

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A REALISTIC JOB
PREVIEW AND JOB APPLICANTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT
PERCEPTIONS

Except where reference is made to the work of others, the work described in this dissertation is my own or was done in collaboration with my advisory committee.
This dissertation does not include proprietary or classified information.

Jeremy Owen Stafford

Certificate of Approval:

Hubert Feild
Professor
Management

Charlotte Sutton, Chair
Associate Professor
Management

Casey Cegielski
Associate Professor
Management

George T. Flowers
Interim Dean
Graduate School

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A REALISTIC JOB
PREVIEW AND JOB APPLICANTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT
PERCEPTIONS

Jeremy Owen Stafford

A Dissertation

Submitted to

the Graduate Faculty of

Auburn University

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the

Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Auburn, Alabama
December 17, 2007

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A REALISTIC JOB
PREVIEW AND JOB APPLICANTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT
PERCEPTIONS

Jeremy Owen Stafford

Permission is granted to Auburn University to make copies of this dissertation at its
discretion, upon request of individuals or institutions and at their expense.
The author reserves all publication rights.

Signature of Author

Date of Graduation

VITA

Jeremy Owen Stafford, son of Robert Harris III and Barbara Lee Stafford, was born March 8, 1973, in Mt. Holly, New Jersey. He graduated from Moorestown Senior High School in 1991 before attending Burlington County College where he earned his Associate of Arts degree in May 1994. He then went on to attend Rutgers University in Camden, New Jersey, and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology in May 1997. In August 1997 he entered the Graduate School at Appalachian State University and graduated with a combined Master of Arts in Industrial/ Organizational Psychology and Human Resource Management in August 2000.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT
AN EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A REALISTIC JOB
PREVIEW AND JOB APPLICANTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT
PERCEPTIONS

Jeremy Owen Stafford

Doctor of Philosophy, December 17, 2007
(M.S., Appalachian State University, 2000)
(B.A., Rutgers University, 1997)

100 Typed Pages

Directed by Charlotte Sutton

Psychological contracts have generated considerable interest from organizational scholars and practitioners for the past several decades, largely due to the negative organizational outcomes that arise when these contracts are violated. While investigations of the outcomes of psychological contracts between an employee and his or her employer have dominated the literature, there has been very little theoretical and empirical investigation of how and when psychological contracts form. One exception is the notion that psychological contracts are rooted in an individual's pre-employment experience. In addition, there is an assumption that psychological contracts are related to the realistic job previews potential employees receive as part of the recruitment process.

This association has been generally accepted but lacks empirical support. Therefore, the major aim of the current study was to provide empirical support for the relationship between realistic job previews and the psychological contract perceptions of job applicants.

Using questionnaire data from a sample of 139 job applicants for entry-level manufacturing positions, this study found a significant relationship between a realistic job preview and one of the two core dimensions of the psychological contract. Specifically, the realistic job preview did not relate to applicants' perceptions of the job being sought, but was significantly related to their expectations regarding their anticipated exchange obligations with the employer. Implications and opportunities for future research are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank Dr. Charlotte Sutton, Dr. Hubert Field, and Dr. Casey Cegielski for their diligent efforts as committee members. I would especially like to thank my wife, Mrs. Johnna Stafford for the endless support, encouragement, and understanding she provided me while completing this research. Additional thanks are due to my parents, family, friends, and colleagues who have all supported and encouraged me throughout my educational pursuits. Finally, I would like to dedicate this research to my late father, Robert Harris Stafford III.

Style manual used: American Psychological Association (APA)

Computer software used: Microsoft Word

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION	1
Problem	3
Purpose of Present Research.....	4
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW	7
Background of Psychological Contracts and Realistic Job Previews	7
Contemporary Views of the Psychological Contract	9
Dispositional Correlates of the Psychological Contract	12
Trust	13
Affective Organizational Commitment	14
Core Dimensions of the Psychological Contract	16
Mutuality	17
Reciprocity	18
Realistic Job Previews	20
The Pre-Employment Psychological Contract	21
Realistic Job Previews and Mutuality	22
Realistic Job previews and Reciprocity	23
Trust and Realistic Job Previews	24

Trust and the Psychological Contract	25
Affective Commitment and Realistic Job Previews	26
Affective Commitment and the Psychological Contract	26
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY	30
Sample and Setting	30
Procedure	31
Participant Recruitment	31
Realistic Job Preview Development	33
Realistic Job Preview Delivery	34
Measures	36
Psychological Contract	36
Trust Belief	39
Affective Organizational Commitment	40
Data Analysis	42
CHAPTER IV. RESULTS	43
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	50
Summary	50
Implications	53
Limitations	55
Directions for Future Research	58
Conclusion	62
REFERENCES	64

APPENDIX A. Realistic Job Preview	81
APPENDIX B. Instrument	82
APPENDIX C. Information Letter	85

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of Sample Descriptive Statistics	44
Table 2a: Independent Sample Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables.....	45
Table 2b: Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables...	46
Table 3: Results of Moderated Regression Analysis for Mutuality and Reciprocity.....	48
Table 4: Summary of Findings for Hypotheses Proposed in the Study.....	49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Diagram of the Proposed Relationships of the Study Variables	6
--	---

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

New employment relationships are often defined by the formal terms and conditions of employment such as the compensation and benefits employees will receive from the employer in exchange for their job performance. These terms and conditions are typically enumerated and agreed upon before an official offer of employment is extended. The acceptance of the employment offer, under the agreed upon terms and conditions, constitutes an employment contract. There are, however, other inducements new employees may expect to receive from the employer along with other perceived reciprocal obligations that are based on perceived promises made during their recruitment into the organization. Those perceived promises, and the expectations that are inferred from them, comprise the terms and conditions of what has commonly been referred to as the “psychological contract” (e.g., Hallier & James, 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Robinson, 1996; Rousseau, 1995, 2001; Rousseau & Wade-Benzoni, 1994).

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) viewed psychological contracts as the exchange of employee loyalty and effort for organizational inducements such as job security, advancement opportunities, clearly defined role responsibilities, adequate resources, and desirable working conditions. Similarly, Rousseau (1995) conceptualized psychological contracts as a system of beliefs regarding the terms of the exchange agreement an

employee has with his or her employer. What differentiates an actual employment contract from a psychological contract is that the psychological contract is based on *expected*, and not necessarily required, employer inducements and reciprocal employee obligations. Specifically, Robinson (1996, p. 574) defined the subjective nature of the psychological contract as “employees’ perceptions of what they owe to their employers and what their employers owe to them.”

For example, a new employee might be expected to demonstrate positive corporate citizenship by assuming tasks that may fall outside the defined parameters of his or her immediate role. However, refusal by the employee to engage in such discretionary behaviors would not be subject to any formal disciplinary action, but would undoubtedly weaken the employment relationship. On the other hand, the employee might expect the employer to accommodate work-life balance issues by providing a flexible work schedule. However, if the employer does not extend such an accommodation, the employee may not file a formal grievance against the employer but may instead intentionally restrain future performance efforts. Thus, if the perceived expectations by either party are not met, several negative organizational outcomes may arise.

For example, violations of the psychological contract have been shown to negatively affect important organizational outcomes such as employee intention to turnover (Turnley & Feldman, 1999), in-role performance, organizational commitment, and decreased willingness to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (Kickul & Lester, 2001; Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Rousseau, 1990; Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003). In addition, employee

lack of trust and loyalty in the organization, resistance to organizational change, and even cynicism towards employers in general have been shown to be negatively associated with perceived breaches in the psychological contract (see Robinson, 1996). Thus, certain expectations of the employment relationship may be based on promises perceived and not necessarily stated in a formal contract; however, they are nonetheless influential to the employment relationship (Schein, 1980).

Given the potential for such negative organizational outcomes, psychological contracts have received a considerable amount of attention. However, organizational researchers have only recently begun to explore *how* psychological contracts form and develop over time. In fact, several recent authors have called for the need for a greater understanding of the antecedents and building blocks of the psychological contract (e.g., Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Robinson & Morrison, 1995; Rousseau, 1990, 2001).

Problem

Despite the substantial body of psychological contract literature, only recently has attention been given to the origins of the psychological contract itself. Rousseau (2001) has suggested that the psychological contract evolves from pre-employment beliefs, recruitment experiences, post-entry socialization, and broader social norms. However, the majority of psychological contract research has been exclusively focused on the contexts of either new (e.g., D'Art & Turner, 2006; De Vos, 2005) or existing (e.g., Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Sutton & Griffin, 2004) employer-employee relationships. Portwood and Miller (1976) expressed concerns similar to Rousseau's and offered theoretical guidance on where to begin an empirical investigation into the origins of the

psychological contract. Yet, it appears their work and their call for future research has been overlooked by contemporary scholars.

One of the more glaring disparities in the psychological contract literature is the lack of research that has focused on the pre-employment and recruitment context. In fact, an exhaustive search of *ABI/Inform*, *ProQuest*, *Social Sciences Direct*, and several other literature databases was unable to produce a single empirical study examining the influences of psychological contract formation prior to the organizational entry of new employees. This is unfortunate and a gross oversight that has only recently come to the attention of psychological contract researchers. Rousseau (2001) voiced such sentiments noting that the antecedents and formation of the psychological contract have received considerably less attention from researchers than its associated organizational outcomes.

Recently, however, suggestions have been made by scholars that the roots of the psychological contract may be related to the information communicated during the recruitment process (see Rousseau, 2001). As such, a relationship between realistic job previews (RJPs) and psychological contracts has been suggested in the research literature (e.g., Rousseau, 2001; Sims, 2006) and in textbooks (e.g., George & Jones, 2008; McShane & Von Glinow, 2003). This is because RJPs have demonstrated an ability to decrease new employees' pre-entry expectations and have contributed to reduced negative organizational outcomes by creating more realistic pre-entry expectations (e.g., Phillips, 1998; Premack & Wanous, 1985). Yet, it appears that no study to date has empirically tested for a direct relationship between an RJP and the psychological contract.

Purpose of Present Research

Given the current lack of empirical evidence, the overarching goal of this research was to determine if a relationship existed between the realistic job preview (RJP) and the psychological contract in order to provide organizational researchers with new insights into the dynamics of the recruiting process beyond broad-based assessments of person-organization and person-job fit. Specifically, such a finding would add empirical support to Rousseau's (2001) evolutionary theory that the psychological contract begins to take substantive form during the recruitment process. In order to accomplish this goal, this research suggested that applicant perceptions and beliefs regarding the terms and conditions commonly associated with the psychological contract would be related to the information provided in an RJP during job applicants' initial employment interview.

The literature review below is divided into four sections, each serving a distinct purpose for developing the conceptual framework of this research. First, a review of the early psychological contract literature is presented in order to establish the theoretical underpinnings of the construct. Second, the contemporary theoretical and empirical investigations of the psychological contract are presented in order to provide a more contemporary view of the construct. Third, a review of the relevant RJP literature is presented in order to support an investigation of the psychological contract within a RJP framework. Finally, a brief review of affective organizational commitment (AOC) and trust as research variables in prior psychological contract research is provided. An overview of the proposed relationships in this study between the RJP, psychological contract, trust belief, and AOC are presented in Figure 1.

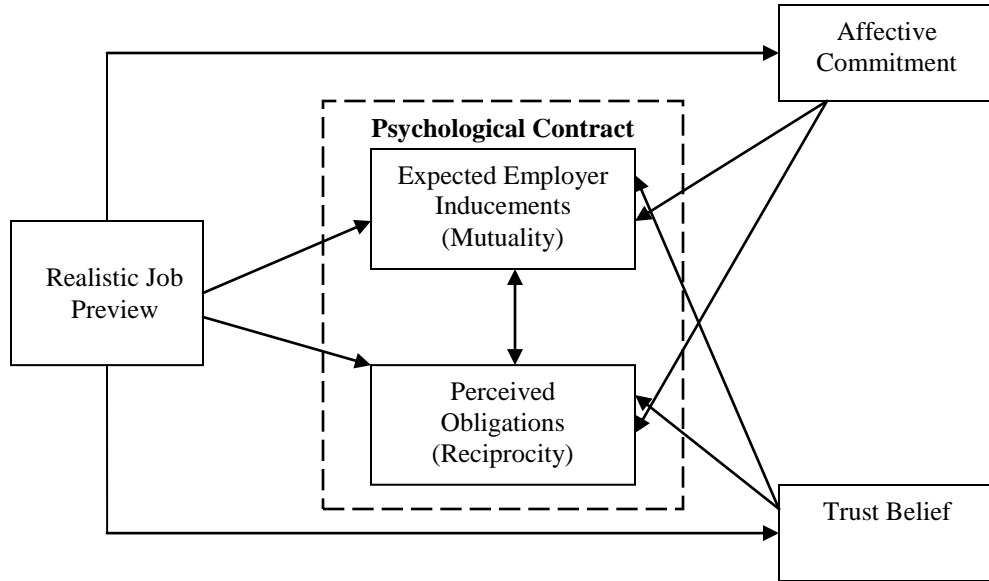


Figure 1. Overview of the proposed relationships between the realistic job preview, psychological contract, trust belief, and affective organizational commitment.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Background of Psychological Contracts and Realistic Job Previews

Psychological Contracts

The roots of psychological contract theory may be traced to Barnard's (1938) equilibrium theory which holds as its basic premise that the employer-employee exchange provides the conditions in which members of the organization choose to continue their organizational membership. It was March and Simon (1958, p. 90), however, who first introduced the notion that unwritten contractual obligations between parties to an employment relationship underlie the exchange relationship. These authors stated, "In joining the organization, he (the employee) accepts an authority relation, i.e., he agrees that within some limits (defined both explicitly and implicitly by the terms of the employment contract) he will accept as the premise of his behaviors orders and instructions supplied by the organization."

As far as who is credited with naming the construct, Roehling (1996) noted that both Argyris (1960) and Levinson, Price, Munden, and Solley (1962) have been given historical credit with introducing the "psychological contract" terminology, although these authors held divergent conceptualizations of the construct. Argyris' conceptualization of the psychological contract was initially used to characterize the

implicit understanding of obligations between a group of employees and their supervisor. In contrast, Levinson et al.'s view focused on the individual and the respective employer.

The view adopted by Levinson et al. (1962) reflected the ideas of Menninger (1958) who, in describing the nature of a psychotherapist-patient relationship, emphasized that contracts and contractual relationships are characterized by the reciprocal exchange of tangibles (e.g., pay, goods, and services) and intangibles (e.g., mutually beneficial companionship). According to Menninger, these reciprocated aspects are directed at satisfaction of both parties' needs. The insights of Menninger enabled Levinson et al. to outline two fundamental characteristics of psychological contracts. First, the obligations that comprise the psychological contract are implied. Second, these obligatory expectations form during the pre-organizational entry stage of the employment relationship; and as the employment relationship develops, these expectations evolve and change over time.

Robinson and Morrison (1995, p. 290) noted that psychological contracts are formed "through the interactions between an employee and specific organizational agents such as recruiters, direct superiors, and human resource personnel." Schein (1980) also claimed that in addition to an individual's needs, psychological contracts are shaped by organizational traditions and norms. Thus, although Argyris' (1960) and others' group-based view of the psychological contract construct served to promote general interest in the construct (e.g., Ghiselli & Brown, 1955; March & Simon, 1958; Schein, 1980), it was Levinson et al.'s (1962) individual phenomenon conceptualization that provided the theoretical foundation for much of the empirical research that followed (Portwood & Miller, 1976).

Some of the early empirical studies of psychological contract theory focused almost exclusively on the construct's influence on traditional organizational outcomes. For example, Gibson (1966) examined the relationship between the quasi-contractual aspects of the formal written work contract and employee absenteeism. Kotter (1973) asserted that psychological contracts are comprised of congruent expectations (that he referred to as matching). In his study, the highest percentage of matched expectations correlated with greater job satisfaction, productivity, and reduced turnover. Later works such as Dabos and Rousseau's (2004) would also focus on matching actual expectations as a core element of psychological contracts, although these authors note that the vast majority of psychological contract research merely considers the perception of agreement and not necessarily actual agreement.

Finally, Portwood and Miller's (1976) study empirically validated their psychological contract model that was based upon the idea that the summation of differences found between employees' expectations and their perceived job reality (organizational policies) for all relevant factors represents the overall degree of employee-job fit. Using a longitudinal design with a field sample, Portwood and Miller found a positive relationship between employees' met expectations and their job satisfaction and work behaviors. Thus, when seeking a position with an employer, the greater the degree to which a potential employee can formulate more realistic expectations of the job, the greater the chance that negative organizational outcomes will be avoided in the future.

Contemporary Views of the Psychological Contract

Because of its relationship with important organizational outcomes, the psychological contract has received considerable attention over the past decade; and interest seems to be steadily increasing. There are literally hundreds of published studies to date pertaining to the psychological contract, and a complete review of such research is beyond the scope of this dissertation research. Yet, several common themes regarding psychological contracts have emerged from the research and warrant a brief discussion. First, there seems to be a general agreement among psychological contract scholars that the construct is an individual-level phenomenon (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Guest & Conway, 2002; Lester, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2000; Levinson et al., 1962; Lewis-McClear & Taylor, 1997; Robinson, 1996; Rousseau, 1989, 1990, 2001). Considering that the psychological contract is, in essence, an exchange relationship between two independent parties, individual cognitive and dispositional influences would be expected to differentiate one psychological contract from another.

Another common theme is the orientation of the research. Specifically, Dabos and Rousseau (2004) noted that psychological contract studies in general have been dominated by the employee perspective, have focused almost entirely on the dysfunctional nature of the employment relationship (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Lester, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2000), and have focused primarily on the negative outcomes associated with perceived and actual psychological contract violations (see Braun, 1997; Pugh, Skarlicki, & Passell, 2003; Robinson & Morrison, 1995).

Finally, most if not all psychological contract research has been framed within the contexts of new or existing relationships. As noted previously, there has been very little

theoretical development on not only how, but *when* the psychological contract is initiated. Understanding when the psychological contract is initiated (i.e., are the expectations of both parties in the exchange relationship established before or after organizational entry) may be an important factor for understanding and managing newcomer socialization, adjustment, and performance. Despite the lack of attention from organizational researchers, recent theoretical inroads have been offered that shed some light on both how and when psychological contracts form. One theory in particular was put forth by Rousseau (2001) and has received considerable attention because it considers the role of individual mental models known as “schemas” as a significant factor of the psychological contract within the theoretical evolutionary framework.

First, Rousseau (2001) described the psychological contracts as a mental model of conceptually related elements that are unique to the individual engaged in the exchange relationship. She noted, “Because individuals can have differences in their basic cognitive structures, elements that fit easily into one person’s schema may fit less well to another’s” (p. 513). As such, Rousseau theorized that the schema an individual has regarding employment might influence that individual’s expectations regarding what he or she may expect from the employer, and what they would be expected to reciprocate in return.

Similar schema-based views have been more explicitly conceptualized by earlier authors such as Kramer (1996) who, citing Jones (1990), explained that reciprocation scripts reflect the mutual understandings of parties to a social interaction. Furthermore, Rousseau (2001, p. 512) noted, “Psychological contract comprises subjective beliefs

regarding an exchange agreement between an individual and, in organizations typically, the employing firm and its agents.”

Finally, Rousseau (2001) proposed that the origins of the psychological contract are rooted in the schemas of new employees prior to their entry into the organization. As a new employee gains organizational experience, that experience is compared with the elements of his or her schema. Thus, while the psychological contract assumes its initial form during recruitment, it continuously develops and is further refined as the employment relationship matures. Rousseau did not elaborate on any potential dispositional antecedents of the psychological contract, but describes the evolutionary process of the psychological contract. She said,

Prior to employment, workers can possess beliefs regarding work, their occupations, and organizations generally that set in motion certain responses to joining with an employer. Recruitment experiences engender understandings regarding the promises workers and employers make to each other, and post-hire socialization continues the processing of new information regarding the employment relationship and promises related to it. (Rousseau, 2001, p.512)

Dispositional Correlates of the Psychological Contract

Interpersonal trust and affective commitment are two of the more commonly observed constructs in various forms throughout the organizational, behavioral, and social sciences research. Not surprising, then, is the frequency in which these constructs appear across the psychological contract literature. This is because psychological contracts require not only a shared understanding of the terms and conditions of the

exchange, but also some degree of mutual trust and commitment when the exchange relationship is intended to be open-ended. Thus, in the recruitment context where the applicant and employer are expected to hold some anticipation of the longevity of their relationship, trust and affective commitment may be vital to the psychological contract itself.

Trust. The notion of trust in the psychological contract literature is a reoccurring theme, with various dimensions of trust permeating the empirical research (Robinson, 1994). Researchers have been most interested in the notion of distrust that arises when there is a perceived violation of the psychological contract (e.g., Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; George, 2003; Guest, 2004; Searle & Ball, 2004; Winter & Jackson, 2006). The association between trust and psychological contracts is rooted in the idea that trusting behavior is critical for maintaining a social interaction such as an employment exchange relationship (e.g., Bachmann, 2003; Braun, 1997). Specifically, the psychological contract itself may represent an expectancy of receiving inducements from an employer that is predicated on the employee trusting that the employer can and will deliver what was promised, or at least what was perceived to have been promised.

Adopting this expectancy perspective of trust, Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Cramerer (1998) conceptualized trust in terms of one's willingness to be vulnerable to others based on positive expectations of the behavior and intentions of those others. The implication of this viewpoint is that the relationship between trust and reciprocity may go back to our earliest sociological experiences where our willingness to be vulnerable to others (i.e., giving valued items to others when they were in need) was predicated on expectations that those others would later provide for you when you were in need (see

Cosmides & Tooby, 1992). Similarly, De Vos and Wielers (2003, p. 87) stated, “It is quite clear that reciprocity implies trust. People in a reciprocal relationship are responsive to each others’ needs and know what they are.” Another perspective comes from Cook and Wall (1980, p. 126) who described trust as the extent to which one is willing to ascribe good intentions to and have confidence in the words and actions of other people, which is a crucial underlying dimension of interpersonal relationships.

Finally, Dabos and Rousseau (2004, p. 53) noted, “Much of the value in creating psychological contracts lies in their capacity to reduce insecurities and anticipate future exchanges, helping both individuals and organizations to meet their needs.” This inter-reliance requires some degree of vulnerability of and trust from both parties to the exchange relationship because, aside from normative influences, there are no formal requisites to ensure reciprocity in an exchange relationship. In fact, Rempel, Holms, and Zanna (1985) concluded that interpersonal trust involves both the belief that one’s partner is concerned with one’s needs and also a feeling of confidence in the strength of the relationship.

In short, trust is a necessary component for developing and maintaining exchange relationships. However, trust itself does not initiate nor sustain such relationships long enough for a psychological contract to develop and mature. Thus, in order for two parties to initiate the exchange relationship and remain engaged, there must be some degree of commitment among the parties to the exchange.

Affective organizational commitment. Affective organizational commitment (AOC) has been generally defined as the degree to which an employee is emotionally connected to, involved in, and identified with his or her organization (e.g., Meyer, Irving,

& Allen, 1998; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979; Van Emmerik & Sanders, 2005). The construct has received considerable attention in the organizational commitment literature (see Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997 for comprehensive reviews) due in large part to the effects of AOC on individual-level outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance, turnover, and organizational citizenship behavior.

In general, organizational scholars have considered affective organizational commitment primarily as an outcome of a new employee's post-entry socialization (e.g., Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardiner, 1995). However, several authors have also suggested that AOC may develop during the recruitment process prior to entry. For example Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) noted that involvement with an organization may serve as an important factor in the development of AOC. An example of organizational involvement may include an applicant's continued voluntary participation in the recruitment process. Furthermore, Phillips (1998) noted that personal commitment may occur when individuals believe that they chose an organization without coercion or external inducements. Thus, job applicants' continued and voluntary participation in an organization's selection process may be evidence of some base level of affective organizational commitment in that they have an interest in the organization's success. In other words, applicants would not typically apply for a position with an organization when they expect that organization to fail.

While many conceptualizations of AOC are based on an individual's direct experience with the organization and its agents, applicants who intentionally seek employment with a specific organization may in fact demonstrate some degree of AOC. Specifically, knowledge gleaned about the organization, its mission, and its values prior

to having any direct contact or interaction with the organization may be sufficient for the individual to positively identify with the organization. For example, several authors have defined identity and reputation of the organization as an enduring central component of its character (e.g., Albert & Whetten, 1985; Gioia & Thomas, 1996) while Foreman and Whetten (2002) found that a company's reputation and image are positively related to internal member commitment. Several other authors have also suggested that the company's reputation and image positively influence others' positive feelings and beliefs about the organization (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Robbins and Judge (2007, p. 80) adopt a similar view and define affective commitment as "an emotional attachment to the organization and a belief in its values." These authors go on to explain that an employee may be affectively committed to his or her employer because of the organization's mission and core values such as firms that are service oriented or not-for-profit. Thus, while applicants have yet to make any significant contributions to the organization and its goals, they may nonetheless feel committed to the organization if the organization's mission and values appear on the surface to match their needs.

Core Dimensions of the Psychological Contract

Rousseau (2001) proposed that pre-employment schemas provide meaning to workers' employment experiences and give rise to the reciprocal obligation beliefs that stem from this sensemaking. In the context of the recruitment process, applicants' schemas will be expected to influence how they perceive and internalize the information being presented, thus creating their situational reality. This situational reality will then be expected to influence their perceptions of promises made by the employer, and also

perceptions of what obligations they have to the employer. These two dynamics represent separate components of the psychological contract (e.g., Dabos & Rousseau, 2004) where one component is comprised of the perceived promises made by the employer while the other component is comprised of the perceived obligations the applicant owes the employer in return.

Mutuality. During recruitment, the information communicated by the employer or its agents typically includes (at a minimum) details of the job itself and its requirements, the work environment, compensation, and the organization's policies that directly pertain to the job (e.g., dress, attendance, training, probationary periods, and work scheduling). This information is regarded as the formal terms and conditions of employment because the terms and conditions are determined to a large degree by job descriptions, compensation guidelines, and workplace regulations that are not usually subject to individual interpretation or application. However, other information may be communicated or implied by the employer or its agent during recruitment as a form of incentive that may lead the applicant to perceive that some form of inducement was promised. Such inducements may include career opportunities and development, financial rewards and incentives, work life balance accommodations, and a desirable social atmosphere in the workplace.

In most recruitment situations, potential employees receive no formal guarantees of any incentives; however, when information about such incentives is presented, many individuals will assume an implied agreement regarding those incentives. Rousseau (2001) referred to this perceived agreement as "mutuality" which she noted is determined by the perceptions of individual parties to the exchange relationship. According to

Rousseau, mutuality is predicated on several criteria such as the accuracy of individual perceptions based on the information shared between the parties, and having the right to consent to or reject the terms of the agreement. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the term *mutuality* is used to describe the first major component of the psychological contract which is the degree to which a set of inducements were perceived to have been promised by the employer based on information communicated to the applicant during an employment interview.

Reciprocity. The second major component of the psychological contract is the set of reciprocal obligations that one party to an exchange believes they owe the other. The underlying basis for such beliefs stems from Gouldner (1960) who proposed the idea that when one party receives favorable treatment from another party, the recipient is then motivated to provide favorable treatment in return. He referred to this dynamic as the “norm of reciprocity” and asserted that reciprocation of positive behavior among members in a social system underlies the stability of that social system. As Deckop, Cirka, and Andersson (2003) noted, the norm of reciprocity has been universally recognized and studied from many different perspectives within the theological, philosophical, and sociological disciplines. The norm of reciprocity has also received considerable attention within the organizational context where exchanges between parties in an employment relationship may be either economic or social (Blau, 1964). Specifically, an economic exchange is characterized as an explicit, and often contractual, exchange of pay for work performed that is clearly defined and understood by both parties and is typically short term. On the other hand, social exchange is characterized by “unspecified obligations over an unspecified time frame” (Deckop et al., 2003, p. 103).

Early approaches to reciprocity used the economic view of reciprocity based in large part on Axelrod's (1984) view of reciprocity. Specifically, Axelrod explained reciprocity using a tournament game context where parties exchanged inducements in order to maintain a deficit /credit equilibrium. However, most scholars including De Vos and Wielers (2003) later adopted the social exchange conceptualization of reciprocity which they referred to as the "reciprocity complex." According to these authors, the reciprocity complex includes salient social science concepts such as justice, morality, and altruism. Thus, the major difference between theirs and Gouldner's (1960) views of reciprocity is that reciprocity is not strictly a calculative economic process, but rather one that is based on subjective and moral influences as well.

What makes reciprocity an important construct in both social and employment exchange is the conditional nature in which it is applied. Specifically, those who have or believe they have received some positive treatment by one party would be expected to hold certain beliefs about their future reciprocal obligations to that party. For example, Deckop et al. (2003) suggested that the norm of reciprocity moderates the exchange of discretionary organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) between coworkers. Furthermore, these authors underscore that in the employment exchange context, non-monetary forms of exchange (e.g., OCBs) have been of primary interest because they directly support the social exchange relationship itself (see Blau, 1964). However, they also promote a "long-term orientation where there exists trust between parties that reciprocation will occur." (Deckop et al., p. 102)

Because employer-employee exchange relationships often involve the exchange of non-monetary inducements (e.g., OCB's for career development opportunities),

reciprocity has been identified as a core component of the psychological contract (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; De Vos et al., 2003; Rousseau, 2001). Yet, these and other studies have examined reciprocity in either new or existing employment relationships where reciprocity referred to the employee inducements that were provided in response to actually receiving some form of employer inducement. In contrast, this research considers reciprocity in the recruitment context where employer inducements may have been suggested but have yet to be provided. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, *reciprocity* refers to the degree to which applicants believe that they will owe a set of reciprocal inducements to the employer in return for the anticipated receipt of perceived employer inducements.

Realistic Job Previews

For decades RJPs have been of interest for organizational researchers due to their ability to decrease unrealistic expectations (e.g., Hom, Griffeth, Palick, & Bracker, 1998; McShane & Von Glinow, 2003; Mello, 2002; Portwood & Miller, 1976) and to positively affect important organizational outcomes such as tenure, performance, commitment, and coping (Premack & Wanous, 1985). Such outcomes are attributed to the presentation of both positive and negative job information to applicants and new employees. In addition, RJPs have been shown to facilitate applicant self-selection by promoting greater compatibility between a prospective employee and the job being applied for based on employee perceptions of whether the job and the organization would be expected to meet his or her individual needs (e.g., Rynes, 1990; Vandenberg & Scarpello, 1990). In short, RJP effectiveness is based on the fundamental assumption that the message of the RJP is received, processed, and internalized by the applicant. Consequently, several

meta- analyses have been conducted during that time period (e.g., McEvoy & Cascio, 1985; Phillips, 1998; Premack & Wanous, 1985; Wanous, 1977, 1980) that have all generally supported the idea that an RJP, as part of the recruitment process, lowers applicants' initial expectations and increases their commitment to the organization.

For example, Saks and Cronshaw (1990) built upon Popovich and Wanous' (1982) view that one of the critical functions of the RJP is to provide accurate information to the applicant. These authors hypothesized that by receiving a realistic job preview, an applicant will have more complete and accurate knowledge about a job. In addition, these authors suggested that the increased knowledge that comes from the RJP "enables applicants to make more informed decisions and should result in greater commitment to job choice decisions, and a greater perception of honesty due to the provision of an honest and accurate picture of the job" (Saks et al., p. 224). Results of their study confirmed that participants receiving an RJP had more accurate knowledge about the job they were applying for, and that knowledge of the job mediated the effects of the RJP on job expectations, role clarity, organization and interviewer honesty, and commitment to their choice.

The Pre-Employment Psychological Contract

While the primary focus of this research was to examine the relationship between the RJP and the psychological contract, it was important to first test for a relationship between the core dimensions of the psychological contract in a unique, pre-employment context. Building on prior research, this study suggests that in the recruitment context where applicants have no prior exchange history with the employer, mutuality and reciprocity might still be significantly related. That is, the shared understanding of what

the employer intends to offer to a large extent may determine the reciprocal obligation beliefs of the employee. This fundamental relationship between what is expected (i.e., mutuality) and what is or will be owed in return (i.e., reciprocity) forms the basis for exchange relationships and the psychological contract. Until now, however, examinations of the relationship between mutuality and reciprocity have been limited to post-hire contexts (e.g., Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994; Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau, 1990).

Hypothesis 1: Applicants' mutuality and reciprocity perceptions will be positively related in the pre-employment context.

Realistic job previews and mutuality. Perceptions of expected or promised employer inducements in new employer-employee relationships have shown to be often over-inflated in a wide variety of contexts. Rousseau (2001) suggested this may occur because when individuals enter into a new employer-employee relationship, sensemaking of the new relationship is based primarily on limited or incomplete information about the terms and conditions of their new employment relationship. Thus, new hires initially rely on pre-formed schemas for sensemaking, which are subsequently adjusted over time as experience is gained. More specifically, schemas affect inferences about previously stored information and, most importantly, are based mostly on anticipated rather than observed outcomes.

Specifically, De Vos et al. (2003) adopted the conceptualizations of Rousseau (1989) and Schalk and Freese (1997) in which they focus on the psychological contract as a perceptual, not actual, reality. Yet the perceived reality provides a more solid

foundation for pre-entry sense-making than no information at all. This may be why many applicants choose to opt out of a selection process after receiving an RJP.

The job and job context information communicated in the RJP may serve as the foundation for applicants' perceptions regarding what inducements the employer has promised to provide such as training, work-life balance accommodations, a safe and supportive work environment, and job variety. These expectations comprise the perceived expectations of employer inducements component of the psychological contract.

Applicants who receive an RJP would be expected to have a clearer understanding about the actual task requirements and performance goals of the job for which they are applying. Thus, in the absence of the RJP, applicants may overestimate their perceptions of what inducements the employer has promised to them.

Hypothesis 2: The realistic job preview will be negatively related to applicant's mutuality perceptions.

Realistic job previews and reciprocity. Current psychological contract literature proposes that the behaviors employees believe they are obligated to reciprocate to the employer are adjusted upwards or downwards depending on what they actually receive from the employer in order to maintain a balance in the exchange relationship (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004). Furthermore, in the post-hire context, research has shown that new employees who did not receive an RJP as part of their recruitment process tended to overestimate the degree to which they owed positive behaviors to the employer. For example, Robinson, Kraatz, and Rousseau (1994) observed that over time newcomers often perceived that they owed the organization *less* than what they had initially believed. More recently, De Vos et al. (2003) examined changes in new-hire perceptions with

regard to several unique employee obligations at four separate times following entry into a new employee-employer relationship (i.e., 2 weeks, 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months). These authors observed that reciprocal obligation beliefs were greater during the earliest socialization encounter stage (immediate post-entry) but then decreased over time. Such studies support the notion that new employees may tend to bring to their newly formed relationships an over-inflated sense of what positive behaviors they are obligated to provide to their employer.

As previously discussed, realistic job previews (RJPs) have been shown to decrease initial expectations in job applicants and new hires, thus in order to fully understand how the psychological contract arises, an examination is warranted to determine whether not having a realistic job preview (RJP) as part of the recruitment process contributes to the over-estimation of applicants' reciprocal obligation beliefs. Specifically, this current research suggests that applicants who have not yet entered a new employee-employer relationship can reasonably be expected to hold higher reciprocal obligation beliefs if they have not had an RJP as part of their recruitment process.

Hypothesis 3: The realistic job preview will be negatively related to applicant's reciprocity perceptions.

Trust and realistic job previews. Trust in new organizational relationships, such as those between a recruit and the organization, does not necessarily need extensive amounts of time or interpersonal interaction in which to develop. In fact, high levels of initial trust among individuals who had no previous knowledge about one another have been observed in a phenomenon that Meyerson, Weick, and Kramer (1996) refer to as "swift trust." Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) conceptualized swift trust within the

framework of temporary work teams, and McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany (1998, p. 474) noted “initial trust between parties will not be based on any kind of experience with, or firsthand knowledge of, the other party.” Extending the notion of swift trust to the current research context, Hom et al. (1998) noted that recruits may interpret RJPs in such a way as to elicit beliefs that employers are in fact trustworthy and that they are concerned about newcomers’ welfare. For instance, applicant perceptions of employer trustworthiness and altruism have been associated with RJPs in past research (e.g., Dean & Wanous, 1984; Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981). Therefore, this research tested the relationship between the RJP and trust belief about the employer.

Hypothesis 4a: The realistic job preview will be related to applicant’s trust beliefs about the employer.

Trust and the psychological contract. Because exchange relationships are often considered open-ended, the psychological contract may therefore be considered as both resulting from and at the same time perpetuating an open-ended exchange. It is believed that the primary mechanism for continuing an exchange relationship is mutual trust, and it is this trust that is expected to affect both psychological contract components. For instance, mutuality represents at a minimum the assumption of agreement on the set of employer inducements perceived to have been offered. Thus, in order for such agreement to occur, the applicant or new employee must trust that the inducements are legitimate and that the person making the offer is trustworthy.

Furthermore, since trust is believed to be an antecedent to mutuality and since mutuality must occur for reciprocity to follow, it is reasonable to assume that trust would also be related to reciprocity. Specifically, in order for applicants to believe that they are

obligated to reciprocate to the employer in some way requires that they must first trust that they will actually receive the inducements perceived to have been promised by the employer at some point in the future. Therefore, this research suggests that trust is a core factor that underlies applicants' mutuality and reciprocity beliefs.

Hypothesis 4b: Applicants' trust beliefs about the employer will be related to applicant's mutuality perceptions.

Hypothesis 4c: Applicants' trust beliefs about the employer will be related to applicant's reciprocity perceptions.

Affective commitment and realistic job previews. Previous organizational research has shown that employees who believe that their company cares about their well being often increase their emotional bond with the organization over time (e.g., Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Shore & Wayne, 1993). Support for this assumption is found in Premack and Wanous's (1985) meta-analysis of 21 RJP experiments which showed a significant relationship between RJP and organizational commitment. These authors' meta-analysis included studies that were all framed within the post-entry context; however, a similar relationship between the RJP and affective commitment was expected in the pre-employment context of this research. Based on the research previously cited, I proposed that applicant perceptions of employer support and candor elicited from receiving an RJP may also illicit some degree of emotional affinity toward the employer. Therefore, it was hypothesized that applicants who receive an RJP will feel more affective commitment towards the employer than those who do not receive an RJP.

Hypothesis 5a: The realistic job preview will be related to applicant's affective organizational commitment towards the employer.

Affective commitment and the psychological contract. The psychological contract is comprised of both the perceived agreement over inducements to be provided by the employer (i.e., mutuality) as well as reciprocal obligations that are believed to be owed to the employer in return (i.e., reciprocity). The perceived terms of the psychological contract may, therefore, be considered to be, in part, a reflection of the organization itself and its values. With regard to affective commitment, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) noted that differences in commitment may be explained by differences in the types of opportunities that organizations offer. For instance, applicants for a small, not-for-profit organization would not be expected to believe that they were promised managerial career development opportunities with substantial monetary bonuses; nor would applicants for a high-level professional position with a for-profit firm be expected to perceive that they would be provided with a bonus for good attendance. In other words, the mission, values, or reputation of the organization may influence applicant perceptions of what employer inducements are available. And because the applicants choose to seek membership with the organization, it is therefore logical to assume that they would possess some level of affective commitment (as defined by Robbins & Judge, 2007) that would be directly related to mutuality.

Regarding reciprocity, one of the defining characteristics of ongoing exchange relationships is a history of inducements provided and obligations reciprocated. In the pre-employment context such as an initial interview situation, there are little to no opportunities for potential employees to actually receive an inducement such as a promotion. However, a perceived obligation to reciprocate discretionary behavior in the future may still exist based on the applicant's level of affective commitment towards the

employer. Specifically, Sanders and Schyns (2006) noted that reciprocity behavior in cooperative exchange relationships, particularly between employee and employer, is predicated both on mutual interest and a mutual affective concern among parties to the exchange. In addition, a lack of interest in the future quality of an exchange relationship would be expected to have a negative effect on cooperative behavior among parties. This falls squarely in line with the underlying precept of the norm of reciprocity (see Blau, 1964) that reciprocity beliefs are based on both what was received and what can be expected in the future. Thus, a lack of commitment among the parties of an exchange relationship would be expected to result in a lack of felt obligation to either provide an inducement or to reciprocate one that has been provided. Therefore, affective commitment towards the employer would be expected to be related to applicants' perceptions of both mutuality and reciprocity.

Hypothesis 5b: Affective organizational commitment towards the employer will be related to both applicant mutuality perceptions.

Hypothesis 5c: Affective organizational commitment towards the employer will be related to applicant reciprocity perceptions.

Finally, Rousseau (2001) noted that reciprocity beliefs are adjusted upwards or downwards based on individual assessments of received or anticipated employer inducements. An extension of that research would suggest that reciprocity would be affected by an individual's perception of remaining with the organization long enough to actually receive the employer inducements. In other words, an applicant may believe that the employer can be trusted to deliver the inducements that were perceived to have been promised; however, if the applicant does not anticipate remaining with the employer long enough to receive those inducements (i.e., low affective organizational commitment), he

or she would be less likely to feel any reciprocal obligations. This research proposes that job applicants with positive trust beliefs in the employer will be more likely to believe that they will receive certain employer inducements in the future and will feel some obligation to reciprocate as per the norm of reciprocity (see Gouldner, 1960); however their commitment to the exchange relationship will, in turn, increase those perceived reciprocity beliefs. Thus, on the basis of the literature and past research on reciprocity, the following hypothesis is made:

Hypothesis 6. The relationship between applicants' trust beliefs towards the employer and their reciprocity beliefs will be moderated by affective organizational commitment. Specifically, applicants who hold positive trust beliefs about the employer will perceive a greater sense of obligation to reciprocate when they are affectively committed to the employer.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Setting and Sample

Participants in this study consisted of individuals seeking full-time, entry-level employment through an established outsourced hiring agency. The agency was interviewing for positions at an internationally branded food product manufacturer located in the southern region of the United States. This company has one of the most recognizable names in the food industry and has been in operation for almost 70 years. The company's local food production operation produces a wide variety of food products for commercial sale as well as for government contract and operates on a continuous basis with a labor force that exceeds a thousand employees. In order to manage the ongoing turnover at the facility, the staffing agency was contracted to recruit and hire replacement workers as needed.

All participants had to have been registered with the employment agency before being considered for any employment opportunities. Typically, these individuals did not come to the agency exclusively seeking employment with one employer. Instead, after reviewing registered workers' personal and work-history information, the agency's human resource specialists determined several employment assignment options for each worker based on the agency clients' personnel needs as well as the applicants'

qualifications, work history, and individual preferences. Workers were then free to choose or decline any employment opportunity that was offered.

Procedure

Participant recruitment. Applicants for the production position were solicited by the researcher to participate in the research following their employment interview. Specifically, each applicant interview was conducted at the employment office by one of several human resource specialists and lasted approximately 15 minutes. Depending on time constraints, availability of the human resource specialists, and daily volume of the office, some interviews were scheduled in advance, but the majority was conducted at the time workers indicated they were interested in applying for the food-production position. If the interview was successful, the applicant was then offered a position conditional upon the successful completion of both a criminal background check and drug screen. Only after the background check and drug screen were completed was an official offer of employment given.

Applicants were asked if they would volunteer to participate in the current research study before they left the recruitment office following their interview. During the study, no formal record was kept of the actual number of applicants who were solicited or who declined to participate. Therefore, the actual numbers of applicants who were solicited and who declined participation can only be estimated. In total, approximately 251 applicants were solicited and of those roughly 90 declined to participate in the study. In addition, approximately 10 of the applicants who began the survey terminated their participation before it could be completed. Thus, approximately 64% of the total number of applicants solicited agreed to participate in the current study.

The most common reasons cited by those who declined participation outright and for those who did not complete the survey were time constraints (i.e., many of those applying for the position were employed elsewhere at the time and needed to return to their jobs) and personal obligations (i.e., they needed to pick up their children or tend to other personal business). Several others were unable to participate because they did not meet the minimum 19-year age criterion. Of the 151 total completed surveys, 12 were omitted from analysis due to apparent rater bias such as answering each item with the same response score or because large sections of the survey were left blank. Thus, the total number of usable surveys in this study was $N = 139$.

The average age of applicants in this study was 27 years old ($SD = 8.14$) with a range from 19 to 57. Gender for the total sample was roughly equal where 52% were male and 48% were female. In addition, more than half (56%) of all participants had only a high school-level education, and the majority (73%) of participants had less than 10 years of work experience.

This research took place at an employment agency office; therefore survey administration and completion time was a critical issue for the office personnel. It was imperative that the survey administration and completion not disrupt or in any way interfere with the operation of the office or the applicant interview process; therefore, the time required for applicant solicitation and survey administration was kept as short as possible. As such, at the time the research began, no formal RJP was being provided to applicants by the employment agency staff during the interview process for this position. A goal of the research was to obtain approximately 75 applicant surveys when the RJP was not being used as part of the existing interview process, and then approximately 75

surveys following the incorporation of the RJP. Other than the addition of the RJP, there was no manipulation of the existing interview process. Due to the scheduling of the applicants and also the time constraints of the employment agency, the total number of surveys actually obtained from those applicants who did not receive the RJP (i.e., control group) as part of their employment interview was ($N = 68$) whereas the total number of surveys actually obtained from those applicants whose interview included the RJP were ($N = 71$).

Realistic job preview development. The RJP used in this study was developed with the assistance of three incumbent human resource specialists of the employment agency. It is important to note that because these specialists did not have direct experience as actual supervisors of employees working in the food-assembly position, they could not be considered *true* subject matter experts (see Barr & Hitt, 1986; Hakel, Dobmeyer, & Dunnette, 1970; Singer & Bruhns, 1991). However, like many human resource professionals tasked with the recruitment of potential employees, these human resource specialists maintain a close relationship with the employer and are expected to hold an intimate understanding of the position for which they are recruiting in order to maximize the effectiveness of their recruiting efforts. As such, it was felt in this study that the knowledge and expertise of the human resource specialists as the exclusive recruiters for the manufacturing position sufficiently qualified them as expert judges for the purpose of developing the RJP.

Thus, for this study, each human resource specialist was interviewed in order to identify the positive and negative aspects of the job and the work environment. From these interviews, an exhaustive list of positive and negative RJP items was generated. In

addition to human resource specialist interviews, a comprehensive new-hire orientation information packet provided by the employment agency's client was used to identify job-related factors. The packet included specific employer performance and behavioral expectations, and these were also used to develop the final RJP (see Appendix A). After an initial review of the RJP information, the specialists were asked to add any information that they felt was relevant but had been omitted. After several iterations, a consensus was reached among the specialists regarding the content and wording of the final RJP. For example, RJP statements reflected specific task requirements (i.e., cutting and sorting product), adherence to strict health and safety procedures, physical demands such as standing upright for long periods of time, physical hazards (i.e., working around machinery and sharp cutting instruments), and ambient conditions (i.e., working in hot or cold temperatures) that employees would be expected to routinely encounter while working at the processing facility.

It is important to note that the RJP developed for this study was generalized and reflected the requirements for several jobs because the work assignments at the food-production facility changed frequently depending on the production schedule and the availability of associates. Thus, although the job applicants were interviewing for the position of "Food Product Assembler," they were informed that this job would frequently require them to perform a variety of food production tasks. Staffing situations of this nature are common to food production and general manufacturing operations in order to meet changing production goals.

RJP delivery. Phillips (1998) observed that in post-hire contexts where the goal was to affect positive training outcomes, videotaped RJP's were more effective than

verbal or written RJPs. However, when considering other outcome criteria such as perceptual congruence of expectations, research suggests that the face-to-face interaction afforded by a verbal RJP results in more salient attitude changes than if the RJP information was gleaned passively via written or videotaped means (e.g., Colarelli, 1984; Osborn & Watts, 1973). Phillips (p. 685) concluded from her meta-analysis that “RJP information presented via a two-way communication process (i.e., verbally) facilitates applicant attention and comprehension better than RJP information presented via one-way communications like brochures or videotapes, given the greater mean effect sizes for verbal RJPs.” Thus, each job applicant in the treatment group received a verbal RJP from one of the human resource specialists as part of their interview process.

Applicant interviews were conducted at the employment office by one of several human resource specialists and lasted approximately 15 minutes. Assignment of participants to the research groups was determined only by the order in which participants completed their interviews which were scheduled in advance by the recruiting office. Thus, there was no true random assignment of participants to either the treatment or control groups. In addition, depending on time constraints, availability of the human resource specialists, and daily volume of the office, some interviews were scheduled in advance, but the majority was conducted at the time workers indicated they were interested in applying for the food-production position. If the interview was successful, the applicant was then offered a position conditional upon the successful completion of both a criminal background check and drug screen. Only after the background check and drug screen were completed was an official offer of employment given.

Each of the three human resources specialists shared responsibility for conducting initial interviews depending on the daily interview schedule volume and specialist availability; however, each specialist used the same RJP to ensure that the applicant he or she was interviewing received the same information in the same manner as all the other applicants. The format for the RJP script was bullet-typed only because this format was preferred by the specialists who wanted to be able to seamlessly incorporate the RJP material into the interview according to each specialist's personal interview style.

Measures

Psychological contract. Applicant psychological contract perceptions were assessed in this current research using scale items derived from a 38-item psychological contract measure developed by De Vos, Buyens, and Schalk (2003). The De Vos et al. study examined changes in new, entry-level employees' psychological contract perceptions over time beginning with the new employees' post-entry organizational socialization. These authors' measure consists of two, five-dimension scales of perceived "employer inducements" and perceived "employee contributions" (referred to previously in this research as *mutuality* and *reciprocity*, respectively). First, the *employer inducements* scale used in the De Vos et al. study consisted of 19 items across five scale dimensions that included: (a) three *career development* items, (b) four *job content* items, (c) four *social atmosphere* items, (d) four *financial reward* items, and (e) four *work life balance* items. Second, the *employee contributions* scale used in the De Vos et al. study consisted of another set of 19 items across five dimensions that included: (a) six *extra-role behavior* items, (b) four *flexibility* items, (c) four *ethical behavior* items, (d)

three *loyalty* items, and (e) two *employability* items. Overall Cronbach's alpha for each scale were not reported in the De Vos et al. (2003) study.

It is important to note that the employees in the De Vos et al. (2003) study were all recently hired employees from several large service organizations in the telecommunications, electronics, financial services, and consulting industries. In contrast, the participants in the current research were all job applicants seeking entry-level manufacturing positions with the same organization. Thus, in contrast to the De Vos et al. study, none of the participants in the current had any first-hand experience with their prospective employer. As such, each of the De Vos et al. scale items were evaluated on (a) whether the item response required first-hand experience with the employer, (b) whether the item was relevant to the job position in the current study, and (c) whether the item could be reworded to reflect a future tense.

Of the 38 original items several items from the De Vos et al. (2003) employer inducements and employee contributions scales, 4 items did not meet one or more of the above criteria and were deemed inappropriate for use in the current research. Specifically, of the original 19 items in the employer inducement scale used by De Vos et al., those that were omitted from the current study were: (a) one *job content* item ("opportunities to show what you can do"), (b) one *social atmosphere* item ("a good communication among colleagues"), (c) one *financial reward* item ("an attractive pay and benefits package"), and (d) one *work life balance* item ("a flexible attitude concerning the correspondence between your work and private life").

The remaining 15 employer inducement scale items from the De Vos et al. (2003) study were then altered slightly to fit the specific context of the study. For example, one

employer inducement item in the De Vos et al. study was changed from “Wage increases based on your performance” to “The better I work the more money I will make” for this current study. Another example is “Opportunities for career development within the organization” was changed to read “There will be career opportunities for me within this company.”

Similarly, of the 19 perceived employee contributions scale items originally used in the De Vos et al. (2003) study, five of the scale items were not used in the current research based on the previously outlined criteria. The scale items that were not included in the current study were: (a) three *extra role* items (“share information with your colleagues”, “cooperate well with your colleagues”, and “get along with your colleagues”), (b) one *flexibility* item (“take work home regularly”), and (c) one *ethical behavior* item (“use the resources you receive from the organization honestly”). The remaining 14 scale dimension items were altered slightly to fit the specific context of the study. For example, one employee contribution item in the De Vos et al. study was changed from “Deliver quality work” to “Perform quality work” for this current study. Another example is “Follow the policies and norms of the organization” was changed to read “Follow the company’s rules and policies.”

Using a Likert scale with 1 representing “do not agree at all” and 5 representing “strongly agree” applicants in the current study ($N = 139$) rated their agreement with each of the 15 perceived mutuality (i.e., perceived employer inducements) scale items. The reliability estimate for the job content dimension from this study’s sample was marginal ($\alpha = .69$) but was included in the mutuality scale used in the current study. However, the level of reliability of the work life balance dimension ($\alpha = .43$) from this sample was

considered too low and was excluded. Cronbach's alpha for the 15 item mutuality measure used in this study was $\alpha = .82$.

Applicants in the current study ($N = 139$) also used a Likert scale to rate their agreement with each of the 14 reciprocity (i.e., perceived employee contributions) scale items with 1 representing "do not agree at all" and 5 representing "strongly agree". The reliability estimate of the ethical behavior dimension ($\alpha = .44$) in the current study was considered unreliable. Cronbach's alpha for the 14 item reciprocity measure used in this study was $\alpha = .80$. See Appendix B for the complete post-interview questionnaire.

Trust belief. Items from McKnight, Choudhury, and Kacmar's (2002) measure of trust belief were used to assess applicant perceptions of employer trustworthiness perceptions in this study. The McKnight et al. measure consisted of a single, 11 item scale that reflected three core dimensions of customer trust beliefs that included: (a) four organizational *integrity* items, (b) four organizational *competence* items, and (c) three organizational *benevolence* items. In their study, Cronbach's alpha observed for their overall trust belief scale was $\alpha = .82$.

McKnight et al.'s (2002) measure was developed to assess customer trust belief about online service providers in an ecommerce context; however, the items were structured to reflect beliefs about the organizations' trustworthiness based on perceived attributes and characteristics of the organization rather than actual experience with the organization. Therefore, the McKnight et al. measure was considered appropriate for assessing applicant trust beliefs in the current research; however, several items from the McKnight et al. measure were omitted from the measure used in the current study for one of two reasons.

First, several of the McKnight et al. (2002) scale items were felt to be based on first-hand experience with the organization rather than its perceived attributes and characteristics. Examples include such statements such as, “_ is truthful in its dealings with me” and “_ is sincere and genuine”. Second, several items appeared to be redundant. Examples of these statements include “_ is competent and effective in providing legal advice” and “Overall, _ is a capable and proficient Internet legal advice provider”.

Of the 11 original scale items from the McKnight et al. (2002) study, a total of 6 (two *integrity*, two *benevolence*, and two *competence*) scale items were retained for use in this research. Of these, several were then reworded to reflect the context of the current study. For example, an original statement from the McKnight et al. study read, “_ would keep its commitments” and was changed slightly to read, “This company would keep its promises to me and to others”. Another example of an item from the McKnight et al. scale that was altered is, “In general, _ is very knowledgeable about the law” was changed to read “In general, this company is very knowledgeable about food production.” See Appendix B for the complete post-interview questionnaire.

Job applicants in this research rated their agreement with each of the trust belief scale items using the same Likert scale, with 1 representing “do not agree at all” and 5 representing “strongly agree.” Cronbach’s alpha of the six-item trust belief measure used in this study was $\alpha = .74$.

Affective organizational commitment. Applicants’ affective commitment to the employer was measured in this research using two items from Meyer, Allen, and Smith’s (1993) six-item affective organizational commitment scale. This scale has been used in a wide variety of organizational research, particularly in studies examining turnover and

intention to quit (e.g., Ugboro, 2006; Van Hooft, Born, Taris, Van Der Flier, & Blonk, 2004) contingent worker attitudes (e.g., Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2003) as well as in psychological contract research (e.g., Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003).

Of the six original scale items, four items were excluded because the questions required the responder to have some degree of meaningful experience working for the employer and were therefore not applicable to the context of this current research. These items included: “I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own.” “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.” “I do not feel like ‘part of the family’ at my organization.” “I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.”

The remaining two items of the Meyer et al. (1993) scale used in this research were included because they were future-oriented and reflected the applicants’ attitude towards the organization in general. These items were “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization”, and “I do not feel ‘emotionally attached’ to this organization” (reverse scored). The latter item was altered to read “I think of this company as just another job only” because several of the initial participants in this study indicated that they did not understand the intent of item as originally worded. Applicants rated their agreement with each affective commitment item using a Likert scale, with 1 representing “do not agree at all” and 5 representing “strongly agree.” Cronbach’s alpha of the 2 item affective organizational commitment measure used in this study was ($\alpha = .74$).

Data Analysis

For this study, Hypothesis 1 through 5c were tested using bivariate correlation. Hypothesis 6 was tested using hierarchical regression. The hierarchical regression procedure was used because it allows for causal priority to be defined by the researcher (as opposed to stepwise regression analysis), by doing so it also allows for incremental validity to be assessed, and it is more effective at removing spurious relationships (see Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Separate hierarchical regression models were used to test hypotheses related to each of the psychological contract components (i.e., mutuality and reciprocity). Inspection of the variance inflation scores (*VIFs*) for each regression model indicated that multicollinearity was not problematic. To confirm this, the maximum cut-off value of 10.0 advocated by Neter, Kutner, Nachtsheim, and Wasserman (1996) was used as a comparative index; however, all the *VIF* scores in each model fell below 2.0.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Descriptive analyses of the demographic data were conducted to assure that the participants in the RJP and no-RJP groups were drawn from the same population using an alpha level of .05. Due to incomplete responses on the surveys, there was minor sample size variation among the demographic variable analyses. Results showed no differences between the RJP and the no-RJP samples with regard to gender, $\chi^2(1, N = 135) = 1.25, p > .05$, education $\chi^2(1, N = 137) = 4.48, p > .05$, or work experience $\chi^2(1, N = 135) = 0.95, p > .05$. There was, however, a difference for age $t(134) = -2.75, p < .05$, with the RJP sample ($M = 29, SD = 1.09$) being older than the non-RJP sample ($M = 26, SD = .82$). A summary of RJP and non-RJP sample demographic data is presented in Table 1.

Table 2a reports the means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and coefficient alphas for the study variables. As shown, mutuality and reciprocity beliefs were correlated ($r = .49, p < .01$); therefore, although these two measures were related, they were treated as separate variables in this study because previous research has treated these variables as distinct measures (e.g., De Vos et al., 2003). With regard to the psychological contract components, the realistic job preview was negatively correlated with reciprocity ($r = -.28, p < .01$); however it was uncorrelated with mutuality ($r = -.06, p > .05$).

Table 1
Summary of Sample Descriptive Statistics

<i>Variable</i>	No RJP <i>N</i> = 68	RJP <i>N</i> = 71
<i>Gender</i> ¹		
Male	47%	43%
Female	53%	57%
<i>Education</i> ²		
High school graduate	58%	53%
Some college	26%	39%
College graduate	16%	8%
<i>Work Experience</i> ³		
Less than 1 year	9%	10%
1 to 4 years	18%	20%
4 to 7 years	26%	20%
7 to 10 years	22%	21%
More than 10 years	25%	29%
<i>Age</i> ⁴		
<i>Mean</i>	25.62	29.37
<i>SD</i>	.82	1.09

Note. All tests of sample differences used an alpha of 0.05.

RJP coded as 0 = No RJP; 1 = RJP.

¹Gender differences assessed using a 2x2 Chi-Square.

²Education differences assessed using a 2x3 Chi-Square.

³Work Experience differences assessed using a 2x5 Chi-Square.

⁴Age differences assessed using a *t*-test.

* *p* < .05.

Table 2a
Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations, and Coefficient Alphas for Study Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. Mutuality	45.20	8.48	(.82)				
2. Reciprocity	38.60	5.64	.49**	(.80)			
3. Trust Belief	23.50	4.00	.62**	.61**	(.74)		
4. Affective commitment	6.15	2.20	.30**	.17	.30**	(.74)	
5. Realistic job preview	.51	.50	-.06	-.28**	-.03	.10	--

Note. $N = 139$. Coefficient alphas are reported on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The realistic job preview was not correlated with trust belief ($r = -.03, p > .05$) and was also uncorrelated with affective organizational commitment ($r = .10, p > .05$). Trust belief and affective organizational commitment were correlated ($r = .30, p < .01$) and trust belief was positively related to both mutuality and reciprocity ($r = .62, p < .01$; $r = .61, p < .01$). Finally, while affective commitment was correlated with mutuality ($r = .61, p < .01$) there was no correlation with reciprocity ($r = .17, p < .05$). Table 2b reports the means and standard deviations of the independent samples.

Table 2b
Independent Sample Means and Standard Deviations of Study Variables

<i>Variable</i>	No RJP	No RJP	RJP	RJP
	M	SD	M	SD
1. Mutuality	45.67 (<i>N</i> = 67)	8.71	44.75 (<i>N</i> = 71)	8.31
2. Reciprocity ¹	44.35 (<i>N</i> = 68)	6.26	40.99 (<i>N</i> = 70)	6.69
3. Trust Belief	23.62 (<i>N</i> = 68)	4.43	23.37 (<i>N</i> = 70)	3.56
4. Affective commitment	5.94 (<i>N</i> = 67)	2.36	6.36 (<i>N</i> = 70)	2.02

¹ Cohen's *d* = 1.33

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 stated that mutuality and reciprocity would be positively related in the pre-employment context. As shown in Table 2a, data from this research sample resulted in a strong correlation between the two variables $r(137) = 0.48, p < .01$, and Hypothesis 1 was therefore supported. Hypothesis 2 stated that applicants' mutuality perceptions would be negatively related to the RJP; however, the correlation between these two variables $r(138) = -0.06, p > .05$ did not support this hypothesis. Hypothesis 3 stated that the RJP would be negatively related to applicant's reciprocity perceptions. As shown in Table 2, a modest correlation was observed $r(138) = -0.25, p < .01$ between the two variables that was in the hypothesized negative direction.

Hypothesis 4a stated that the realistic job preview (RJP) would be related to applicant's trust belief about the employer. As shown in Table 2a, no relationship between the RJP and applicant's trust beliefs was observed $r(138) = -.03, p > .05$ and the hypothesis was not supported. The relationships between the core components of the psychological contract and trust belief were also the focus of Hypotheses 4b and 4c. Also shown in Table 2a, Hypothesis 4b was supported in that trust belief was positively related to mutuality $r(137) = .62, p < .01$ and Hypothesis 4c was also supported in that trust belief was related to reciprocity $r(137) = .61, p < .01$.

Hypothesis 5a stated that the realistic job preview (RJP) would be related to applicant's affective commitment towards the employer; however, the correlational analysis shown in Table 2a did not support this hypothesis $r(137) = .10, p > .05$. Hypotheses 5b and 5c reflected the hypothesized relationships between affective commitment and the core dimensions of the psychological contract. Hypothesis 5b stated that affective organizational commitment will be positively related to mutuality and was supported by the significant relationship observed between affective organizational commitment and mutuality $r(137) = .30, p < .01$; however, no relationship was observed between affective organizational commitment and reciprocity $r(136) = .17, p > .05$. Therefore, Hypothesis 5c was not supported.

Finally, Hypothesis 6 stated that the relationship between trust belief and reciprocity will be moderated by affective organizational commitment. After centering the variables, the interaction term was entered as the final step of the hierarchical regression models. As shown in Table 3, the interaction of trust belief and affective commitment was not related to reciprocity ($\beta = .01, p > .05$); thus Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

Table 3
Results of Moderated Regression Analysis for Mutuality and Reciprocity

<i>Variable</i>	Mutuality B	Reciprocity β
<i>Step 1:</i>		
Realistic job preview ¹	-.04	-.23**
ΔR^2 after Step 1	.00	.06**
<i>Step 2:</i>		
Trust belief	.57***	.61***
Affective organizational commitment (AOC)	.15*	.01
ΔR^2 after Step 2	.39***	.37***
<i>Step 3:</i>		
Trust belief X AOC ²	-.10	.07
ΔR^2 after Step 3	.01	.01
Overall R ²	.40	.44
Overall Adjusted R ²	.39	.42
Overall <i>F</i>	22.24***	25.13***

Note. $N = 139$. β is the standardized regression coefficient.

All β values are from the final model. All tests are two-tailed.

¹Coded as 1 = RJP; 0 = no RJP.

² Interaction term computed using centered variables.

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

A summary of the hypotheses and analysis results is shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Summary of Findings for Hypotheses Proposed in the Study

Hypothesis	Result
<i>H1</i> : Applicants' mutuality and reciprocity perceptions will be positively related.	Supported
<i>H2</i> : The realistic job preview will be negatively related to applicant's mutuality perceptions.	Not supported
<i>H3</i> : The realistic job preview will be negatively related to applicant's reciprocity perceptions.	Supported
<i>H4a</i> : The realistic job preview will be related to applicant's trust beliefs about the employer.	Not supported
<i>H4b</i> : Applicants' trust beliefs about the employer will be related to applicant's mutuality perceptions.	Supported
<i>H4c</i> : Applicants' trust beliefs about the employer will be related to applicant's reciprocity perceptions.	Supported
<i>H5a</i> : The realistic job preview will be related to applicant's affective organizational commitment towards the employer.	Not supported
<i>H5b</i> : Affective organizational commitment towards the employer will be related to applicant's mutuality perceptions.	Supported
<i>H5c</i> : Affective organizational commitment towards the employer will be related to applicant's reciprocity perceptions.	Not Supported
<i>H6</i> . The relationship between applicants' trust beliefs towards the employer and their reciprocity beliefs will be moderated by affective organizational commitment. Specifically, applicants who hold positive trust beliefs about the employer will perceive a greater sense of obligation to reciprocate when they are affectively committed to the employer.	Not supported

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Summary

The major aim of this dissertation research was to test for a relationship between the psychological contract and a realistic job preview (RJP) in a pre-employment context. Given the result of Hypotheses 1, it is clear that the relationship that has been observed between mutuality and reciprocity in post-hire contexts (e.g., Dabos & Rousseau, 2004) also holds true in the pre-employment context. This result implies that the mutually exclusive yet interdependent core elements of the psychological contract are formed at some point prior to organizational socialization and adds empirical support to Rousseau's (2001) theory of psychological contract development being rooted in individuals' schemas. The key issue then becomes what are the antecedents of both of these psychological contract components.

Hypothesis 2 predicted a negative relationship between the RJP and mutuality; however, no significant relationship was observed. This result was surprising since past research had shown that potential employees tend to over-inflate their expectations of potential jobs (Rousseau, 2001). Thus when an RJP was administered, it was expected that mutuality would decline. Two explanations may be offered for the current findings. First, the job requirements of the particular food-production position of this research may have already been clearly understood by the applicants based upon past work or

association with other manufacturing work. In such a case, applicant expectations may not have been negatively affected by the RJP. Secondly, applicants may have been sufficiently impressed with the company's honesty through the RJP that this positive impression may have off-set some of the negative information provided in the RJP itself.

Although no relationship was observed between the RJP and mutuality, the observed support for Hypothesis 3 clearly demonstrated that the RJP was significantly correlated with reciprocity. Furthermore, the directionality of the observed relationship is in-line with results of previous studies (e.g., Robinson, Kraatz, & Rousseau, 1994) where a RJP significantly lowered reciprocity beliefs. This result suggests that the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) may have a greater influence on newly formed exchange relationships than on those that already exist (see Shore & Tetrick, 1994). Specifically, one's perceived obligation to reciprocate positive behaviors based on the anticipated receipt of inducements from another is a fundamental underlying principle of the norm of reciprocity. In existing exchange relationships where inducements have actually been provided, those receiving the inducements would be expected to adjust their perceived level of reciprocal obligation based on what they had actually received (e.g., Guest, 2004; Rousseau, 1991). However, in contexts such as the employment interview where no actual employer inducements have been received by the applicant, applicants' reciprocal obligation perceptions may be based solely on the expectation of receiving inducements in the future.

Hypothesis 4a proposed that the RJP would relate to applicant trust belief; however, no such relationship was observed. This result is surprising given the findings of previous research (e.g., Dean & Wanous, 1984; Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981; Hom et al.,

1998) in which RJPs were correlated with trust. What is surprising is that both trust belief and the RJP were clearly related to the same core psychological contract component (i.e., reciprocity) in this study; however, there was no apparent correlation between the two variables. This may suggest that schemas may play more of an influential role in psychological contract formation (see Rousseau, 2001) than previously thought and will require further theoretical development and empirical exploration.

Results of Hypothesis 4b and 4c showed that applicant trust beliefs about the employer were related to both mutuality and reciprocity perceptions. These findings provide support for the general relationship between mutuality and reciprocity proposed by this study. Specifically, building off various authors' conceptualization of the psychological contract as being an exchange relationship between an employee and his or her employer (e.g., Schein, 1980; Shore & Tetrick, 1994; Thomas, Au, & Ravlin, 2003), I suggested that mutuality was an antecedent of reciprocity. This conceptualization of the mutuality-reciprocity relationship is supported by Shore and Tetrick (1994) who said that in an exchange relationship such as a psychological contract, the perceived promises of one party lead to an expectation of promise fulfillment by the other party. Furthermore, I suggested that mutuality requires that one party trusts that the other party has the ability to deliver the inducements promised, and that reciprocity is, in turn, based on the belief that the inducements promised will actually be received. Thus, these findings offer some additional insight into the dispositional nature of the mutuality-reciprocity relationship.

Hypothesis 5a was only partially supported because affective organizational commitment (AOC) was related to mutuality but did not explain significant variance in reciprocity. As with the influence of the RJP in the pre-employment context, it may that

AOC and other forms of commitment may be more important during the evaluation and reshaping of existing psychological contracts rather than during the formation of new ones. Hypothesis 5b and 5c examined the relationship between AOC and the core components of the psychological contract. Again the results were surprising in that AOC was significantly related to mutuality, but not reciprocity. Although it appears that previous psychological contract research has focused exclusively on the affective dimension of organizational commitment (e.g., Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Sanders & Shyns, 2006) it may be that other forms of commitment may be more relevant to psychological contract formation. For instance, the constructs of normative commitment (i.e., commitment to satisfy some social norm) and continuous commitment (i.e., commitment by default where there are no other available employment alternatives) may be more relevant to mutuality and reciprocity than previously thought.

Finally, not finding any support for Hypothesis 6 which proposed that AOC would moderate the relationship between trust beliefs and reciprocity was, in retrospect, not surprising given that AOC showed no relationship to reciprocity. As more theory is developed regarding the dispositional antecedents of the psychological contract, future research will undoubtedly suggest alternative interactions that were not conceptualized in this research.

Implications

There are several implications from this study that warrant consideration. First, the finding that the RJP was not related to mutuality but was related to reciprocity for this sample lends support to Rousseau's (2001) theory that the psychological contract prior to entry in an organization may be rooted in individuals' schemas. Specifically, reciprocity

is founded on the notion that an obligation to reciprocate exists when an inducement is perceived to have been provided. Yet, in the pre-employment context of this research, no inducements were actually provided by the employer prior to and at the time of the applicant interview. Thus, one implication may be that psychological contracts may represent a different type of exchange relationship than previously conceptualized where the development of reciprocity beliefs necessarily follows mutuality.

A related implication may be that part of applicants' 'job interview' schema when they entered the recruitment process included some expectation of receiving an RJP. Currently, there are no references in the psychological contract or RJP literature that specify the RJP as an expected employer inducement; however more focused research on the nature and structure of pre-employment schemas may yield important theoretical insights into this construct's influence on the development of the psychological contract. The implication here is that the negative organizational outcomes commonly associated with violations of the psychological contract may be more deeply embedded in the individual schema than previously thought (see Rousseau, 2001) and may be the result of the individual's experience with a previous employer. For example, cynicism towards employers in general (e.g., Andersson, 1996; De Vos, H., & Wielers, R., 2003) may also be a salient component of one's schema, and may predetermine some individuals to exhibit negative organizational behaviors regardless of any inducements offered by a new employer.

Third, as the use of employment agencies for the recruitment and assessment of potential workers' fit with a client organization continues to grow, the influence of these employer proxies on new workers' psychological contracts with their employer will

undoubtedly become more of a concern for human resource practitioners. Finally, and most importantly, the results observed suggest that the psychological contract may be too broadly defined under its current conceptualization. Specifically, there is no current distinction made between psychological contracts in entry-level, semi-professional, and professional jobs, nor does the evolutionary theory of psychological contracts distinguish between employee hiring versus employee selection where the recruitment process involvement and complexity of the latter is typically more substantial than the former. This is a substantial departure from current psychological contract theory and may introduce a new and significant stream of research. Such a research stream would have significant implications for organizational researchers and practitioners for strategic human resource planning.

Limitations

There were several important limitations in this study that need to be acknowledged. First, the applicants' interaction with the employer was through an employment services agent and not the actual employer. While outsourced hiring for entry-level and temporary positions is a common human resources practice, the effects such a proxy may have had on applicant perceptions is unclear; however, the employment office interview setting would most certainly have affected different applicant perceptions than if the applicants had been interviewed by the employer at the employer's locale. In short, applicant perceptions formed from interaction with the employer versus an agent of the employer is an issue that may have imposed constraints on the outcomes of this research.

A second limitation of this research was the current lack of well-defined theory on the specific dispositional antecedents of the psychological contract in general. As Frazier, Tix, and Barron (2004) noted, a well-defined theory is important for making research design decisions; however, prior to this study, the dispositional antecedents of the psychological contract were unknown. Another limitation was not having a psychological contract measure that was specific to the pre-employment context. As such the De Vos et al. (2003) measure was determined to be the most appropriate psychological contract measure at the time of this research for several reasons. First, De Vos et al. used items that reflected both generalized perceived employer and employee promises. Second, the items were phrased in common terms and were easy for participants to comprehend. Third, many of the published psychological contract instruments available used job categories well above the entry-level position (e.g., laboratory scientists in Dabos & Rousseau, 2004) and were determined to be inappropriate for use with this participant sample.

In contrast, the participants in the De Vos et al. (2003) study all occupied full-time, entry-level clerical staffing positions, and all participants had similar age, gender, and educational backgrounds. Their scale's items were structured around generalized psychological contract terms and conditions which seemed to be a more appropriate fit to the non-specific job tasks and work environment of the position being applied for by applicants in this study. In short, while the De Vos et al. measure was deemed the most appropriate psychological measure that was available at the time of the research it was not designed to directly capture various aspects of workers' pre-employment schemas.

Another limitation in this study is the possibility of common method bias (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Since all measures were collected at one time period, the potential exists that questions asked or measures used may have affected participants' responses to other scores or measures being gathered. An additional limitation is that the measure used in this study was derived from De Vos et al.'s (2003) psychological contract measurement scales. Since the De Vos et al. instrument was designed for use with existing employees, most of the items were unsuitable for use in a pre-employment situation. Therefore, several of the scale items in the De Vos et al. measure were omitted from the scales used in this research, and the majority of the De Vos et al. scale items that were retained were altered to reflect a future tense. This may have had an impact on the quality of psychological contract measurement and raises the question of whether the omission of scale items along with the changes made to the De Vos et al. scales adequately reflected the mutuality and reciprocity constructs. This again illustrates the need for development of a psychological contract measure specific to the pre-employment context.

Finally, this research was conducted using a field sample; and there were considerable time constraints with regard to the participant survey. Specifically, in order to collect the participant data without disrupting the work flow of the recruitment office, it was necessary to minimize the length of the overall survey instrument. This prevented the inclusion of additional construct measures that might have been relevant to the psychological contract such as cynicism, personality, procedural fairness, and additional organizational commitment dimensions (e.g., continuous and normative). The time constraints also clearly impacted the participants who often completed the survey in a

hurried manner and may not have given sufficient consideration to the questions posed. In addition, a true random assignment of applicants to either the RJP or no-RJP groups was possible in this field setting which is an additional limiting factor of this study.

Given that schemas may play a greater role in the relationship between RJPs and the psychological contract than expected, an experimental design where a more in-depth assessment of applicant experience may be necessary before proceeding with a psychological contract measure. This may not be feasible in similar field settings, however, and may require the use of a laboratory simulation. In addition, because of the constraints imposed by the field setting, it was not possible to have the same interviewer conduct all of the interviews; therefore, differences in the way the RJP may have been given by the three interviewers must also be noted as a limitation of this study.

Directions for Future Research

Clearly, the psychological contract has been shown in previous research to be an important construct given its potential for affecting negative organizational outcomes. However, the results of this study suggest that the cognitive and dispositional influences that underlie both potential and new employee-employer exchange relationships cannot be determined within a single omnibus framework. Instead, future psychological contract research in the pre-employment setting needs to focus on theory building that differentiates between entry-level, semi-professional, and professional occupational categories. Support for this line of reasoning comes from Rousseau (2001) who noted that new hires who have substantial prior work experience tend to hold different job-related schemas than those who have considerably less prior work experience. The participants in this study, however, underwent a common hiring procedure that is characterized by

minimal interaction between the potential employer and the applicant. In addition, the recruitment process did not extend beyond the immediate employment interview. In many semi- and professional-level recruiting scenarios, there is a great deal of direct interaction with the employer and often the job applicant undergoes a multi-tiered process that may enable more opportunities for psychological contract formation, confirmation, and adjustment prior to organizational entry.

Future research also needs to examine and compare psychological contract formation in situations where the applicant interacts with the employer directly versus through an agent of the employer such as an employment office. Some guidance may be drawn from research that has observed differences in the perceptions of workers who have sought employment through an employment agency that have been attributed to constructs such as procedural fairness of the agency and perceived organizational support (see Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2003).

These results also provide a clearer picture of the interrelationship between mutuality and reciprocity. First, it clearly indicates the directionality of the exchange relationship. Specifically, perceptions of inducements are necessary to frame perceptions of reciprocal obligations, but not vice versa. Because the inducements come from the employer, the psychological contract is therefore initiated by the employer. Second, it raises the issue of the sustainability of the exchange relationship itself. If reciprocity is in fact merely a response to mutuality, then once the expected inducements are ultimately satisfied, how then does the exchange relationship continue over time?

Such considerations underscore the critical nature of personnel recruitment and pave the way for another important stream of research. That is, it appears that no previous

research study on the psychological contract has distinguished between new employee-employer relationships that arise from a hiring versus a selection process. Procedures for hiring tend to be much less formal than for employee selection and are often used to fill an immediate personnel need. Thus, hiring interviews are often much less rigorous and descriptive regarding the job tasks. More importantly, however, is that selection procedures often entail multi-level continuous interactions between the potential employee and the employer and often uses a variety of means to assess both person-job as well as person-organization fit.

The question of how much information regarding inducements should or should not be provided and at what stage should that information divulged may be another important consideration for practitioners and may offer a new perspective on important outcomes such as performance, turnover, absenteeism, and commitment. As such, it is important for researchers to consider separate explanatory models that differentiate between the RJP-psychological contract relationships within both hiring and selection frameworks instead of relying on a general framework to form hypotheses as was done in this and other research.

The notion of trust as an integral part of the psychological contract was also reinforced in this study, however the role that trust may play in other aspects of the formation of psychological contracts warrants further investigation. For example, although this study focused on trust beliefs in general, it would be interesting to examine specific trust dimensions. For example integrity, benevolence, and competence may be compared across specific inducements such as career development and job content, and reciprocal obligations such as extra role behavior, flexibility, and loyalty. Guidance may

be taken from Dabos and Rousseau (2004) who noted that psychological contracts serve to prevent imbalances in exchange relationships in that the perceived ratio of inducements to reciprocated behaviors may create a sense of unbalance and disrupt the relationship. A relevant question therefore would be whether trust in the employer's benevolence (for example) moderate the employee's perceived reciprocal obligation to more than trust in the employer's competence? And if such differences exist, then the question that arises next is whether recruiters or organizational agents should focus on one form of trust versus another at different developmental stages in pre-employment and or post-employment relationships.

Affective organizational commitment (AOC) was also a focus of this current study, and because AOC was not related to the RJP but was related to mutuality, one might conclude that affective commitment may in fact play a role in engendering some form of perceptual bias. Specifically, mutuality is the perceived agreement of inducements offered by the employer which are derived from the information communicated to employees or applicants during their initial job interview or early organizational socialization. Applicants affirm what inducements they believe were offered or at least are to be expected from the employer through their processes for information gathering and reasoning.

Yet because individuals' reasons for seeking this information may not be the same, differences in mutuality may result. For example, Nickerson (1998) noted, people tend have different motivations to seek and attend to information based on the individual's need for the information. He said that when information seeking is selective, as in instances where the individual seeks to maintain a previously held belief, then the

thoughts and behaviors that result are influenced by “motivated” confirmation bias. On the other hand, “unmotivated” confirmation bias may occur even when the individual is indifferent to the situation and impartially evaluates the information, but still reaches a biased conclusion.

This may be due to faulty reasoning rather than deliberate treatment of the information. For instance, Frey (1986) noted that people use selective information gathering to increase the likelihood of getting information that is consistent with their existing beliefs and to decrease the likelihood of getting information that is inconsistent. Considering the pre-employment schema described by Rousseau (2001), it is conceivable that when applicants freely chose to apply for the position in this study where alternative employment opportunities were available, the applicants were then motivated to attend to information during the interview that was congruent with their pre-employment schema.

Finally, more theoretical work is needed to explain the role that schemas play in influencing differences in applicant perceptions depending on the procedure used to recruit employees into the organization. Such differences would be of utmost concern for future investigations into the role the RJP plays in psychological contract formation in general, but would be of particular importance for future research into the role the psychological contract plays in affecting negative organizational outcomes.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to draw upon the psychological contract literature in order to explore a unique framework for psychological contract formation that has been virtually ignored in past research. More directly, this research answered the call from several prominent psychological contract theorists (e.g., De Vos et al, 2003;

Rousseau, 2001) for theoretical development and empirical analysis of the dispositional antecedents of the psychological contract. The approach taken in this research study was not to develop any new psychological contract theories per se, but rather to revisit, expound, confirm, and attempt to make further sense of some intriguing perspectives and observations that had gone undeveloped for nearly three decades.

This study established an empirical relationship between a commonly used recruitment practice and the perceptions regarding the reciprocal obligations within new employee-employer relationships. Given the results, it appears that the primary goal of this study was partially achieved. In retrospect it is clear that because the RJP perceptions are influenced by individual factors and because those perceptions then have an effect on the psychological contract, future RJP-psychological contract research must consider separate theoretical frameworks at the entry, semi-professional, and professional level. Structuring future research within these frameworks would also allow for a comparative analysis of alternate variables such as procedural fairness, employer-applicant interaction, and selection procedure complexity; all of which would be expected to differ greatly depending on the job-classification level previously described.

REFERENCES

- Albert, S., & Whetten, D.A. (1985). Organizational identity, in B. Staw & L.L. Cummings, (Eds.) *Research in Organizational Behavior*, (pp. 263-295) Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Allen, N.J., & Meyer, J.P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization, *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63, 1-18.
- Andersson, L.M. (1996). Employee cynicism: An examination using a contract violation framework, *Human Relations*, 49, 1395-1418.
- Argyris, C. (1960). *Understanding organizational behavior*. Homewood, IL: The Dorsey Press, Inc.
- Ashforth, B.E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization, *Academy of Management Review*, 14, 20-39.
- Axlerod, R. (1984). *The evolution of cooperation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bachmann, R. (2003). Trust and power as a means of coordinating the internal relations of the organization: A conceptual framework, in B.N. Nooteboom, & F.S Six, (Eds.) *Trust in organizations: Empirical studies of the determinants and the processes of trust development*, (pp. 58-74). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, Ltd.

- Barnard, C.I. (1938). *The functions of the executive*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Barr, S. H., & Hitt, M. A. (1986). A comparison of selection decision models in manager versus student samples, *Personnel Psychology*, *39*, 599-617.
- Blau, P.M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. Wiley, NYC.
- Braun, C. (1997). Organizational infidelity: How violations of trust affect the employee-employer relationship, *Academy of Management Executive*, *11*, 94-95.
- Buckley, M.R., Fedor, D.B., Carraher, S.M., Frink, D.D., & Marvin, D. (1997). The ethical imperative to provide recruits realistic job previews, *Journal of Managerial Issues*, *9*, 468-484.
- Cohen J., & Cohen, P. (1983). *Applied multiple regression/ correlational analysis for the behavioral science*. Earlbaum, Hillsdale, NJ.
- Colarelli, S.M. (1984). Methods of communication and mediating processes in realistic job previews, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *69*, 61-68.
- Cook, T.D., & Campbell, D.T (1979). *Quasi-experimentation: Design and analysis for field settings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Cook, J., & Wall, T. (1980). New work attitude measures of trust, organizational commitment, and personal need non-fulfillment, *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, *53*, 39-52.
- Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (1992). Cognitive adaptations for social exchange, in H. Barkow, L. Cosmides, & J. Tooby (Eds.) *The adapted mind* (pp. 163-228). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Coyle-Shapiro, J.A-M. (2002). A psychological contract perspective on organizational citizenship behavior, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23, 927-946.
- D'Art, D., & Turner, T. (2006). New working arrangements: Changing the nature of the employment relationship, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17, 523-536.
- Dabos, G.E., & Rousseau, D.M. (2004). Mutuality and reciprocity in the psychological contracts of employees and employers, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89, 5-72.
- Dean, R.A., & Wanous, J.P. (1984). Effects of realistic job previews on hiring bank tellers, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 69, 61-68.
- Deckop, J.R., Cirka, C.C., & Andersson, L.M. (2003). Doing unto others: The reciprocity of helping behavior in organizations, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 47, 101-113.
- Deery, S.J., Iverson, R.D., & Walsh, J.T. (2006). Toward a better understanding of psychological contract breach: A study of customer service employees, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 166-175.
- De Vos, A. (2005). The psychological contract of organizational newcomers: An investigation of antecedents and changes over time, *International Journal of Human Resource Development and Management*, 5, 371-392.
- De Vos, A., Buyens, D., & Schalk, R. (2003). Psychological contract development during organizational socialization: Adaptation to reality and the role of reciprocity, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 24, 537-559.

- De Vos, H., & Wielers, R. (2003). Calculativeness, trust, and the reciprocity complex: Is the market the domain of cynicism? In B.N. Nooteboom, & F.S. Six (Eds.) *Trust in organizations: Empirical studies of the determinants and the processes of trust development*, (pp. 75-104) Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, Ltd.
- Dugoni, B.L., & Ilgen, D.R. (1981). Realistic job previews and the adjustment of new employees, *Academy of Management Journal*, 24, 579-592.
- Eby, L.T., Freeman, D.M., Rush, M.C., & Lance, C.E. (1999). Motivational bases of affective organizational commitment: A partial test of an integrative theoretical model, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 72, 463-484.
- Eisenberger, R., Fasolo, P., & Davis-LaMastro, V. (1990). Perceived organizational support and employee, diligence, commitment, and innovation, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75, 51-59.
- Erez, A., & Isen, A.M. (2002). The influence of positive affect on the components of expectancy motivation, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 1055-1067.
- Fedor, D.B., Buckley, M.R., & Davis, W.D. (1997). A model of the effects of realistic job previews, *International Journal of Management*, 14, 211-222.
- Fiske, S.T., & Taylor, S.E. (1984). *Social cognition*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Fombrun, C., & Shanley, M. (1990). What's in a name? Reputation building and corporate strategy, *Academy of Management Journal*, 33, 233-258.
- Flanagan, J.C. (1954). The critical incident technique, *Psychological Bulletin*, 51, 327-359.
- Foreman, P., & Whetten, D.A. (2002). Members' identification with multiple-identity organizations, *Organization Science*, 13, 618-635.

- Fornell, C., & Larcker, F.D. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement errors, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18, 39-50.
- Frazier, P.A., Tix, A.P., & Barron, K.E. (2004). Testing moderator and mediator effects in counseling psychology research, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 51, 115-131.
- Frey, D. (1986). Recent research on selective exposure to information. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental psychology*, (vol. 19, pp. 41-80). New York: Academic Press.
- George, E. (2003). External solutions and internal problems: The effect of employment externalization on internal workers' attitudes, *Organization Science*, 14, 38-402.
- George, J.M., & Jones, G. R. (2008). *Understanding and managing organizational behavior*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Ghiselli, E.E., & Brown, C.W. (1955). *Personnel and industrial psychology*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Gibson, R.O. (1966). Toward a conceptualization of absence behavior of personnel in organizations, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 11, 107-133.
- Gioia, D.A., & Thomas, J.B. (1996). Identity, image, and issue interpretation: Sensemaking during strategic change in academia, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41, 370-403.
- Gordon, M.E., Slade, L.A., & Schmitt, N. (1986). The "science of the sophomore revisited": From conjecture to empiricism, *Academy of Management Review*, 11, 191-207.

- Gouldner, A.W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity: A preliminary statement, *American Sociological Review*, 25, 161-178.
- Guest, D.E. (2004). The psychology of the employment relationship, *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 53, 541-555.
- Guest, D.E., & Conway, N. (2002). Communicating the psychological contract: An employer perspective, *Human Resource Management Journal*, 12, 22-38.
- Guzzo, R.A., Noonan, K.A., & Elron, E. (1994). Expatriate managers and the psychological contract, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79, 617-626.
- Hackman, J.R., & Oldham, G.R. (1975). The development of the job diagnostic survey, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60, 159-170.
- Hallier, J., & James, P. (1997). Middle managers and employee psychological contract: Agency, protection, and advancement, *Journal of Managerial Studies*, 34, 703-728.
- Hakel, M. D., Dobbmeyer, T. W., & Dunnette, M. D. (1970). Relative importance of three content dimensions in overall suitability ratings of job applicants' resumes, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 54, 65-71.
- Harris, S.G. (1994). Organizational culture and individual sensemaking: A schema-based perspective, *Organization Science*, 5, 309-321.
- den Hartog, D. (2003). Trusting others in organizations: Leaders, managers, and co-workers, in B.N. Nooteboom, & F.S. Six (Eds.) *Trust in organizations: Empirical studies of the determinants and the processes of trust development*, (pp. 125-146) Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, Ltd.

- Herriot, P., Manning, W.E.G., & Kidd, J.M. (1997). The content of the psychological contract, *British Journal of Management*, 8, 151-163.
- Hom, P.W., Griffeth, R.W., Palich, L.E., & Bracker, J.S. (1998). An exploratory investigation into the theoretical mechanisms underlying realistic job previews, *Personnel Psychology*, 51, 421-451.
- Ilggen, D.R., & Seely, W. (1974). Realistic expectations as an aid in reducing voluntary resignation, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 59, 452-471.
- Jackson, S.E., & Schuler, R.S. (1985). A meta-analysis and conceptual critique of research on role ambiguity and role conflict in work settings, *Organizational Behavior & Human Decision Processes*, 36, 16-78.
- Jarvenpaa, S.L., & Leidner, D.E. (1999). Communication and trust in global virtual teams, *Organization Science*, 10, 791-815.
- Johnson, J.L., & O'Leary-Kelly, A.M. (2003). The effects of psychological contract breach and organizational cynicism: Not all social exchange violations are created equal, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 24, 627-647.
- Johnson-George, C., & Swap, W.C. (1982). Measurement of specific interpersonal trust: Construction and validation of a scale to assess trust in a specific other, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 43, 130 -1317.
- Jones, E.E. (1990). *Interpersonal perception*. New York: Freeman.
- Kickul, J., & Lester, S.W. (2001). Broken promises: Equity sensitivity as a moderator between psychological contract breach and employee attitudes and behavior, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 16, 191-217.

- Kotter, J.P. (1973). The psychological contract: Managing the joining up process, *California Management Review*, 15, 91-99.
- Kramer, R.M. (1996). Divergent realities and convergent disappointments in the hierarchic relation: Trust and the intuitive auditor at work, in R.M Kramer, & T.R. Tyler, (Eds.) *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research*, (pp. 216-245) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lester, S.W., Turnley, W.H., & Bloodgood, J.M. (2000). Supervisor and subordinate views of psychological contract fulfillment: The impact of perceptual differences on employee work attitudes and behaviors, *Proceedings of the Academy of Management*, 1-6.
- Lester, S.W., Turnley, W.H, Bloodgood, J.M., & Bolino, M.C. (2002). Not seeing eye-to-eye: Differences in supervisor and subordinate perceptions and attributions for psychological contract breach, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23, 39-56.
- Levinson, H., Price, C.R., Munden, K.J., & Solley, C.M. (1962). *Men, management, and mental health*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lewicki, R.J., & Bunker, B.B., (1995). Trust in relationships: A model of trust development and decline, in B.B. Bunker, and J.Z Rubin, (Eds.) *Conflict, cooperation, and justice*, (pp. 13-173) San Fransico: Jossey-Bass.
- Lewis, J.D., & Weigert, A.J. (1985). Trust as a Social Reality, *Social Forces*, 63, 967-985.
- Lewis-McClear, K., & Tyler, M.S. (1997). Not seeing eye-to-eye: Implications of discrepant psychological contracts and contract violation for the employment relationship, *Published Proceedings of the Academy of Management*, 335-339.

- Liden, R.C., Wayne, S.J., & Kraimer, M.L. (2003). The dual commitments of contingent workers: An examination of contingents' commitment to the agency and the organization., *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 24, 609-625.
- Lindenberg, S. (2003). Governance seen from a framing point of view: the employment relationship and relational signaling, in B.N. Nooteboom, & F.S. Six (Eds.) *Trust in organizations: Empirical studies of the determinants and the processes of trust development*, (pp. 37-57) Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, Ltd.
- Louis, M.R. (1980). Surprise and sense-making: What newcomers experience and how they cope in unfamiliar organizational settings, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25, 226-251.
- March, J.E., & Simon, H.A. (1958). *Organizations*. New York: John Wiley and Sons.
- Major, D.A., Kozlowski, S.J., Chao, G.T., & Gardiner, P.D. (1995). A longitudinal examination of newcomer expectations, early socialization outcomes, and the moderating effects of role development factors, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80, 418-432.
- March, J.G. & Simon, H.A. (1958). *Organizations*. Wiley, New York.
- Mathieu, J.E., & Zajac, D.M. (1990). Further evidence for the discriminant validity of measures of organizational commitment, job involvement, and job satisfaction, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 76, 127-133.
- Mathieu, J.E., & Zajac, D.M. (1990). A review and meta-analysis of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of organizational commitment, *Psychological Bulletin*, 127, 376-407.

- Mayer, R.C., & Davis, J.H. (1999). The effect of the performance appraisal system on trust for management: A field quasi-experiment, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84, 123-142.
- Mayer, R.C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F.D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust, *Academy of Management Review*, 20, 709-734.
- McEvoy, G.M., & Cascio, W.F. (1985). Strategies for reducing employee turnover: A meta-analysis, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 70, 342-356
- McKnight, D.H., Choudhury, V., & Kacmar, C. (2002). Developing and validating trust measures for e-commerce: An integrative typology, *Information Systems Research*, 13, 334-359.
- McKnight, D.H., Cummings, L.L., & Chervany, N.L. (1998). Initial trust formation in new organizational relationships, *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 479-490.
- McShane, S.L., & Von Glinow, M.A. (2003). Employment relationship and career dynamics, in S.L. McShane, & M.A. Von Glinow, (Eds.) *Organizational behavior: Emerging realities for the workplace revolution*, (pp. 552-555), New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Mello, J.A. (2002). *Strategic human resource management*. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western.
- Menninger, K. (1958). *Theory of psychoanalytic technique*. New York: Basic Books.
- Meglino, B.M., DeNisi, A.S., Williams, K.J., & Youngblood, S.A. (1988). Effects of realistic job previews: A comparison using an enhancement and a reduction preview, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 73, 259-266.

- Meyer, J.P., Allen, N.J., & Smith, C.A. (1993). Commitment to organizations and occupations: Extension and test of a three-component conceptualization, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78, 538-551.
- Meyer, J.P., Irving, G.P., & Allen, N.J. (1998). Examination of the combined effects of work values and early work experiences on organizational commitment, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 19, 29-52.
- Meyerson, D., Weick, K.E., & Kramer, R.M. (1996). Swift trust and temporary groups, in R.M. Kramer, & T.R. Tyler (Eds.) *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research* (pp. 166-195), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Morrison, E.W., & Robinson, S.L. (1997). When employees feel betrayed: A model of how psychological contract violation develops, *Academy of Management Review*, 22, 226-256.
- Mowday, R.T., Steers, R.M., & Porter, L.W. (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 14, 224-247.
- Neter, J., Kutner, M.H., Nachtsheim, C.J., & Wasserman, W. (1996). *Applied linear statistical models*. McGraw-Hill, Boston, MA
- Nickerson, R.S., (1998). Confirmation Bias: A ubiquitous phenomenon in many guises, *Review of General Psychology*, 2, 175-220
- Osborn, W.P., & Watts, W.A. (1973). The interactive effects of the mere stating of an opinion and academic ability on perceived knowledge and subsequent opinion change, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1, 124-126.
- Phillips, J.M. (1998). Effects of realistic job previews on multiple organizational outcomes: A meta-analysis, *Academy of Management Journal*, 41, 673-690.

- Podsakoff, P.M., MacKenzie, S.B., Lee, Jeong-Yeon, Podsakoff, N.P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88, 879-903
- Popovich, P., & Wanous, J.P. (1982). The realistic job preview as a persuasive communication, *Academy of Management Review*, 7, 570-578.
- Porter, L.W., Pearce, J.L., Tripoli, A.M., & Lewis, K.M. (1998). Differential perceptions of employers' inducements: Implications for psychological contracts, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 19, 769-783.
- Porter, L.W., Steers, R.M., Mowday, R.T., & Boulian, P.V. (1974). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover among psychiatric technicians, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 59, 603-609.
- Portwood, J.D., & Miller, E.L. (1976). Evaluating the psychological contract: Its implications for employee job satisfaction and work behavior, *Proceedings of the Academy of Management*, 109-113.
- Premack, S.L., & Wanous, J.P. (1985). A meta-analysis of realistic job preview experiments, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 70, 706-719.
- Pugh, S.D., Skarlicki, D.P., & Passell, B.S. (2003). After the fall: Layoff victims' trust and cynicism in re-employment, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 76, 201-212.
- Rempel, J.K., Holms, J.G., & Zanna, M.P. (1985). Trust in close relationships, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 45, 95-112.

- Restubog, S.L.D., Prashant, B., & Tang, R.L. (2006). Effects of psychological contract breach on performance of IT employees: The mediating role of affective commitment, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 79, 299-306.
- Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 698-714.
- Riker, W.H. (1971). The nature of trust, in J.T. Tedeschi (Ed.) *Perspectives on social power*, (pp. 63-81), Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Riketta, M. (2002). Attitudinal organizational commitment and job performance: A meta-analysis, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 23, 257-266.
- Rizzo, J.R., House, R.J., & Lirtzman, S.I. (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15, 150-163.
- Robbins, S.P. & Judge, T.A. (2007). *Organizational behavior*. Upper Saddle River, NJ, Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Robinson, S.L. (1996). Trust and breach of the psychological contract, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41, 574-600.
- Robinson, S.L., Kraatz, M.S., & Rousseau, D.M. (1994). Changing obligations and the psychological contract: a longitudinal study, *Academy of Management Journal*, 37, 137-152.
- Robinson, S.L., & Morrison, E.W. (1995). Psychological contracts and OCB: The effect of unfulfilled obligations of civic virtue behavior, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 16, 289-298.

- Roehling, M.V. (1996). The origins and early development of the psychological contract construct, *Published Proceedings of the Academy of Management*, 202-206.
- Roehling, M.V. (1997). The origins and early development of the psychological contract construct, *Journal of Management History*, 3, 204-209.
- Rotter, J.B. (1971). Generalized expectancies for interpersonal trust, *American Psychologist*, 26, 443-452.
- Rousseau, D.M. (2001). Schema, promise, and mutuality: The building blocks of the psychological contract, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 74, 511-541.
- Rousseau, D.M. (1990). New hire perceptions of their own and their employer's obligations: A study of psychological contracts, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 11, 389-399.
- Rousseau, D.M. (1989). Psychological and implied contracts in organizations, *Employee Rights and Responsibilities Journal*, 2, 121-139.
- Rousseau, D.M., & McLean Parks, J. (1993). The Contracts of individuals in organizations, in L.L. Cummings & B. M. Staw (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior*, (pp. 1-47), Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Rousseau, D.M., Sitkin, S.B., Burt, R.S., & Cramerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust, *Academy of Management Review*, 23, 393-405.
- Rousseau, D.M., & Wade-Benzoni, K.A. (1994). Linking strategy and human resource practices: How employee and customer contracts are created, *Human Resource Management*, 33, 385-401.

- Rynes, S.L. (1990). Recruitment, job choice, and post-hire consequences: A call for new research directions, in M. Dunnette, & L. Hough, (Eds.) *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, (pp. 399-444), Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists.
- Saks, A.M., & Cronshaw, S.F. (1990). A Process investigation of realistic job previews: Mediating variables and channels of communication, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *11*, 221-236.
- Salancik, G.R. (1977). Commitment is too easy, *Organization Dynamics*, *6*, 62.
- Sanders, K. & Schyns, B. (2006). Trust, conflict, and cooperative behavior: Considering reciprocity within organizations, *Personnel Review*, *35*, 508-518.
- Schalk, R., & Freese, L. (1997). New facets of commitment in response to organizational change: Research trends and the Dutch experience, in C.L. Cooper, & D.M. Rousseau (Eds.), *Trends in organizational behavior*, (pp. 107-123), New York: Wiley.
- Schein, E.H. (1980). *Organizational psychology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Searle, R. H., & Ball, K.S. (2004). The development of trust and distrust in a merger, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *19*, 708-721.
- Sels, L., Janssens, M., & Van Den Brande, I. (2004). Assessing the nature of psychological contracts: A validation of six dimensions, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *25*, 461-488.
- Shore, L.M., & Tetrick, L.E. (1994). The psychological contract as an explanatory framework in the employment relationship, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *1*, 91-110

- Shore, L.M., & Wayne, S.J. (1993). Commitment and employee behavior: Comparison of affective commitment and continuance commitment with perceived organizational support, *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78*, 774-780.
- Sims, R. R. (1994). Human resource management's role in clarifying the new psychological contract, *Human Resource Management, 33*, 373-382.
- Singer, M. S., & Bruhns, C. (1991). Relative effect of applicant work experience and academic qualification on selection interview decisions: A study of between-sample generalizability, *Journal of Applied Psychology, 76*, 550-559.
- Stein, D.J. (1992). Schemas in the cognitive and clinical sciences, *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration, 2*, 45-63.
- Suszko, M.K., & Breugh, J.A. (1986). The effects of realistic job previews on applicant self-selection and employee turnover, satisfaction, and coping ability, *Journal of Management, 12*, 513-523.
- Sutton, G., & Griffin, M.A. (2004). Integrating expectations, experiences, and psychological contract violations: A longitudinal study of new professionals, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 77*, 493-515.
- Thomas, D.C., Au, K., & Ravlin, E.C. (2003). Cultural variation and the psychological contract, *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 24*, 451-471
- Turnley, W.H., & Feldman, D.C. (1999). The impact of psychological contract violations on exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect, *Human Relations, 52*, 895-922.
- Turnley, W.H., Bolino, M.C., Lester, S.W., & Bloodgood, J.M. (2003). The impact of psychological contract fulfillment on the performance of in-role and organizational citizenship behaviors, *Journal of Management, 29*, 187-201.

- Ugboro, I.O. (2006). Organizational commitment, job redesign, employee empowerment, and intention to quit among survivors of restructuring and downsizing, *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management*, 7, 232-254.
- Vandenberg, R.J., & Scarpella, V. (1990). The matching model: An examination of the processes underlying realistic job previews, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75, 60-67.
- Van Emmerik, I.J., & Sanders, K. (2005). Mismatch in working hours and affective commitment, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 20, 712-726.
- Van Hooft, E.A.J., Born, M. P.H., Taris, T.W., Van Der Flier, H., & Blonk, R. W. (2004). Predictors of job search behavior among employed and unemployed people, *Personnel Psychology*, 57, 25-59
- Wanous, J.P. (1980). *Organizational entry: Recruitment, selection, and socialization of newcomers*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Winter, R., & Jackson, B. (2006). State of the psychological contract: Manager and employee perspectives with an Australian credit union, *Employee Relations*, 28, 421-434.

APPENDIX A: REALISTIC JOB PREVIEW

Realistic Job Preview: Please read each statement to the applicant that you are interviewing and make sure you specify when the information relates to the job, the work environment, or the company.

The Job

- Pay increases will be available after 6, 12, and 18 months anniversary dates
- Hired as part-time first, then can become full-time (in order of hire) if all 3 of the following criteria are met:
 - after 90 days consecutive work
 - no more than 5 attendance points
 - maintain positive work performance
- Regular and consistent attendance is expected
 - associates are responsible for providing supervisors with advanced absenteeism or tardiness notice and explanations and for needing to leave early
- job tasks will vary depending on the production schedule assignments and may include
 - working in the chiller
 - standing while working at the cutting and sorting lines
 - removal and transfer of heated product to and from ovens
 - doing clean up and sanitation maintenance

The Work Environment

- Noisy, busy, and often crowded work areas
- Temperature changes are common in different areas of the plant
- Hand tools and cutting instruments are used in most work stations
- Wearing of a security badge and following security procedures required at all times
- A dress code is in place and enforced. This dress code includes wearing hair nets and ear plugs, appropriate footwear and protective clothing, and limited jewelry
- Good personal hygiene and personal appearance is required at all times
- There are process management practices that must be learned and followed that often requires associates to attend additional OSHA safety training
- Environmental, health, and safety laws and regulations are maintained
- Employees may come in contact with hazardous chemical materials
- There is the potential for personal injury on the job

The Company

- Manufacturer of food products with a globally recognized brand
- Operates in 58 countries and markets branded products in nearly 200 nations
- Diversity-supportive company
- Commitment to local communities
- Encourages employee participation in community volunteer programs

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Section I

Think about the information provided to you during your employment interview. Then, read each statement below and decide how much you agree with the statement. Use the scale below to indicate your responses.

EXAMPLE: If you do not agree at all with the statement, you will put the number “1” in the space next to the statement. If you do not agree or disagree then you will put the number “3” in the space.

Do not agree at all 1	Disagree a little 2	Neither 3	Agree a little 4	Strongly agree 5
-----------------------------	------------------------	--------------	---------------------	---------------------

- ___ There will be many chances for promotion in this company
- ___ I will be able to make decisions for myself while doing my job
- ___ There will be a good work environment
- ___ I will receive extra money for doing a great job
- ___ This company will care about what is happening in my life
- ___ There will be career opportunities for me within this company
- ___ This job will allow me to show my skills
- ___ Other workers will be friendly to me
- ___ The better I work the more money I will make
- ___ I will be able to change my work schedule if I need to
- ___ I will be able to build a career with the company
- ___ This job will have responsibilities
- ___ Other workers on the job will help me if I need them to
- ___ I will get benefits from the company
- ___ I will be able to decide for myself when I take vacations

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT SURVEY (continued)

Section II

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

Do not agree at all 1	Disagree a little 2	Neither 3	Agree a little 4	Strongly Agree 5
-----------------------------	---------------------------	--------------	---------------------	------------------------

- ___ I think this company is honest
- ___ Most people care about the problems of others
- ___ If I needed help, this company would do its best to help me
- ___ I feel certain about how much authority I will have
- ___ This company is good at producing food products
- ___ In general, most people keep their promises
- ___ This company is interested in my well being and not just its own
- ___ I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this company
- ___ I know exactly what is expected of me as far as the job is concerned
- ___ In general, people really do care about the well being of others
- ___ In general, this company is very knowledgeable about food production
- ___ I think of this company as just another job only (reverse scored)
- ___ I believe most professional people do a very good job at their work
- ___ I know what I am supposed to do on the job
- ___ This company would keep its promises to me and to others
- ___ Most people are honest
- ___ Most professionals are very knowledgeable about their work

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT SURVEY (continued)

Section III

Please indicate how much you agree with what ***** should expect from you if you are hired to work there.

Do not agree at all 1	Disagree a little 2	Neither 3	Agree a little 4	Strongly agree 5
-----------------------------	------------------------	--------------	---------------------	---------------------

- ___ Work fast and efficiently
- ___ Work extra hours if the company needs me to
- ___ Talk about sensitive company information with other people
- ___ Look for another job right after being hired at this company (reverse scored)
- ___ Participate in company activities that are not scheduled during my work hours
- ___ Assist other workers
- ___ Volunteer to do work that is not part of my job if needed
- ___ Not damage company property
- ___ Stay with this company for at least a year after being hired
- ___ Attend all training courses even if it requires me to stay at work late or come early
- ___ Perform quality work
- ___ Work a different schedule if this company needs me to
- ___ Follow the company's rules and policies
- ___ Not do or say anything to hurt the company's reputation *

* Item deleted from analysis due to incorrect wording

APPENDIX C: INFORMATION LETTER

Auburn University

Auburn University, Alabama 36849-5241

Department of Management
415 W. Magnolia, Suite 401
Lowder Business Building

Telephone: (334) 844-4071

**INFORMATION SHEET
for Research Study Entitled
Influences of Realistic Job Previews on Psychological Contract Formation**

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to examine job applicant opinions of employment hiring situations. This study is being conducted by Mr. Jeremy Stafford under the supervision of Dr. Charlotte Sutton, associate professor of management, Auburn University. We hope to learn about differences in the experience of individuals who undergo the same job application process. You were selected as a possible participant because you are at least 19 years of age, and other job applicants have completed the same application process. This will enable us to make comparisons of individual experiences.

If you decide to participate, I will ask you to fill out a questionnaire which will take approximately 5 minutes to complete. The information you provide will remain completely anonymous and you will be instructed not to place any identifying marks whatsoever on the questionnaire. This precaution is necessary to protect your anonymity. In addition, none of Sarah-Lee Food's or Kelley Services, Inc personnel will have any access to the information you provide.

We feel that the information you provide will be critical for developing alternative selection procedures that will provide applicants in the future with more interaction and participation in the process. The benefit to you for participating in this research is that your opinion will serve as a significant contribution to the field of human resource management, although we cannot promise you will actually perceive any personal benefit from knowing that your participation will make a difference.

Any information obtained in connection with this study will remain anonymous. Information collected through your participation may be used to publish in a professional journal and/or present at a professional meeting. As a participant, you may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. However, after you have provided anonymous information you will be unable to withdraw your data after participation since there will be no way to identify individual information.

Page 1 of 2

HUMAN SUBJECTS
OFFICE OF RESEARCH
PROJECT #05-059 MR 0505
APPROVED 05/19/05 O 05/08/07

A LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY

APPENDIX C: INFORMATION LETTER (continued)

Auburn University

Auburn University, Alabama 36849-5241

Department of Management
415 W. Magnolia, Suite 401
Lowder Business Building

Telephone: (334) 844-4071

Finally, this questionnaire will be used for human resource management research purposes only. Your decision whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University, Kelley Services Inc, or Sarah-Lee Foods.

If you have any questions I invite you to ask them now. If you have questions later, please feel free to contact Mr. Stafford at 256-765-4148 or jostafford@una.edu and/ or Dr. Sutton at 334-844-6507 or [cgsutton@business.auburn.edu](mailto:cdsutton@business.auburn.edu) and we will be happy to answer them.

For more information regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone at (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at hsubjec@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu .

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. THIS LETTER IS YOURS TO KEEP.

Investigator's signature

Date

Page 2 of 2

A LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY

HUMAN SUBJECTS
OFFICE OF RESEARCH
PROJECT #05-059 MR 005
APPROVED 05/06/05 TO 05/08/07

