participation, all students were allowed to participate a second time. The order of presentation of the conditions was varied at the discretion of the researcher depending upon the number of participants already collected in each condition. There was an attempt to collect equal proportions of business and psychology students.

Materials and Measures

All scales are included in Appendix A.

Research conditions. The audio-visual RJP condition was selected from an existing video file found on a www.collegegrad.com. This website is designed to inform future or recent college graduates of career options and provide detailed information regarding certain fields and job positions. The informational video of a Human Resource Manager position was chosen because of its pertinence to

both business and psychology majors. The video depicts the working environment associated with the job position, required education, essential skills, typical daily activities, as well as typical work hours. The duration of the video is one minute and twenty-eight seconds. The information included in the video was used as a template for creating the written RJP condition as well as the basic information found in the general condition.

The written RJP condition was created to replicate the job-specific information depicted in the audio-visual format, but in a written, rather than video format. The least detailed/general job information condition only presented the title of the position being advertised, the employee type (full-time), the career level (manager), and required education (bachelor's degree in business, psychology, or a related field). This information was presented in a table format including only headings and the general information mentioned that was extracted from the video material.

Each condition included general information about the company. The general information included the name of the company, industry, and company size. A fictitious company name was used in order to prevent any previous knowledge or experiences with the company causing pre-established thoughts or feelings of the students towards the organization.

Knowledge statements. A follow-up knowledge assessment was administered to participants immediately after the viewing of each RJP condition. The five items on this assessment were designed to assess participants' level of job information retained after viewing one of the three conditions. The items

asked the participants to recall the official title of the job being advertised, the type of educational background needed for the position, the typical work hours involved with the position, if there was any required experience needed to qualify for the position, and if they believed that they were currently qualified for the position. The response format was open-ended.

Applicant attraction. General applicant attraction to the organization was measured using a scale created in a previous study by Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003). The scale consisted of five items being presented using a 7-point response scale, modified from the original 5-point response scale, (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). The applicant attraction scale had a cronbach's alpha score of .88 in the previous study by Highhouse et al. The present study yielded a cronbach's alpha score of .92.

Intentions to pursue. Intentions toward the company and job position were assessed using a slightly modified version of an existing scale also created by Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003). This scale consists of five items designed to focus on the behavioral intentions of respondents towards the company's job position advertisement (Highhouse et al.). This was presented using a 7-point response format, also modified from its original 5-point response format, (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). The scale had a cronbach's alpha of .82 in the original study (Highhouse et al.). The present study yielded a cronbach's alpha score of .86.

Job acceptance decisions. The decision of job acceptance was encompassed in a single item, "I would accept a job offer for this particular job."

Participants responded using the same 7-point response scale as mentioned above (*1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree*).

Level of effort. An item was introduced asking the participant to indicate the level of effort they believe the company put into creating the job advertisement that they viewed. The participants responded using a 7-point response scale (*1=very low; 7=very high*). This item aimed at assessing whether or not the applicants can accurately assess the amount of effort a company may put forth when choosing to present or not present detailed information regarding the job position.

Helpfulness of advertisement. The final item asked the participants to indicate how helpful they believed the job advertisement to be in providing details and information concerning the job if they had not previously considered working in Human Resource Management. The response format consisted of a 7-point scale (*1=very unhelpful; 7=very helpful*). This item was designed in reference to the possibility that newly graduated job seekers may be somewhat unknowledgeable about certain careers that they will encounter being advertised on web-based job search engines. Determining which type of RJP condition is perceived to be the most helpful in relaying new information may be beneficial for organization recruitment practices.

Additional Measures. It was of interest to not only measure the job acceptance rates of the participants but to try and determine why they chose to either accept or not accept a job offer after viewing all four RJP conditions. Following the job acceptance item, four items asked the participants to indicate

the level of importance that they believed each item had when making the job acceptance decision; “The nature of the specific job (type of industry or work field)”, “Job-specific content included in the RJP (work schedule, environment, demands)”, “lack of information”, and “other” with an option to briefly explain. The participants were asked to respond to each of the four items using a 7-point response scale (*1=very important; 7=very important*).

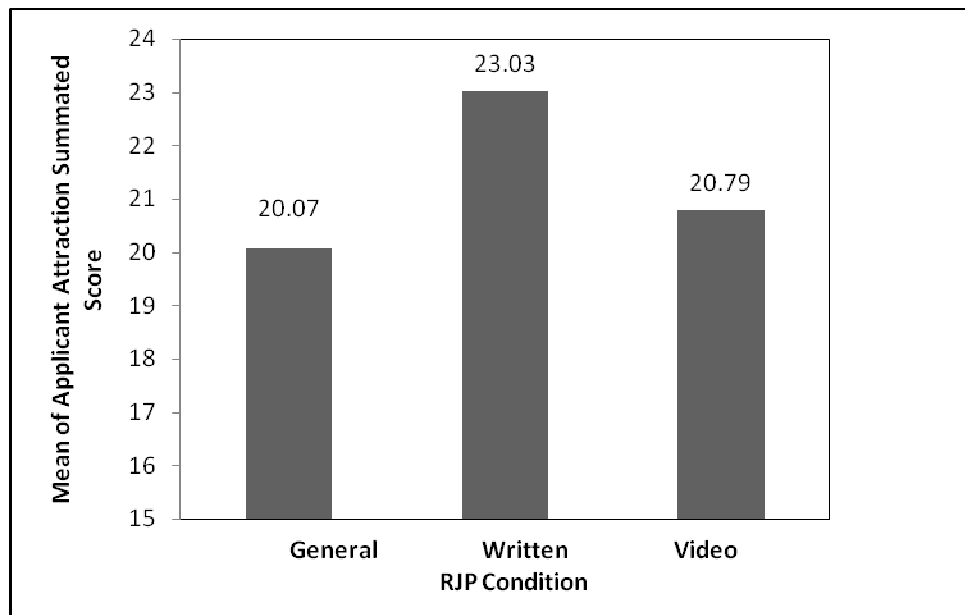
The next measure was a qualitative item asking the participant to briefly explain what they believe influenced their job acceptance decision the most. This single item was designed to acknowledge that each of the four items mentioned above may have been considered to be of importance to the participant, when making the job acceptance decision, but it was of interest to uncover what they believed to be the most influential and why. Allowing a qualitative, open-ended response format was to gain the most detailed and complete response possible.

Demographics. General demographic information (i.e., age, gender, school status) was collected as well as additional items pertaining to previous employment experience and career pursuit interests to aid in the interpretation of the rest of the study.

III. RESULTS

Analysis of Hypothesis 1. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test for possible differences among the mean applicant attraction scores across the three conditions. The analysis indicated a significant between groups difference $F(2,254) = 4.157, p = .017$. A Tukey b post hoc analyses indicated that the written RJP condition ($M = 23.03, SD = 6.43$) resulted in a significantly higher rate of applicant attraction when compared to the general ($M = 20.07, SD = 6.44$) advertisement condition. The written RJP received a higher summated applicant attraction score than the audio-visual condition ($M = 20.79, SD = 7.27$) as well. Because of this pattern of findings, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Figure 1. Relationship between individuals among the three conditions and the summated applicant attraction response scores.



Analysis of Hypothesis 2. In order to test the variables of interest in the second hypothesis, the responses to the single job acceptance item were coded to

represent the strength and direction of each response. Participants responding with a 6 or 7 (Somewhat agree, Strongly agree) to the item received a code of 1, indicating a high level of agreement to the item. Participants responding with a 1 or 2 (Strongly disagree, Somewhat disagree) received a code of 2, indicating a low level of agreement. Participants that responded with a 3, 4, or 5 (Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree) were assigned a code of 3, indicating neither a high nor low level of agreement.

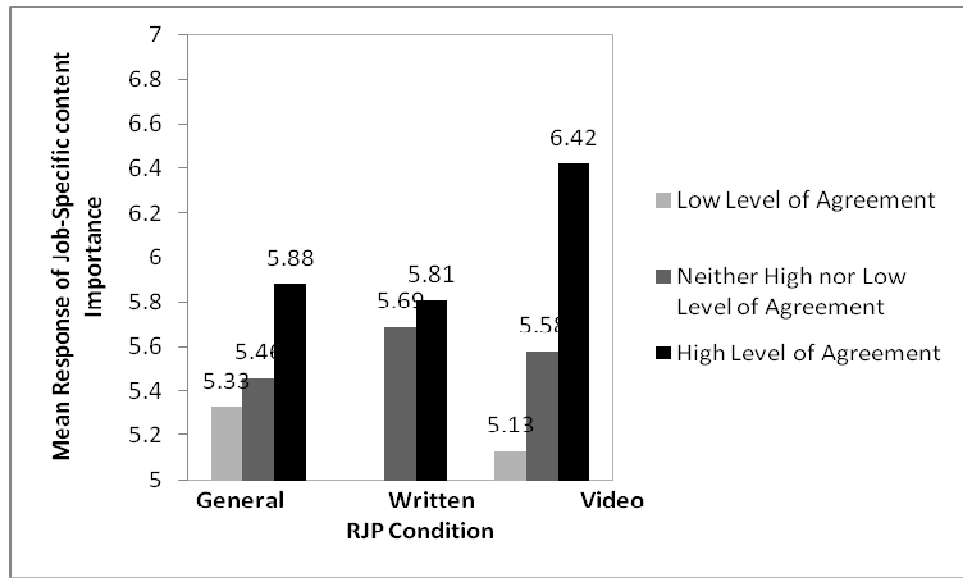
A two-way (3 X 3) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to test for differences in mean job-specific content importance ratings across the nine job condition x strength of response conditions. The results of the initial analysis indicated that the respondents in the audio-visual RJP condition contained the most responses coded as a high level of agreement to the job acceptance decision item ($M=6.42$, $SD=.717$) in comparison to the written RJP ($M=5.81$, $SD=1.57$) and general ($M=5.88$, $SD=1.86$) conditions. The two-way ANOVA did not identify a significant interaction between advertisement condition and strength of the response to the job acceptance item $F(3,247) = 1.81$, $p = .457$, partial $\eta^2 = .010$, as proposed in Hypothesis 2. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

However, the two-way ANOVA did show a main effect $F(2,247) = 7.37$, $p = .03$, partial $\eta^2 = .028$, associated with the strength of the response to the job acceptance decision. The strength of response main effect indicated that those indicating a high level of agreement reported higher levels of importance in regards to the influence of the job-specific content included in the RJP. The

highest levels of agreement were present among the audio-visual condition.

Figure 2 graphically depicts the significant main effect.

Figure 2. Significant main effect among the strength of the response to the job acceptance decision and the importance of job-specific content when making that decision.



Analysis of Hypothesis 3. In order to assess the rate of knowledge retention among the three different conditions, a knowledge score variable was added in which the number of correct responses was reported for each participant among the first four items. If a participant answered only one item correctly then they received a 1, if only two items were answered correctly then a score of 2 was assigned, if three of the four items were correctly answered then they received a 3 for the knowledge score variable, and finally if all four items were answered correctly then the participant received a 4 for the new variable. Mean correct score across these knowledge items were compared across the three conditions: General ($M=3.23$, $SD=.916$), Written ($M=3.24$, $SD=.709$), and Video ($M=3.18$,

$SD=.808$). The ANOVA analysis was not significant, $F(2,255) = .149$, $p=.862$ and therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Additional Analysis. The responses to the five intentions to pursue items were summated for each participant to create an overall intentions score variable. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the relationship between the summated intentions variable and each of the three research conditions. The results of the Tukey b post hoc analysis indicated a significant between groups difference among the general and written conditions $F(2,252) = 3.574$, $p=.029$. The mean responses were ($M=24.24$, $SD=5.21$) for the written condition, ($M=21.89$, $SD=5.40$) for the general condition, and ($M=22.47$, $SD=6.41$) for the video condition.

The mean responses to the single job acceptance item (I would accept a job offer for this particular job) were compared across the three conditions using a one-way ANOVA, Scheffe post hoc analysis. The ANOVA results indicated a significant difference in responses to the single item between groups $F(2,254) = 5.475$, $p=.005$. The scheffe post hoc analysis reported that a significant difference to the item existed between the general ($M=4.21$, $SD=1.55$) and the written ($M=5.00$, $SD=1.23$) conditions. The video condition had a mean response rate of 4.53, ($SD=1.67$) which, while slightly higher than the General condition, did not represent a significant difference.

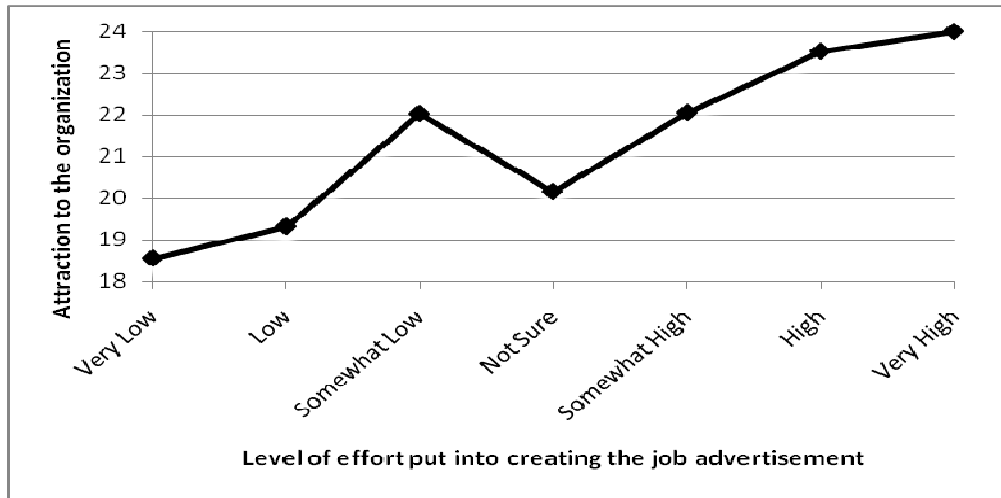
The mean responses to the item asking participants to indicate the level of effort they believe the company put into creating the job advertisement were compared across the three conditions using a one-way ANOVA, Scheffe post hoc

analysis. The ANOVA results indicated a significant difference in response to the item between groups $F(2,254) = 42.140, p < .01$. The Scheffe post hoc analysis reported that the general ($M=2.49, SD=1.12$) was significantly different from both the written ($M=4.29, SD=1.43$) and the video ($M=3.96, SD=1.45$) conditions. The Written and Video conditions were not found to be significantly different from each other for this item.

The mean responses to the item asking participants to indicate how helpful the information in the advertisement was in providing details and information concerning the this type of job were compared across the three conditions using a one-way ANOVA, Scheffe post hoc analysis. The ANOVA results indicated a significant difference between groups $F(2,251) = 53.284, p < .01$. The scheffe post hoc analysis reported that the general ($M=2.52, SD=1.46$) condition was significantly different from both the written ($M=4.55, SD=1.54$) and the video ($M=4.57, SD=1.48$) conditions. The written and video conditions were not significantly different from each other for this item.

Although this relationship is not stated as one of the main focuses of the study, it was of interest to analyze the relationship between the overall summated attraction to the organization and the level of effort the participants felt the company put into the creation of the advertisement. A one-way ANOVA, Tukey b post hoc analysis was conducted on the two variables of interest. The analysis resulted in a significant relationship $F(6,249) = 2.273, p = .037$. Figure 5 depicts this relationship.

Figure 3. Relationship between level of effort the participants believe the organization put into creating the job advertisement and the summated attraction to the organization.



IV. DISCUSSION

It was the aim of this study to examine the effects of implementing a realistic job preview (RJP) during recruitment among job postings resembling those currently in use on the web. Although participants presented with the audio-visual RJP did not report higher levels of attraction to the organization, as proposed in Hypothesis 1, it was found that the written RJP condition resulted in significantly different levels of attraction when compared to the general advertisement condition. However, additional analyses found that the level of effort that participants believe the organization put into creating the job posting had a significant impact on the overall applicant attraction to the organization. The participant's responses indicated that they believed that the level of effort put into the job postings in the written and audio-visual conditions was significantly higher than the effort put into the general advertisement posting. Therefore, in a real-world setting, an increase in information being presented on behalf of the organization may be viewed as an increase in effort and result in a higher rate of attraction to the organization.

Although Hypothesis 2 was not supported and an interaction effect was not found between the three conditions and the strength of the response to the job acceptance item, the analyses of these variables did yield significant main effect results. The main effect of the conditions found that the importance of the job-specific content included in the RJP did have a significant effect on the strength of the response to the job acceptance decision. Therefore, organizations can assume that the more detailed information they present in their job postings, the more

realistic the job preview they are presenting, and this has an impact on the level of agreement an applicant will have when considering a job offer acceptance. As previously mentioned in the introduction, presentation of RJP material is not solely used as an attraction tool for the organization. A RJP is also useful in deterring applicants from applying for particular positions. This is a way of weeding out applicants that may not be a good fit for the job or be serious about accepting an offer for the actual position and all that it entails. Providing details of the job, associated with a realistic job preview during the recruitment phase, may result in a significant decrease in the response to a job offer. This result is good for both the organization and the applicant. Applicants will not waste their efforts applying and interviewing for a job that they may not be truly interested in and organizations will save money and time on reviewing applications of those who may not accept a job offer.

Hypothesis 3, proposed a better retention of knowledge rate among those presented with the audio-visual RJP, was not supported either but still allowed for the discovery of important implications. This hypothesis was based on the notion that visually depicting the environmental information, while simultaneously relaying the job-specific content auditorally, would result in the best retention of information. However, considering that college students were the sample of participants being utilized, it may not be too surprising to see a better retention among written communications. One explanation for this finding may be that college students are accustomed to reading and skimming detailed information in written format and being expected to retain a significant amount of it for short-

term memory recall. Being practiced at this skill may explain the results that were found. In addition, the conditions were presented in a classroom setting on the projector screen as most information is done on a daily basis for college students. This setting may have had an effect on the readiness of the students to review the written material and correctly respond to the knowledge statements.

However, one note of importance is that the knowledge retention items were presented in an open-ended format rather than identifying between incorrect or correct responses. This format was chosen to ensure that the participants were paying attention to the conditions when they were being presented. If the majority of participants responded incorrectly to the open-ended knowledge items then it would be likely that they were not directing their complete attention to the administration and the results of the rest of the findings could have been affected. However, because of the high rate of correct responses among all three conditions, it can be assumed that the participants were paying attention during administration.

Limitations of the Present Study

As with any other study, the present one has its limitations. First, unequal proportions were obtained among the three advertisement conditions. It was hoped to obtain approximately 100 participants in each condition but time constraints resulted in a lower sample size ($N=96$, $N=86$, & $N=76$). The present study also aimed to only utilize junior and senior level college students that were expected to be actively job searching within one year. However, because most participants were gathered in a classroom setting, other class levels participated as

well. Displaying the conditions in a classroom setting on an overhead projector may have caused a loss in the simulation of an actual job searching condition.

In addition, there may have been method bias among participants when presented with the advertisement conditions. It was unexpected to find that the participants did not perceive a significant difference between the level of effort the organization put into creating the written and audio-visual advertisements. As mentioned in the literature review when discussing the different channels of communication of a RJP, creating an audio-visual production would obviously be somewhat more costly for the organization. Costs are associated with a higher level of effort. However, because students were used as participants, the written format may have been viewed as involving a seemingly equal level of effort because students are biased in the amount of work it takes to produce written documents (i.e., essays, term papers, weekly assignments). An increase in technology may also result in the perception that audio-visual production does not involve a high level of effort. Most cell phones and digital cameras now offer a video recording feature in which audio-visual information can be captured and uploaded to the internet, on sites such as youtube.com, in a matter of minutes. Therefore, participants may be biased in their perceptions of the level of effort and associated costs an organization sinks into providing an audio-visual RJP in recruitment advertisements.

Practical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Results of this study support the previous findings mentioned within the literature review that providing detailed information pertaining to the job position,

including negative information, does not result in a decrease in job acceptance rates. In fact, the general job advertisement condition, offering the least amount of job-specific information, yielded the lowest job acceptance rates. In addition, the general advertisement condition yielded the lowest applicant attraction scores as well as the lowest rates of intentions to pursue the position. Therefore, although it may be more expensive to purchase extra advertisement space on web-based job search engines, the effort of providing positive and negative job-specific content, may result in a higher rate of perceived job-fit among serious applicants and an increased job acceptance rate.

The decision to choose the title of Human Resources Manager for the advertisement conditions may also shed some light on the importance of providing realistic job preview information during the recruitment phase. As previously mentioned, job search engines make it possible for millions of job searchers to view posted advertisements and submit applications in a matter of minutes. Among those that have recently graduated from college, typically entry-level job seekers, they may not be knowledgeable in regards to what types of job they are qualified for and what some job titles and positions may actually entail. The fifth knowledge statement asked the participants to indicate if they believed that they were currently qualified for the position being advertised. The correct answer was “No.” Although the analysis of this item did not yield a significant difference among conditions, a total of 64 participants incorrectly answered the item. This could lead to the submission of applications by participants that are not qualified for the job. Reviewing applications and discovering these submission

errors costs time and money on behalf of the organization. Providing as much detailed information concerning the required education and experience of a job position will result in a decrease of these types of submission errors.

It may be of interest for future researchers wishing to replicate this study to administer the conditions outside of a classroom setting. Recruiting participants to a location that is not a classroom setting may have an influence on the results. In addition, possibly creating a website for each job posting condition that the participants navigate at a computer on their own before completing the survey items may more closely resemble individual web-based job searching practices. Attempting to obtain equal proportions of participants in each condition is also suggested. Upon viewing the results of the current study, it was discussed that it may be helpful to include an item in the questionnaire that attempts to collect information regarding how often each participant spends reading, watching TV, playing video games, or surfing the internet each week. This type of information may help explain differences among responses to how helpful each condition is or the effect of the condition on retention of knowledge. If participants spend most of their time reading then they may respond better to the presentation of written material as opposed to video-formatted information and vice versa.

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APPENDIX A

Knowledge Assessment Statements

Please read each item and respond by writing in your response on the lines provided. Please print your responses as clearly as possible.

1. What was the official title of the job position that you just viewed?

2. What type of educational background is needed for this position?

3. What typical work hours are involved with this position?

4. Is there any experience required to qualify for this position?

5. Do you believe that you are currently qualified for this position?
_____YES _____NO

General Attractiveness Items

(Highhouse et al., 2003)

Please read each item and respond using the following 7-point response scale:

(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3= Disagree, 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5= Agree, 6=Somewhat Agree, 7=Strongly Agree)

1. For me, this company would be a good place to work. _____
2. I would not be interested in this company except as a last resort. _____
3. This company is attractive to me as a place for employment. _____
4. I am interested in learning more about this company. _____
5. A job at this company is very appealing to me. _____

Intentions to Pursue Items

(Highhouse et al., 2003)

Please read each item and respond using the following 7-point response scale:

(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3= Disagree, 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5= Agree, 6=Somewhat Agree, 7=Strongly Agree)

1. I would accept a job offer for this job position. _____
2. I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer. _____
3. If this company invited me for a job interview, I would go. _____
4. I would exert a great deal of effort to submit an application to this company. _____
5. I would recommend this company to a friend looking for a job. _____

Job Acceptance Decision

Please respond to the following item using the following 7-point response scale:

(1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Somewhat Disagree, 3= Disagree, 4= Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5= Agree, 6=Somewhat Agree, 7=Strongly Agree)

I would accept a job offer for this particular job. _____

Influence on Job Acceptance Decision

Please indicate the level of importance you believe each item had when making your job acceptance decision (your response to the previous item) using the following 7-point response scale: (place a rating next to each item)

(1=Very Unimportant, 2=Somewhat Unimportant, 3=Unimportant, 4= Neutral, 5= Somewhat Important, 6=Important, 7=Very Important)

The Nature of the Specific Job (Type of Industry or Work Field) _____
Job-specific content included in the RJP (Work Schedule, Environment, Demands) _____
Lack of information _____
Other _____(briefly explain) _____

Please briefly explain what you believe influenced your job acceptance decision the most.

Level of Effort

Please indicate the level of effort you believe the company put into creating this job advertisement. (Make only one choice)

- Very Low
- Low
- Somewhat Low
- Not Sure
- Somewhat High
- High
- Very High

Interest in Human Resources

How interested are you in pursuing a career in Human Resources? (Make only one choice)

- Very Uninterested
- Uninterested
- Somewhat Uninterested
- Undecided
- Somewhat Interested
- Interested
- Very Interested

Helpfulness of Advertisement

If you have not previously considered working in Human Resource Management, how helpful was the information in this job advertisement in providing you details and information concerning this type of job? (Make only one choice)

- Very Unhelpful
- Unhelpful
- Somewhat Unhelpful
- Undecided
- Somewhat Helpful
- Helpful
- Very Helpfu

Demographics

The following items are designed solely to collect background information of the research participants. Please respond to all items truthfully. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

What is your current age? _____

Please indicate your gender: _____ Male _____ Female

Please indicate your ethnical background

_____Caucasian, _____African American, _____Asian, _____Hispanic, _____Other

What is your current major and concentration?

Have you had any previous work experience in your field of interest?

_____Yes, _____No

Upon graduation, do you intend to utilize your degree and seek employment in your field of interest? _____Yes, _____No

Are you currently seeking employment? _____ Yes, _____ No

Will you be actively seeking employment within the next 6 months to one year? _____Yes, _____No

What is your current school status? _____ Freshman, _____Sophomore, _____ Junior, _____ Senior, _____ Graduate, _____ Other (please explain)

Please indicate your current work status.

_____Full-time _____Part-time _____Unemployed

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

While we hope that you will complete the attached study, your participation is voluntary. You may elect not to participate at any time. In addition, if you do not feel comfortable answering any of the questions you may leave that question blank and continue with the rest of the study. The information you provide will be anonymous and we do not ask you to identify yourself in any way. We do not foresee any risks associated with your participation in this project. At no time will single responses be identified. You will not receive any direct benefit from participating in the study.

This survey will ask you to view certain job advertisement material displayed on the projection screen and then respond to questions located within the response packet. In addition, other questions will provide us with information about your background, educational status, current employment status, and future job seeking intentions. These questions will help us to interpret the rest of the study.

We hope that you will complete the survey and return all response sheets located in the packet to the researcher. Remember this is an anonymous survey, so do not put your name on any part of the survey. We expect that it will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to participate in this study.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions or would like to obtain a report of this research study when the results have been completed, please contact the primary investigator, Laure Rodebaugh (Laure-Rodebaugh@utc.edu) or Dr. Bart Weathington (423-425-4289), Department of Psychology, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. This survey is being conducted as part of a thesis project.

The Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (FWA00004149) has approved this research project #08-125.

If you begin to experience any undesirable feelings while completing this survey please contact the counseling center located on campus to assist you at:

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
615 McCallie Ave. - Dept. 1801
Room 338 University Center
Chattanooga, TN 37403

(423) 425-4438

Walk-in Hours from 9 am - 12 noon and 1-3 pm Mon.-Fri.

EMERGENCIES: After hours call Campus Safety at (423) 425-4357

Thank you for participating in our survey.

APPENDIX C

MEMORANDUM

TO: Laure Rodebaugh
Dr. Bart Weathington **IRB # 08-125**

FROM: Lindsay Pardue, Director of Research Integrity
M. D. Roblyer, IRB Committee Chair

DATE: August 18, 2008

SUBJECT: IRB # 08-125: The Effects of Implementing a Realistic Job Preview on Applicant
Attraction, Intentions to Pursue, and Job Acceptance Rates

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your application and assigned you the IRB number listed above. You must include the following approval statement on research materials seen by participants and used in research reports:

The Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (FWA00004149) has approved this research project #08-125.

Please remember that you must complete Form C when the project is completed or provide an annual report if the project takes over one year to complete. The IRB Committee will make every effort to remind you prior to your anniversary date; however, it is your responsibility to ensure that this additional step is satisfied.

Please remember to contact the IRB Committee immediately and submit a new project proposal for review if significant changes occur in your research design or in any instruments used in conducting the study. You should also contact the IRB Committee immediately if you encounter any adverse effects during your project that pose a risk to your subjects.

For any additional information, please consult our web page <http://www.utc.edu/irb> or email instrb@utc.edu

Best wishes for a successful research project.

