The role of trustworthiness in recruitment and selection: A review and guide for future research

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Summary   Although scholars recognize the importance of trustworthiness for both job applicants and hiring organizations, prior research exploring trustworthiness during the organizational pre-entry period is scattered across a number of disparate literatures. This paper selectively reviews prior work that investigates the role of trustworthiness in the recruitment and selection processes. Within these pre-entry processes, we explore how job applicants' and hiring organizations' perceptions of one another's trustworthiness, conceptualized as each parties' attitudes regarding the others' benevolence, integrity, and ability, influence meaningful recruitment and selection outcomes. Avenues for future research regarding trustworthiness are also identified in each section of the review. Finally, particular attention is given to two overarching issues at the intersection of trustworthiness and pre-entry processes—trust violations and individual differences in propensity to trust. Copyright © 2013 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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The organizational pre-entry period is primarily made up of processes involving recruitment (i.e., practices and activities that organizations undertake to attract quality applicants to an organization) and selection (i.e., methods that organizations use to select the best applicants). Throughout this period, a significant amount of information is exchanged between hiring organizations (and their agents) and job applicants (Breaugh, 2008, 2012; Cable & Turban, 2001; Dineen & Soltis, 2011; Sackett & Lievens, 2008). Both parties put their faith, to varying degrees, in the notion that they are each receiving as accurate, honest, and complete information as possible from one another (Breaugh, Macan, & Grambow, 2008; Cable & Yu, 2006). Yet, even when this might be the case, information gathered during these processes cannot possibly attend to all of the future unforeseen contingencies involved in the employer–employee relationship. For example, applicants might wonder whether their employer will understand and be supportive of things like unexpected personal days off or future graduate education. On the other side, agents of hiring organizations likely question whether applicants will actually be willing to go beyond their formal job duties when organizational demands require such behavior or otherwise act in ways that are in the best interest of the organization.

As a result of this inability by potential employees and employers to supply proof that they will always fulfill the expectations of the other party when future contingencies arise, the trustworthiness that job applicants and recruiting organizations perceive in one another during pre-entry processes becomes potentially relevant as a proxy for such certainty and likely plays an influential role in applicants' job choice decisions and in organizations' job offer decisions. Because perceptions of trustworthiness between two parties, such as job applicants and potential employers, develop over time through repeated trusting exchanges between the two parties (Kramer, 1999), each interaction

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throughout pre-entry processes provides an opportunity for perceptions of trustworthiness to strengthen or weaken. At almost any time during pre-entry, trust violations or other negatively interpreted information can damage the perceptions of trustworthiness held by job applicants and organizations and impair the relationship between the two parties (Searle & Billsberry, 2011). Therefore, to the extent that job applicants and hiring organizations can enhance the perception of trustworthiness that the other party holds of them, the more effective recruitment and selection activities should be.

To date, however, there has not been a narrative or systematic review of the role of trustworthiness during organizational pre-entry. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to provide a narrative review of the role of trustworthiness in the recruitment and selection literatures and to identify significant shortcomings in our understanding of trustworthiness prior to organizational entry. To do this, we first define the boundaries of this review. Specifically, we define trustworthiness and explain how this review differs from prior research. Next, we review and integrate work examining trustworthiness between applicants and organizations during the recruitment and selection processes. The review follows chronologically the different recruitment and selection activities that take place during pre-entry, and explores trustworthiness from the perspective of job applicants toward hiring organizations and vice versa. To guide future theoretical and empirical work on trustworthiness, within each section, we also identify areas in which our understanding of trustworthiness and its role prior to organizational entry could be further expanded.

Boundaries of the Review

In the introduction of this review, we use the term "recruiting organization" or "hiring organization" to reference both the organization and its agents (e.g., recruiters and interviewers). Later, we discuss trustworthiness as it relates to the organization in general. When discussing trustworthiness as it relates to the actual agents of the firm, we refer specifically to them.

Pre-entry processes and trustworthiness

Pre-entry processes
The scope of this paper will encompass facets of the recruitment and selection processes that influence the perceived trustworthiness of job applicants in the eyes of hiring organizations, and vice versa. Recruitment is the process of attracting applicants and involves tasks by the organization that may or may not involve direct interaction with job applicants (Barber, 1998), whereas the selection process involves deciding which applicants are to be invited to tests and interviews, and ultimately receive job offers (Sackett & Lievens, 2008). A subset of these activities within these processes, such as attending career fairs, hosting site visits, conducting selection tests, interviewing applicants, and providing realistic job previews, is characterized by some form of contact between the recruiting organization or its members (e.g., interviewers) and the applicants, be it in person or through recruitment and selection materials.

Trustworthiness
Trust occurs between two entities, but prior work has often been unclear regarding the level at which trust occurs (i.e., individual, group, or organization), and the referent in which trust is being placed (e.g., manager, coworker, team, and organization; Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). The focus of this review is on the development of perceptions of trustworthiness at the individual level, but with multiple referents. As such, we will examine research concerning how perceptions of trustworthiness develop between job applicants and multiple organizational agents (e.g., recruiters, interviewers, potential managers and coworkers, and the hiring organization as a whole). The vast majority of research focused on trustworthiness during pre-entry has investigated trustworthiness as it relates to a single referent. Clearly though, applicants often form related, yet distinct, perceptions of the trustworthiness of different

referents even though they are all linked to the same hiring organization. As we describe later in the paper, then, future research should take into consideration multiple referents of trust when examining trustworthiness during recruitment and selection. Finally, although the majority of work on trust during pre-entry focuses on job applicants' perceptions of the trustworthiness of organizational referents, we will also review work that examines trustworthiness in the other direction—from hiring organizations toward applicants (e.g., selection tests).

Although the subject of how to define trust has been discussed widely, a consensus regarding the precise delineation of the construct remains elusive. A review of the many descriptions of trust in the literature suggests that most conceptualizations of trust include two main components—positive perceptions of the other party's trustworthiness and a general willingness to make oneself vulnerable to the other party (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Perceived trustworthiness is based on assessments by the trustor concerning three characteristics of the trustee—benevolence, integrity, and ability (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Benevolence refers to the belief that the trustee will act in the best interests of the trustor, integrity describes an alignment between the perceived principles of the trustee with those of the trustor concerning acceptable norms of interpersonal interaction, and ability concerns the perception that the trustee has the competence to fulfill obligations pertaining to any trust-based agreements (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012). Both perceptions of the other party's trustworthiness and one's propensity to trust (i.e., general willingness to make oneself vulnerable to others) should be relevant in pre-entry processes; however, perceptions of trustworthiness are malleable, whereas propensity to trust is relatively more stable and trait-like. Because of the dynamic nature of trustworthiness and its pivotal role in the formation of trust between two parties, this review focuses on how recruitment and selection activities can change applicants' and hiring organizations' perceptions of one another's benevolence, integrity, and ability.

In doing so, this review is unique in that it is more narrow in focus than prior reviews of recruitment (e.g., Breaugh, 2008; Breaugh et al., 2008; Ma & Allen, 2009) or selection (e.g., Ployhart, 2006; Sackett & Lievens, 2008), because of its concentration on the role of perceptions of trustworthiness in these processes. However, this review covers both individual and organizational factors that influence trustworthiness throughout different pre-entry activities, so it is more comprehensive than prior examinations of trust during this time, such as Celani, Deutsch-Salamon, and Singh (2008), who explored how justice affects applicant trust during selection, or Searle and Billsberry (2011), who focused on factors that influence applicants' initial trust during recruitment and the impact of subsequent trust breaches. Finally, prior work has also investigated fairness during recruitment and selection. Although perceptions of fairness correlate positively with and are often conceptualized as antecedents to trust (e.g., Pillai, Schriesheim, & Williams, 1999), they are conceptually distinct from perceptions of trustworthiness. This distinction between trustworthiness and fairness is consistent with work that has investigated organizational justice (which contains fairness perceptions) as antecedent to perceptions of trustworthiness (Frazier, Johnson, Gavin, Gooty, & Snow, 2010).

Because trustworthiness is a precursor to the formation of trust between two parties, gaining an understanding of how job applicants and hiring organizations form perceptions of the other party's trustworthiness has practical significance beyond recruitment and selection. Indeed, trust between employees and employers positively relates to a number of positive outcomes, such as higher levels of job satisfaction (Edwards & Cable, 2009), employee performance (Mayer & Gavin, 2005), leadership effectiveness (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), and teamwork (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Hence, to the extent that the foundation of strong future trust-based bonds between subordinates and supervisors and between employees and their organizations is created in the form of positive perceptions of trustworthiness during pre-entry, the more likely that these entities will quickly realize the benefits of trust-based relationships after employees join the organization. Simply put, trustworthiness during pre-entry is practically important because its presence or absence during recruitment and selection arguably has lasting effects on the ultimate development of trust within organizations.

Scope of the review

This work represents a review of theoretical and empirical research on trustworthiness during recruitment and selection. The articles in this review were drawn from a series of searches of the ABI/INFORM and PsychINFO databases. Specifically, in both databases, we searched for combinations of the terms "recruitment" or "selection"

with either "trust" or "trustworthiness" within the text of the articles. Because of the large number of articles returned in these initial searches, we narrowed our search to peer-reviewed articles or book chapters that also included the term "employee" or "applicant" in their text.

Our review is organized in the following manner. The point of departure is the initial perceptions of trustworthiness that job applicants and hiring organizations hold of one another at the outset of their pre-entry interaction. From there, we address each aspect of the recruitment and selection processes in which prior work has investigated the developmental dynamics of trustworthiness between job applicants and hiring organizations. Within each section of the paper, we discuss the degree to which extant research has provided a comprehensive understanding of how job applicants' and hiring organizations' perceptions of one another's benevolence, integrity, and ability evolve. To provide a clear vision for future theoretical and empirical research, at the end of each section, we describe how future work can address shortcomings in our knowledge of how these three facets of trustworthiness influence job applicants' and hiring organizations' behaviors and decisions. In doing so, we also provide some ideas reflective of our opinion following the directions for future research within each section.

Initial Perceptions of Trustworthiness

Job applicants' initial perceptions of organizational trustworthiness

Although in some cases applicants may be completely unfamiliar with an organization, they typically possess some degree of familiarity with an organization or its members prior to recruitment-related contact (Cable & Turban, 2001; Dineen & Soltis, 2011). This familiarity comes from a number of sources, such as the hiring organization's products, services, or website, employees of the organization, or prior interaction with the firm as a business partner or competitor. In addition, exposure to a company's advertising can positively influence applicant beliefs about the company, thereby improving recruitment outcomes (Collins & Han, 2004). When applicants learn about a job opening through recruitment ads, even these initial recruitment sources can influence baseline perceptions of organizational trustworthiness. Indeed, Burt, Halloumis, McIntyre, and Blackmore (2010) found that recruitment ads showing photographs of real work teams elicited higher perceptions of organizational trustworthiness than did advertisements with models posing as team members. As a result of this exposure, applicants differ in their initial perceptions of trustworthiness even before they have entertained the idea of potentially working for the firm (Celani et al., 2008; Kausel & Slaughter, 2011). Furthermore, this baseline perception of trustworthiness influences whether applicants are attracted to apply to such organizations (Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr, 2004). Therefore, trustworthiness during pre-entry does not start as a blank slate, but at some level, that is determined by applicants' perceptions formed during prior direct and indirect contact with hiring organizations.

Although research scrutinizing individuals' baseline perceptions of the benevolence, integrity, and ability of recruiting organizations is relevant to both recruitment and selection, prior work has not directly examined these perceptions prior to recruitment-related contact between both parties. Notably, however, research in the marketing literature suggests that organizational trustworthiness is a key component of firm reputation (Walsh & Beatty, 2007). In other words, one of the ways through which organizational reputation influences job applicant decisions is through the establishment of an initial perception of organizational trustworthiness. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence supporting the role of organizational reputation in the recruitment process. For example, organizational reputation acts as a positive signal for applicants regarding their perceptions of job and organizational attributes (Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998). In addition, the affirmative reputation or brand equity that organizations possess positively relates to both the size and quality of the applicant pool (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Berkson, Ferris, and Harris (2002) also found that applicants' perceptions of organizational reputation were positively related to an eventual job offer, suggesting that organizational reputation contributes to the fit between the applicant and the recruiting organization or at least motivates applicants to more effectively manage impressions about themselves in the organization's eye. Moreover, Turban and Cable (2003) demonstrated that organizational

reputation significantly influenced how positively applicants evaluated the job and their subsequent job pursuit intentions. Finally, Collins (2007) showed that applicants' decisions to apply for a job positively related to organizational reputation, regardless of whether organizations use low-information recruitment practices (e.g., advertisements and sponsorships) or high-information recruitment practices (e.g., detailed recruitment ads and employee referrals).

In sum, when individuals hold positive attitudes toward an organization at the outset of the recruitment process, they are more likely to end up working for that company. Given that perceptions of organizational trustworthiness associate with organizational reputation (Walsh & Beatty, 2007), applicants' initial perceptions of organizational trustworthiness should contribute to positive recruitment outcomes to some degree; however, this relationship has not been examined empirically. Prior work would also suggest that because of confirmation biases, applicants' initial perceptions of trustworthiness could lead to subsequent positive interpretations of the hiring organization's actions (Robinson, 1996). However, this positive cycle has not been used yet to examine the role of organizational reputation during pre-entry processes. Furthermore, the manner in which initial organizational trustworthiness influences subsequent applicants' behaviors is only speculative at this point. Specifically, beyond the work on organizational reputation, which suggests that initial trustworthiness relies mainly on positive feelings toward the firm, it is unclear precisely to what extent the facets of trustworthiness—benevolence, integrity, or ability—as they relate to job applicants' perceptions of the organization, are present at the initial stages of recruitment and selection.

Organizations' initial perceptions of applicants' trustworthiness

Although it was once quite difficult for organizations to develop perceptions of job applicants' trustworthiness at the outset of the recruitment process, recruiters are increasingly using Internet search engines and social networking sites to screen job applicants (Chauhan, Buckley, & Harvey, 2013). Hiring organizations are interested in collecting as much information as possible about job applicants throughout pre-entry, particularly before inviting them for more advanced screening such as selection tests or interviews (Breaugh, 2008, 2012). Among other types of information, online sources offer the opportunity for organizations to gather information about applicants' level of trustworthiness (i.e., their benevolence, integrity, and ability). For example, recruiting organizations can find information online about job applicants' knowledge and skills before even reviewing their resumes, thus providing signals about their ability. Similarly, internet search engines and social networking sites provide information about job applicants' benevolence and integrity by displaying the lifestyle that applicants are presenting online.

Directions for future research in initial perceptions of trustworthiness

It is important to note that initial perceptions of trustworthiness may be biased by a number of factors both intrinsic and extrinsic to applicants and hiring organizations (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). For example, a PhD candidate with a strong desire to work at a certain university may cognitively overinflate her assessments of her future Dean's or Department Head's integrity, ability, and/or benevolence when interviewing at that school. Similarly, members of a university-hiring committee that are under pressure to hire a superstar may cognitively distort their perceptions of an applicant's trustworthiness based on a particularly impressive vita. Future work, therefore, should seek to better understand the contingencies that influence the speed and accuracy with which applicants and hiring organizations construct initial impressions of one another's trustworthiness.

In addition, considerable evidence suggests that hiring organizations' websites play a crucial role in influencing applicant attitudes during pre-entry. Although the role of trustworthiness in web-based recruitment has not been examined directly, prior work indicates that the use of organization websites in early stages of recruitment is related to various forms of applicant attraction (Cober, Brown, Keeping, & Levy, 2004). Further, Dineen, Noe, and Wang (2004) found that five justice characteristics (consistency, opportunity to perform, reconsideration opportunity,

feedback timeliness, and automated versus human decision agent) influenced fairness perceptions in the context of web-based applicant screening. Such findings are promising for future research examining the role of trustworthiness in web-based recruitment and selection given that justice perceptions can impact trustworthiness perceptions (Frazier et al., 2010). Therefore, we suggest that future research might examine the role of trustworthiness not only in web-based selection procedures but also in web-based applicant attraction. More specifically, can applicant perceptions of the organizational benevolence, integrity, and ability be influenced by the organization's use of web-based recruitment and selection? If so, what features of the web-based activity relate to specific trustworthiness components?

From an organization's perspective, future work could also seek to determine ways through which hiring organizations use online sources to develop initial perceptions of job applicants' trustworthiness. Information on applicant characteristics from online sources may assist potential employers in their attempts to draw inferences about applicants' trustworthiness that may not be obtained easily through standard means, which could influence employers' decision making process with regard to applicants. Beyond understanding how hiring organizations use online information, researchers should use longitudinal designs to examine the extent to which perceptions of trustworthiness formed using online sources are predictive not only of favorable recruitment outcomes but also of future job performance and career success.

Trustworthiness During Recruitment and Selection

Selection tests

Once applicants apply for a job opening, they may be able to signal their trustworthiness through their responses to selection tests. Indeed, when recruiters require applicants to take integrity tests, personality tests, or cognitive ability tests, they give applicants a chance to demonstrate their trustworthiness. Although many tests have been investigated in the selection literature, we examine three tests that are particularly relevant to organizational perceptions of applicants' benevolence, integrity, and ability. Specifically, integrity tests assess job applicants' honesty and *integrity* with regard to counterproductive work behaviors; personality tests collect information about applicants' personality, including their agreeableness and *benevolence*; and cognitive ability tests directly assess applicants' *ability*, at least one aspect of it.

In addition, most of these tests and the testing environment also inform applicants about organizational trustworthiness (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). For example, applicants could build or develop perceptions of a hiring organization's ability and professionalism depending on the environment in which they take the selection tests (e. g., a quiet and clean computer lab versus a noisy and dusty testing room). Furthermore, such perceptions of the organization's trustworthiness have been shown to impact other important outcomes. Indeed, applicants who experience the selection process more positively (e.g., through higher perceptions of the organization's ability, integrity, and benevolence) tend to view the job and organization more favorably and thus are more likely to accept job offers and recommend the recruiting organization (i.e., make referrals to other prospective candidates; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Macan, Avedon, Paese, & Smith, 1994).

Integrity tests

Some integrity tests measure candidate trustworthiness directly, whereas others comprise more general measures of integrity and honesty (Sackett & Wanek, 1996). Meta-analytic evidence suggests that scores on integrity tests positively relate to employee trustworthiness (Posthuma & Maertz, 2003) and future job performance and negatively relate to theft, absenteeism, and other forms of counterproductive behavior (Van Iddekinge, Roth, Raymark, & Odle-Dusseau, 2012). Van Iddekinge, Taylor, and Eidson (2005) also found that certain facets of integrity scales, namely honesty image (i.e., perceptions of one's own trustworthiness) and norms of general dishonesty (i.e., beliefs concerning how often others behave dishonestly), may be particularly useful predictors of future work performance,

when compared with the overall test. Overall, integrity tests provide a strong signal regarding job applicants' trustworthiness, particularly given that they are the most valid selection procedure other than cognitive ability tests in predicting future job performance (Chan & Schmitt, 2004).

Researchers have also investigated applicant reactions to integrity tests. In general, applicants react more negatively to integrity tests than any other selection procedures (Hausknecht et al., 2004; Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012). As such, requiring applicants to take integrity tests might harm their perceptions of organizational trustworthiness, especially when hiring organizations do not disclose the purpose of these tests to applicants (Morgeson et al., 2007).

Personality tests

Personality tests provide recruiters with information pertaining to job applicant trustworthiness because they typically measure agreeableness, which includes the facets of trustworthiness and altruism (i.e., benevolence; Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991). In fact, individuals high in agreeableness tend to answer integrity tests in a more truthful manner than those low in agreeableness (Byle & Holtgraves, 2008). These facets of agreeableness may also explain why the trait is predictive of future performance in jobs that require high levels of coworker trust, such as police work (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001).

Regarding applicant reactions to personality tests, the findings of prior work suggest that these tests are perceived less favorably than interviews and cognitive ability tests (Hausknecht et al., 2004). This relative negativity stems from the fact that individuals have difficulty determining both the purpose and the potential uses of personality inventories. Indeed, many of these inventories are masked such that it may be difficult to understand what is being measured. This creates doubt in individuals as they must trust both the instrument that they potentially do not understand and the organization's use of the results of the test. As such, job applicants might perceive personality tests as being less relevant to the selection process compared with other procedures such as interviews and intelligence tests.

Cognitive ability tests

Perhaps the most studied and widely used selection tool, the cognitive ability test is designed to assess individuals' general intelligence or their ability in a specific area (e.g., mathematical or verbal reasoning). Because cognitive ability tests are the best predictor of job performance (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Van Iddekinge & Ployhart, 2008), cognitive ability scores should serve as a proxy for the ability component of applicant trustworthiness. Furthermore, the assessment of applicants' ability not only to carry out the requirements of their job but also to engage in extra-role behaviors is an important aspect of the selection process. As trustworthiness includes the competence to fulfill obligations pertaining to any trust-based agreements, such as an employment contract, cognitive ability tests provide information about applicants' ability to be trusted to perform once on the job.

In investigating applicant reactions to cognitive ability tests, Macan et al. (1994) found that applicants reacted favorably to cognitive ability tests. Moreover, they found that applicants who reacted to cognitive ability tests more favorably were also more satisfied with their job and their organization, suggesting (under the assumption that satisfaction with the job and organization is related to the trustworthiness of the organization) that selection tools may also influence applicants' perceptions of organizational trustworthiness. Similarly, Hausknecht et al. (2004) found that cognitive ability tests were viewed relatively positively by applicants, particularly in comparison with personality tests, integrity tests, and biographical data.

Selection tests and trustworthiness: directions for future research

Regarding integrity tests, although prior work has investigated applicant reactions to integrity tests, our understanding of how these tests influence applicant perceptions of organizational trustworthiness is limited. Given that applicants react more negatively to integrity tests than any other selection procedures (Hausknecht et al., 2004; Uggerslev et al., 2012), as noted earlier, requiring applicants to take integrity tests might harm their perceptions of organizational trustworthiness. However, this has yet to be tested, and our understanding of the link between

negative applicant reactions to integrity tests and recruiting outcomes and future work behaviors remains an avenue for future research (Berry, Sackett, & Wiemann, 2007).

Concerning personality tests, there is a paucity of research that examines directly whether higher levels of applicant agreeableness relate to stronger perceptions of trustworthiness among recruiters. Further, as we have discussed, the findings of prior research suggest that when an organization gives personality tests at a prominent place in its selection process, it may weaken applicants' perceptions of that firm's integrity or benevolence, which is perhaps why personality tests are more reliable and better perceived when combined with work samples or cognitive ability tests (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). However, the effect of personality tests on applicant perceptions of hiring organization's integrity and benevolence has yet to be examined directly. Finally, because of the widespread use of cognitive ability tests and because they are perceived quite favorably by applicants, they may represent one of the most effective and common ways that perceptions of the facet of ability are strengthened between applicants and hiring organizations. Therefore, it is imperative that future lab and field studies seek to measure the degree to which levels of trustworthiness change as a result of exposure to cognitive ability tests.

In addition, Gilliland's (1993, 1994) model of candidate reactions may provide a useful framework for examining the influence of integrity, personality, and cognitive ability tests on applicant's perceptions of organizational trustworthiness. Indeed, Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, and Jones (2005) suggested that perceptions of procedural fairness are related to a number of important recruitment outcomes such as perceptions of organizational attractiveness and job acceptance intentions. Individual perceptions of the recruitment and selection processes invariably influence applicant perceptions of the organization's trustworthiness during selection tests. Gilliland (1993, 1994) developed a number of rules that should enhance the perceptions of fairness on the part of the applicant, and a number of these relate to the three components of trustworthiness. For example, ensuring that administrators treat candidates with warmth and respect should increase applicant perceptions of benevolence, ensuring the selection system is job-related could positively influence applicant perceptions of the organization's ability, and giving candidates the opportunity to challenge the results of their selection tests would likely increase applicant perceptions of the organization's integrity. Interestingly, evidence indicates that both recruitment interactions (after application submission) and selection procedures influence an applicant's attraction to an organization, including perceptions of the organization's fairness (Bauer et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2013).

Trustworthiness in pre-entry processes directly involving organizational agents

In the following sections, we consider the role of perceptions of trustworthiness in recruitment and selection processes involving direct contact between job applicants and agents of the hiring organization (e.g., site visits and job interviews). After reviewing the pertinent literature within each subsection, we offer directions for future research.

Organizational agent trustworthiness

At later stages of pre-entry, communication between applicants and specific agents of the organization increases, and as such, these individuals presumably become a, if not the, primary referent of trustworthiness for job applicants. Organizational agents who recruit and select candidates play a large role in influencing applicant attraction to the job and organization (Dineen & Soltis, 2011; Turban et al., 1998). When job applicants perceive that these agents are trustworthy, the likelihood of positive recruitment outcomes for both the organization and the applicants increases (Chapman et al., 2005). Furthermore, job applicants find job information communicated from job incumbents, such as organizational agents, as more trustworthy compared with information provided by formal recruiters (Rynes, Heneman, & Schwab, 1980). Moreover, Saks (1989) also found that realistic job previews (RJPs) delivered by recruiters engendered greater perceptions of trustworthiness than when they were delivered in a written format, which led to increased attraction among applicants who received RJPs from recruiters.

Realistic job previews and trustworthiness

Recruiting organizations often use RJPs to provide job candidates with a picture of what life in the organization is truly like (Breaugh, 2010). Beyond providing job candidates a preview of the job and organizational life, RJPs increase the degree to which applicants view the recruiting organization and its members as trustworthy and honest, thereby reducing future turnover (Breaugh, 2010; Earnest, Allen, & Landis, 2011). In fact, one of the standard reasons given as to why RJPs are successful is that they convey an "air of honesty" to applicants. As such, RJPs appear to be an effective tool for building applicant perceptions of the organizational trustworthiness during recruitment. Indeed, they may provide information to the job candidate that the organization is benevolent, in that they care about the candidate's well-being enough to give his or her information that will help him or her select the appropriate job and environment. Additionally, RJPs may signal the organization's integrity in that they show the organization's willingness to be forthcoming with both positive and negative information.

Further evidence indicates that expectation lowering procedures (ELPs), in which a job applicant's job-related and organization-related expectations are lowered without inclusion of any specific aspects of the job being shared, are also effective in increasing future job satisfaction and reducing turnover (Buckley, Fedor, Veres, Wiese, & Carraher, 1998; Buckley et al., 2002). However, it is not clear whether, similar to RJPs, one of the mechanisms through which these positive outcomes could be achieved is through the increase of organizational trustworthiness in the eye of applicants. We would hypothesize, though, that the positive ELP outcomes might be indicative of positive perceptions of an organization's integrity.

Trustworthiness in the job interview

The job interview is often the first opportunity for applicants and organizational representatives to meet in person and have a meaningful dialogue about characteristics of the applicant, the job, the organization, and so forth. It is also the opportunity to more closely examine perceptions of the organization's trustworthiness that job applicants might have acquired before or during earlier pre-entry activities. Similarly, job interviews give organizational recruiters a chance to reassess perceptions of job applicants' benevolence, ability, and integrity that they might have acquired from earlier selection tests and interactions with the applicant. Thus, during this two-way communication process, there is a significant opportunity for both applicants and recruiters to strengthen (or weaken) their perceptions of trustworthiness in the eyes of the other party. Indeed, Liden, Wayne, and Stilwell suggest that supervisor–subordinate relationships "characterized by mutual trust, respect, liking, and reciprocal influence" (1993, p. 662) begin to form in job interviews when applicants' future supervisors are present.

The role of trustworthiness in the context of the job interview has been examined directly, to some extent, in prior work. DeGroot and Motowidlo (1999) reported that the relationship between interviewee visual cues, such as physical attractiveness, amount of smiling and eye contact, and vocal cues, such as pitch, speech rate, and pitch variability, and favorable interviewer judgments of interviewees were partially mediated by trust. As such, applicants' verbal and nonverbal actions in the interview context can contribute to the trustworthiness each party perceives in the other. In another study, Barrick, Shaffer, and DeGrassi (2009) provided meta-analytic support for the positive relationship between interviewee verbal and nonverbal cues and interviewer ratings and argued that trust building partly explained this relationship.

Trustworthiness during the site visit

The site visit, during which applicants meet with potential coworkers and supervisors, tour work facilities, and explore the community, has a significant, albeit somewhat understudied, impact on job choice decisions (Boswell, Roehling, LePine, & Moynihan, 2003). Turban, Campion, and Eyring (1995) found that applicants' overall evaluations of the site visit and their perceptions of the location and the visit host positively predicted subsequent job acceptance. Surprisingly, they also found that the degree to which the host was helpful and provided information was negatively related to subsequent job acceptance. The authors speculated that overly helpful and informative site visits signaled that something was wrong with the job that the organization was trying to conceal. In other words, applicants' perceptions of the integrity of site visit hosts seemed to decrease as the hosts became excessively helpful and informative.

Trustworthiness during job offer negotiations

Trustworthiness plays a central role in negotiations. Perceived trustworthiness between two parties influences whether or not they will approach negotiations in a distributive or integrative manner (Kimmel, Pruitt, Magenau, Konar-Goldband, & Carnevale, 1980). Further, during negotiations, perceptions of trustworthiness between both sides evolve. Curhan, Elfenbein, and Kilduff (2009) found that the subjective value (i.e., the social psychological outcomes of negotiations), of which trustworthiness is one component, that employees attained during their job offer negotiations predicted their subsequent job and pay satisfaction as well as turnover intentions after 1 year on the job. Additional studies have shed light on the role of perceptions of trustworthiness in the context of negotiations. For example, in simulated negotiations between a job candidate and a recruiter, Anderson and Thompson (2004) showed that negotiators' positive affect fosters perceptions of trustworthiness (likely via benevolence), which in turn leads to higher joint outcomes. Sinaceur (2010) demonstrated that when candidates possess any suspicion as to the integrity of the information that had been provided to them about the job, they tended to trust the other party less and weighed the other party's motives more heavily in their decision making. Finally, in a simulated salary negotiation, Olekalns and Smith (2009) reported that the chances of deception in negotiations were based on the applicants' own affective states, the perceived trustworthiness of the offering party, and the distribution of power between both sides.

Pre-entry processes and organizational agents: directions for future research

It is not uncommon for applicants to first meet with recruiters and then meet later with different HR representatives at company headquarters and then later still meet with their potential future supervisor or coworkers (Turban et al., 1995). Therefore, future research should examine how changes in the referents of trust among hiring organizations influence applicants' perceptions of trustworthiness in the different referents and the organization as a whole and whether certain agents, such as potential coworkers or managers, are more likely to convey positive information and perceptions of higher trustworthiness than other agents, such as HR representatives. Such research would expand prior (equivocal) findings by examining whether and how different types of organizational agents influence applicants' perceptions of an organization's trustworthiness, and in turn predict various recruitment and selection outcomes. In addition, this research could measure the actual level of benevolence, integrity, and ability that applicants' potential managers and coworkers possess, and test the degree to which these facets influence applicants' ultimate job decisions.

Although evidence indicates that RJPs and ELPs are likely to influence applicants' perceptions of an organization's trustworthiness, future research could examine specifically whether RJPs and ELPs influence some trustworthiness facets more than others. For example, it could be that RJPs only influence job applicant's perceptions of an organization's benevolence and integrity whereas ELPs only influence their perceptions of an organization's integrity. Along those lines, it could be interesting to examine whether and how RJPs and ELPs can complement each other as influencing applicant's job pursuit intentions and job choice, as they potentially influence different facets of an organization's trustworthiness.

Taken together, the findings of studies investigating trustworthiness during job interviews suggest that the interview is a critical juncture at which trustworthiness between job applicants and organizational representatives can be either facilitated or critically breached. Going forward, we urge scholars to examine the role of trustworthiness during job interviews from the perspective of both the interviewer and the job applicant. For example, the interview context could lead applicants to conclude that the interviewer or the organization is not trustworthy, thereby causing applicants to decide to abandon their application to the organization. More specifically, from the applicant's perspective, the interview could provide an opportunity to assess the organization's level of benevolence, integrity, and ability through its agents. By asking questions to the interviewer about the job, work environment, organizational culture, and/or corporate social responsibility initiatives, applicants could evaluate whether and to what extent they perceive the agent and the organization to be benevolent and/or have integrity. Similarly, from an organization's perspective, interviewers could use the interview to further examine an applicant's benevolence, ability, and integrity. As such, the interview could corroborate information collected in the various selection tests described earlier.

Beyond the findings of Turban et al. (1995), little is known about whether and how the site visit influences perceptions of trustworthiness between job candidates and recruiting organizations. This seems to be a significant oversight, as it is likely that during the site visit, applicants would be able to compare the claims that have been advanced by prior recruitment sources, recruitment personnel, and interviewers against the evidence provided by seeing one's potential workplace firsthand, meeting one's potential supervisor and coworkers in person, and directly exploring one's potential new community. Anecdotal experiences from our own recruitment and selection processes suggest that it is often not until the site visit that it becomes clear whether prior claims about the job, the organization, and the community have been accurate or embellished. Put another way, the site visit can serve as corroboration of the accuracy of RJPs. Thus, it is imperative for future research to investigate how perceptions of trustworthiness between candidates and recruiting organizations change, if at all, during the site visit and what are the primary mechanisms through which these changes might occur.

Overall, the role of trustworthiness in job offer negotiations has received a significant amount of scholarly attention; however, this line of work is somewhat disjointed when viewed as a whole. That is, the mechanisms through which trust between job applicants and recruiting organizations changes, for better or worse, through the job offer negotiation, remain unclear. Future work should follow the lead of Curhan et al. (2009), who used longitudinal studies of actual job offer negotiations and their outcomes, to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of perceptions of applicant and organizational agent benevolence, ability, and integrity before, during, and after job offer negotiations not only on the outcome of the negotiations but also on the future work outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover).

The pre-entry transition by job applicants from dealing with the organization, in general, to dealing with agents of the organization highlights an overarching need for research exploring how this transition influences perceptions of trustworthiness. More specifically, as our earlier arguments suggest, prior to interacting with specific agents of the organization, job seekers will develop perceptions of the organization's trustworthiness. When they begin interacting with an agent and develop perceptions of trustworthiness for him/her as a target, it is unclear how these perceptions are juxtaposed. Which will carry more weight as a determinant of subsequent decisions/outcomes? What happens when a job applicant sees the organization but not the agent as trustworthy? Does one trump the other? Are perceptions of the trustworthiness of the organization adjusted because of different perceptions of the trustworthiness of the agent (or vice versa)? Future research, then, should seek to better understand the conditions under which perceptions of an organization's benevolence, integrity, and ability transfer to organizational agents and when they do not.

In sum, trustworthiness plays a salient role in various stages of pre-entry that directly involve organizational agents. In particular, as applicants proceed more deeply into pre-entry processes, they meet more and more agents of hiring organizations, and with each new interaction, their trust in the hiring organization as a whole evolves. Similarly, the organization's trust in the candidate also evolves. Accordingly, rather than examining trustworthiness at each stage of pre-entry process separately, studying the role of trustworthiness across the stages of the pre-entry process, on a longitudinal basis, would approximate better how perceptions of trustworthiness actually operate during recruitment and selection and how they interact with characteristics of organizational agents to influence job choice decisions and ultimately future job performance.

Additional Influences on Trustworthiness During Pre-Entry

Each aspect of recruitment and selection has the potential to influence the perceptions that applicants and recruiting organizations hold regarding one another's trustworthiness. Beyond the issues associated with perceptions of trustworthiness relevant to specific activities within recruitment and selection, two overarching factors may influence the perceptions of applicant and organizational trustworthiness during the pre-entry period. In the following subsections, we briefly review research on trust violations and individual differences in propensity to trust, and discuss how future work can advance our understanding of how these two overarching factors influence perceptions of trustworthiness during pre-entry processes.

Trust violations

Betrayals of trust (i.e., trust violations or trust breaches) occur when one party in a trust-based relationship violates any of the "mutually known pivotal expectations of the trustor by the trusted party (trustee), which has the potential to threaten the well-being of the trustor" (Elangovan & Shapiro, 1998, p. 548). Employee trust violations are common occurrences in organizations (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004). Whereas trust repair after a violation is often quite successful in the context of existing long-term relationships between employees and organizational representatives (Kramer & Lewicki, 2010), recent work suggests that this may not be the case in the context of nascent relationships, such as those that exist between applicants and hiring organizations during pre-entry. Indeed, trust breaches at the beginning of interpersonal relationships, such as those between applicants and hiring organizations, can be quite debilitating to the long-term health of the relationship compared with those that take place in an already established relationship (Lount, Zhong, Sivanathan, & Murnighan, 2008).

Despite the potential importance of trust violation during the pre-entry period, and the number of potential areas in which it can occur, little prior work has investigated the effect of trust violations during these pre-entry processes. Qualitative work by Searle and Billsberry (2011) indicates that trust breaches can occur for a variety of different reasons during recruitment and selection, such as the use of discriminatory language (e.g., regarding age, race, or gender) by recruiters or the breaking of an implied promise. Further, Celani et al. (2008) argued that negative applicant reactions to justice violations, such as invasive or discriminatory interview questions, directly impact the perceptions of trustworthiness applicants hold regarding hiring firms. Finally, the findings of Robinson and Morrison (2000) suggest that greater levels of trustworthiness developed prior to organizational entry, particularly through interaction between applicants and organizational representatives, lead to lower employee perceptions of broken promises by the organization later in the employee's tenure.

In sum, although it has been recognized that trust violations play an important role in recruitment and selection and that interaction during this time shapes future employee perceptions of trust violations, questions remain. First, most prior work looks at trust violations committed by the organization toward the applicant. Although this seems like the most reasonable and appropriate line of inquiry, future work should also consider violations that occur in the other direction, with job applicants committing breaches. In addition, future research should determine how damaging trust breaches are to job search and recruitment outcomes. For example, when applicants feel that their trust is violated during a job interview, how does that influence job choice? Similarly, researchers should seek to understand the mechanisms through which damaged trust might be repaired during these pre-entry processes, such as how hiring organizations recover once applicants perceive that a trust breach has occurred.

At a more basic level, for a trust violation to occur between applicants and hiring organizations, one party must discover that their trust has been broken. Although a great deal of prior work has examined the ways in which individuals detect deception, little work has sought to understand the ways in which applicants and agents of hiring organizations perceive that their trust has been broken. Accurate deceit detection is influenced by a number of factors, such as each party's beliefs, the strength of the relationship between individuals, and the manner in which they communicate (e.g., audibly versus visibly; Bond & DePaulo, 2006). As such, future work should use lab and field studies to examine whether the detection of trust violations during pre-entry changes based on the depth of the relationship between applicants and recruiters, or based on whether or not communication between the two parties occurs in person versus via email or other electronic channels.

Individual differences in trust propensity

In addition to perceptions of trustworthiness, trust building also relies on one's general willingness to trust others (Mayer et al., 1995); thus, job applicant characteristics that predispose them to trust others should also facilitate the formation of trust during pre-entry (Searle & Billsberry, 2011). However, little research has directly investigated applicants' propensity to trust during recruitment and selection. Some studies, though, have investigated applicant traits that

are indicative of individuals' tendency to trust others. For example, as previously discussed, the tendency to trust others is one facet of the personality trait agreeableness, which relates to behaviors that enhance recruiter perceptions of similarity with the applicant (Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke, 2002). In addition, Behling (1998) argues that agreeableness is an important trait for job applicants to possess, in part because the trusting nature of those high in agreeableness facilitates strong relationships between themselves and beneficial others inside and outside the hiring organization. On the other side, individuals with lower tendencies to trust will be especially sensitive to changes in their perceptions of the trustworthiness of hiring organizations. Indeed, Kausel and Slaughter (2011) found that propensity to trust moderated the relationship between employee perceptions of an organization's trustworthiness and attraction to the organization, such that this relationship was positive only for individuals who were lower on propensity to trust.

Recruiters' propensity to trust should also influence recruitment and selection processes. Interviewers with high propensity to trust are more effective at correctly detecting dishonest (i.e., low integrity) interviewees than interviewers with low trust propensity, and those lower in trust propensity were more likely to make hiring recommendations in favor of less than honest interviewees than interviewers with high trust propensity (Carter & Weber, 2010). These findings suggest that interviewees with high propensity to trust may also be more accurate in detecting embellishments by company recruiters during the job interview than those low in trust propensity. More speculatively, there may also be regional differences in propensity to trust. As such, trustworthiness be more readily perceived in others in different regions of the US or based upon whether an applicant is a city dweller or not.

Conclusion

The relationship between a job applicant and the recruiting organization, as well as its agents, is an important one. As such, so are the perceptions of the trustworthiness of each party to the other, as these perceptions are likely to have an impact on relevant outcomes throughout the recruitment and selection processes. We have selectively reviewed the extant literature at the intersection of trustworthiness and pre-entry processes. Throughout the review, we suggest that research on trustworthiness in the recruitment and selection processes is active, albeit varied on the basis of the stage of the process. That is, in some stages (e.g., negotiation), a lot is known about the role of trustworthiness, whereas in others (e.g., the site visit), far less is understood about the influence and consequence of trustworthiness between applicants and organizations. Thus, we drew from a number of different areas to highlight the many different ways that trustworthiness intersects with recruitment and selection, and to develop avenues for future research investigating whether and how trustworthiness evolves throughout these pre-entry processes.

In conclusion, it is our hope that this review serves as a platform from which a more unified body of knowledge on this topic can be advanced. We believe that it is imperative for future research to build upon the existing trustworthiness literature, while also integrating other fecund areas such as individual and organizational differences, to examine whether and how trustworthiness develops during the various stages of the pre-entry period.

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