

**FROM STRANGERS TO PARTNERS: THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
APPLICANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS.**

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**FROM STRANGERS TO PARTNERS: THE ROLE OF INFORMATION IN THE
DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL EXCHANGE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN
APPLICANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
SUMMARY.....	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: THEORY DEVELOPMENT.....	9
2.1 Goals During the Hiring Process.....	9
2.1.1 Job applicant goals.....	9
2.1.2 Organizational goals.....	12
2.1.3 Potentially conflicting goals between organizations and job applicants.....	14
2.2 Utilizing Social Exchange to Navigate the Potentially Conflicting Goals Within and Between Organizations and Job Applicants.....	15
2.2.1 Social exchange theory.....	16
2.2.2 Felt obligation as a social exchange-based job applicant goal.....	20
2.2.3 Hiring likelihood as a social exchange-based job applicant goal.....	21
2.2.4 Recruitment and selection as information exchange.....	23
2.3 Model Summary.....	24
CHAPTER 3: MODEL DEVELOPMENT.....	28
3.1 The Role of Organizations' Information Seeking in Meeting Organizational Goals.....	28
3.2 The Role of Organizations' Information Seeking in Meeting Job Applicant Goals.....	32
3.3 Applicant Reciprocation Outcomes.....	38
3.3.1 Self-imposed decision deadlines.....	39
3.3.2 Word of mouth.....	40
3.3.3 Faking.....	42
3.4 Moderated Mediation.....	43
CHAPTER 4: METHODS.....	45
4.1 Research Design Overview.....	45
4.2 Study 1: Experiment.....	45
4.2.1 Sample and design.....	45
4.2.2 Procedure.....	46
4.2.3 Mediator.....	49
4.2.4 Moderator.....	49

4.2.5 Dependent variables.....	49
4.2.6 Manipulation check items.....	51
4.2.7 Control variables.....	54
4.2.8 Preliminary analyses.....	56
4.2.9 Results.....	60
4.2.10 Study 1 discussion and limitations.....	72
4.2.11 Study 1 exploratory analyses.....	76
4.3 Study 2: Field Study.....	77
4.3.1 Field site and participants.....	77
4.3.2 Measures.....	78
4.3.3 Control variables.....	80
4.3.4 Preliminary analyses.....	81
4.3.5 Results.....	82
4.3.6 Study 2 discussion and limitations.....	92
CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS.....	95
5.1 Theoretical Implications.....	95
5.2 Practical Implications.....	99
5.3 Future Research Directions.....	103
APPENDIX A: STUDY 1 EXPERIMENTAL MATERIALS.....	111
APPENDIX B: SUMMARY OF RESULTS FOR EXPLORATORY ANALYSES...	114
APPENDIX C: MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS (STUDY 1 – EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS).....	115
APPENDIX D: SUMMARY OF REGRESSION RESULTS ON FELT OBLIGATION AND HIRING LIKELIHOOD (STUDY 1 – EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS).....	116
APPENDIX E: SUMMARY OF REGRESSION RESULTS ON ESTABLISHMENT OF SELF-IMPOSED DECISION DEADLINES AND LENGTH OF SELF-IMPOSED DECISION DEADLINES (STUDY 1 - EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS).....	117
APPENDIX F: SUMMARY OF REGRESSION RESULTS ON POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH AND NEGATIVE WORD OF MOUTH (STUDY 1 - EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS)... ..	118
APPENDIX G: SUMMARY OF REGRESSION RESULTS ON FAKING (STUDY 1 - EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS).....	119
APPENDIX H: UNSTANDARDIZED INDIRECT EFFECT OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION SEEKING (THROUGH FELT OBLIGATION) AND THE ASSOCIATED 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVALS (STUDY 1 - EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS).....	120

APPENDIX I: MODERATING EFFECT OF HIRING LIKELIHOOD PERCEPTIONS ON THE EFFECT OF POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION SEEKING THROUGH FELT OBLIGATION (STUDY 1 - EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS)...	120
APPENDIX J: SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESES TESTING FOR SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSIS.....	121
REFERENCES	122

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Summary of hypotheses testing	61
Table 2	Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Study 1)	62
Table 3	Summary of regression results on felt obligation and hiring likelihood (Study 1)	64
Table 4	Summary of regression results on establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines and length of self-imposed decision deadlines (Study 1)	66
Table 5	Summary of regression results on positive word of mouth and negative word of mouth (Study 1)	67
Table 6	Summary of regression results on faking (Study 1).....	68
Table 7	Unstandardized indirect effect of positive diagnostic information seeking (through felt obligation) and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 1)	69
Table 8	Unstandardized indirect effect of negative diagnostic information seeking (through felt obligation) and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 1)	71
Table 9	Moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the effect of positive diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation (Study 1).	71
Table 10	Moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the effect of negative diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation (Study 1)	72
Table 11	Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Study 2)	83
Table 12	Summary of regression results on felt obligation (Study 2)	85
Table 13	Summary of regression results on establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines and length of self-imposed decision deadlines (Study 2)	88
Table 14	Summary of regression results on positive word of mouth and faking (Study 2)	89
Table 15	Unstandardized indirect effect of positive diagnostic information seeking (through felt obligation) and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 2)	90

Table 16	Unstandardized indirect effect of negative diagnostic information seeking (through felt obligation) and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 2)	90
Table 17	Moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the effect of positive diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation (Study 2).	91
Table 18	Moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the effect of negative diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation (Study 2).	91

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Theoretical model	6
Figure 2A	Positive responses provided by subjects by condition	59
Figure 2B	Negative responses provided by subjects by condition	59
Figure 3	Interaction between positive diagnostic information seeking and hiring likelihood (Study 2).....	86

SUMMARY

Job applicants and hiring organizations bring a host of goals with them to the staffing process. This can lead to dysfunction as these goals have the potential to conflict on a within-entity basis (e.g. a job applicant has two goals that may conflict) and a between-entity basis (e.g., a job applicant's goal conflicts with an organization's goal). However, I draw upon social exchange theory to examine how organizational actions surrounding an especially valuable strategic resource during recruitment—information—might resolve the multiple conflicting goals of both organizations and job applicants. Based on social exchange theory, I argue that organizations can fulfill both their own goals as well as applicant goals by managing their provision of information-based resources (i.e., positive diagnostic information seeking) and costs (i.e., negative diagnostic information seeking) to applicants. In doing so, I theorize that organizations increase applicant levels of felt obligation which acts as a social exchange mechanism that drives applicant reciprocation of information-based resources back to the hiring organization. I identify four likely forms of applicant information-based reciprocation: the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines and the minimization of these deadlines, more positive word of mouth, less negative word of mouth, and less applicant faking. I test this theory utilizing a multi-method approach with an experiment and a field study. Results provide little support for the proposed hypotheses. These results are discussed in light of limitations, implications, and future research directions.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The recruitment of qualified job candidates, which focuses on identifying and attracting potential employees (Breaugh & Starke, 2000), represents a complex process that has the potential to result in competitive advantages which, in turn, can mean the difference between firm survival and failure (Barney & Wright, 1998). Decades of research on applicant recruitment stands as a testament to the multifaceted nature of recruitment (for reviews see, Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Rynes & Cable, 2003). The difficulties inherent in recruiting are likely due to the fact that organizations must often times balance distinct and somewhat conflicting goals (Rynes, 1988). On one hand, organizations are engaged in a “war for talent” (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001) and endeavor to enlarge the pool of potential qualified candidates as much as possible (Rynes & Barber, 1990; Turban & Cable, 2003). Indeed, applicant attraction, or getting job candidates to view the organization as a positive place to work (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005), is a critical goal of recruitment (Breaugh & Starke, 2000) and has been meta-analytically linked to important outcomes such as job acceptance intentions and eventual job choice (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). On the other hand, organizations are also simultaneously attempting to screen out weak job candidates based on personality profiles (Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991), poor person-organization fit (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Cable & Judge, 1997), or a host of other criteria—a process known as selection (Hough & Oswald, 2000).

Adding to this complexity are the multiple diverse goals that job seekers bring to the recruiting process (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999). For one, job applicants want to work for a good company. Meta-analyses (Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012) suggest that job seekers are generally more attracted to organizations with a certain set of desirable characteristics, such as prestige/reputation ($\rho = .53$), quality of employee–organization relationships and organizational support ($\rho = .58$), job security ($\rho = .25$), and location ($\rho = .22$)¹. As a result, job applicants may conserve their limited resources (Kanfer et al., 2001) and only direct effort toward obtaining employment with desirable organizations. However, compared to the prospect of unemployment, job seekers are likely to be simultaneously concerned with simply finding employment, regardless of the desirability of the organization (Boswell, Zimmerman, & Swider, 2012).

Further complications can arise when the multiple goals that job applicants hold do not align with those of the organization and vice versa. For example, potentially conflicting goals may pressure job candidates to engage in uncooperative behavior such as faking (Levashina & Campion, 2007) to increase their chances of receiving a job offer or responding slowly to existing job offers in hopes that a more desirable one will be extended. In turn, this behavior opens up potential areas of conflict between hiring organizations and job applicants as faking may undermine the validity of a wide variety of selection procedures that depend on accurate information about job applicants (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998) and slow applicant responses to job offers may disrupt recruitment efforts that attempt to balance the logistics associated with multiple job

¹ ρ = coefficient corrected for sampling error and unreliability of the predictor and criterion

candidates. In summary, the numerous (and seemingly irreconcilable) objectives of organizations and job candidates have the potential to impact organizational behavior (e.g., Rynes, 1989; Stevens, 1998a) as well as negatively affect applicant reactions (e.g., Barber, Hollenbeck, Tower, & Phillips, 1994; Connerley & Rynes, 1997; Turban & Dougherty, 1992).

Although the myriad of conflicting objectives operating during the recruiting process would appear to prohibit organizations from effectively attracting and selecting candidates, social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964) suggests that, under certain conditions, separate parties (with their own interests and goals) can and do interact in a cooperative and mutually beneficial way to establish meaningful long-term relationships (for a review see, Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Yet, we know little about the nature of resources that might be exchanged between applicants and organizations, the outcomes we could expect from a healthy social exchange relationship between applicants and organizations, and the critical mechanisms driving these effects. While social exchange theory has been successfully applied to understand a diverse set of research areas such as: sociology (Emerson, 1976), leadership (e.g., Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), cognitive psychology (e.g., Cosmides, 1989), marketing (e.g., Bagozzi, 1975), and networks (e.g., Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004), it remains under-explored in the applicant attraction and reaction literatures (cf. Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). This is surprising given that one of the first and perhaps most dominant models of applicant attraction and reactions to selection procedures (i.e., Gilliland, 1993) is grounded in organizational justice theory (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Ryan &

Ployhart, 2000)—a predominantly social exchange-based phenomenon (Colquitt et al., 2013).

To address these gaps in the literature, I utilize social exchange theory to examine how organizational actions surrounding an especially valuable strategic resource during recruitment—information (U. G. Foa & Foa, 1974, 1980)—might resolve the multiple conflicting goals of organizations and job applicants, and ultimately lead to a high or low quality exchange relationship between these two parties. Information is an important resource for organizations given the crucial role that it plays in effective recruiting (Rynes & Barber, 1990) and selection (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). For instance, the extent to which a job candidate provides honest information likely serves a strategic purpose for organizations as they try to select the best candidate amongst all potential candidates (Levashina & Campion, 2009). Furthermore, timely responses to job offers and favorable word of mouth also represent possible information-based resources likely to benefit organizations as well. At the same time, organizations may need to simultaneously consider job applicant perceptions during any information seeking activity as the nature and extent of strategies that organizations use to gather information about candidates may have an impact on the quality of the social exchange relationship between the job candidate and the organization. For instance, seeking information that is diagnostic, or useful to organizations in hiring decisions (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991), when it makes the candidate look undesirable may cause the job applicant to view the organization as an undesirable social exchange partner which can undermine reciprocation by job applicants.

As seen in Figure 1, I propose that the seeking of information by organizations during the recruiting process predicts the reciprocal provision of information resources to organizations by job applicants while fulfilling applicant goals. According to the reciprocation-in-kind tenet of social exchange theory (U. G. Foa & Foa, 1974, 1980), which suggests that individuals reciprocate information-related resources received with information-related resources in return, the seeking of positive information about a job applicant should ultimately lead applicants to intend to provide more timely information (i.e., job applicants will likely set shorter self-imposed decision deadlines), information that has a broad impact (i.e., job applicants will provide more positive word of mouth and less negative word of mouth), and higher quality information (i.e., job applicants will engage in less faking). On the other hand, job candidates will likely respond to organizations' negative diagnostic information seeking by setting longer self-imposed decision deadlines, providing less positive word of mouth, more negative word of mouth, and engaging in more faking.

Altogether, a social exchange approach to understanding information in recruiting and selection contexts shifts current attention from the content of the information that is exchanged (Earnest, Allen, & Landis, 2011) to the symbolic significance of seeking information as acts in and of themselves that have meaningful implications for relationship quality. Furthermore, social exchange theory has the potential to complement the predominant theoretical lens in the recruiting literature, signaling theory (Turban, 2001; Walker et al., 2012). Whereas signaling theory emphasizes that job applicants primarily interpret organizations' behavior as clues to predict how they will be treated if they joined the firm (Walker et al., 2012), social exchange underscores the fact that the

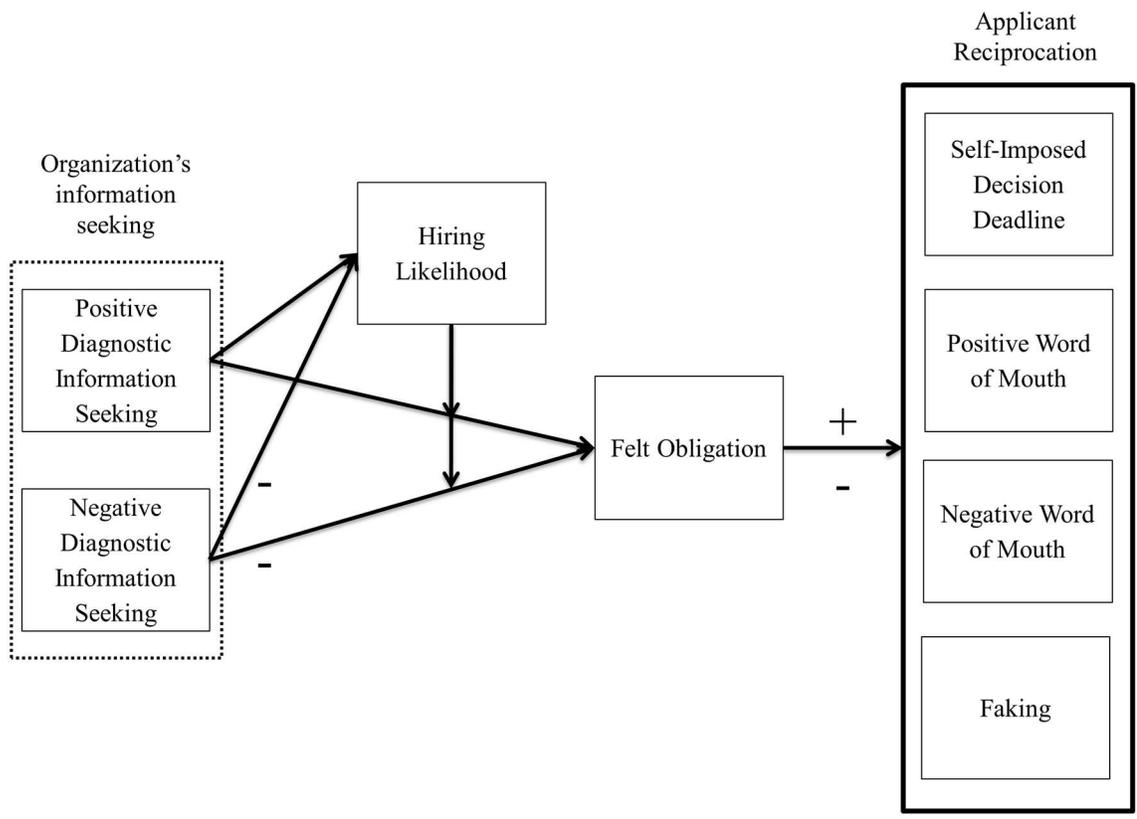


Figure 1
Theoretical model

relationship between a job applicant and a hiring organization starts, not in the future but, at the first point of interaction between these two parties. As a result, social exchange theory can explain applicant and organization activities that occur throughout the entire recruiting/selection process in addition to the final decision of whether or not a job applicant might accept a job offer. Relatedly, social exchange suggests that job applicant reactions to organization behavior likely include outcomes that extend beyond job choice decisions (e.g., job pursuit and offer acceptance) to the reciprocation of other resources that can also benefit an organization (e.g., word of mouth). Finally, a social exchange-based model allows for the study of recruiting and selection from the perspective of both the job applicant and the hiring organization, and not merely one or

the other (cf. Breugh & Starke, 2000; Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). By utilizing a social exchange lens to study applicants' reciprocating reactions to organizations, I answer general calls to more strongly ground recruiting and selection research in theory (Breugh & Starke, 2000; Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005) and specific calls to incorporate social exchanges (Earnest et al., 2011; Ganzach, Pazy, Ohayun, & Brainin, 2002) and information exchanges (Posthuma, Morgeson, & Campion, 2002) into these bodies of literature.

As an additional contribution, I detail how and why an organization's information seeking strategies might lead to different levels of applicant self-imposed decision deadlines, positive word of mouth, negative word of mouth, and faking. To accomplish this, I outline how an organization's information seeking might affect a social exchange-relevant mediator—felt obligation, or the “belief regarding whether one should care about the organization's well-being and should help the organization reach its goals” (Eisenberger et al., 2001: 42)—that drives reciprocation toward the organization. In doing so, I answer calls from researchers to focus attention on and explicitly test mediators in recruitment research (Breugh, 2008, 2012; Rynes & Cable, 2003), especially those that have been ignored or assumed to account for previously observed effects (e.g., Ganzach et al., 2002). In addition, this paper answers calls to investigate the factors that might cause individuals to spread negative word-of-mouth (Van Hove & Lievens, 2009).

Finally, the proposed model further integrates the recruitment and selection literatures by outlining the interplay between simultaneous, and potentially conflicting yet reconcilable, actions typical of selection processes. Given that organizational activities can have both recruitment and selection implications (Rynes, 1989), the

examination of these organizational actions in one model explicitly addresses how selection activities might serve attraction purposes and actually affect applicant attitudes and reactions in an additive fashion. In this way, recruitment and selection functions do not act in isolation and, for better or worse, actions that are thought of as primarily selection focused do have implications for candidate attraction. In particular, I look at a broad class of selection activities, information seeking, and examine how some forms of information seeking (i.e., negative diagnostic information seeking; Connerley & Rynes, 1997; Rynes, 1989) might negatively impact the establishment of viable social exchange relationships between job applicants and organizations. By doing so, this proposal answers calls to bridge the gap between the traditionally separate, but conceptually related, fields of recruitment and selection (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012).

CHAPTER 2

THEORY DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Goals During the Hiring Process

2.1.1 Job applicant goals

The complexity of the hiring process is likely due, in part, to the fact that job seekers seem to have multiple, simultaneously operating goals (Boswell et al., 2012). The most intuitive of these goals is a desire to secure employment. Underlying this goal is the expectation that applying for and pursuing a job might result in the chance, however low, of receiving a job offer of gainful employment (Wanous, Keon, & Latack, 1983). This drive to obtain employment is captured by applicants' perceptions of hiring likelihood, also known as the concept of expectancy, which is defined as job applicants' expectation of receiving a job offer from a specific employer (Rynes, 1991; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). Hiring likelihood perception is a motivational construct that applies to a broad range of job applicants, regardless of whether the job applicant: has a) never had a job and is a new entrant into the labor market, b) is unemployed and searching for a job, or c) is employed but searching for their next job or an additional job (Boswell et al., 2012). While hiring likelihood perceptions might vary throughout the stages of recruitment (Barber, 1998), meta-analytic evidence suggests that job applicants consider hiring likelihood to be relevant throughout all stages of recruitment (Uggerslev et al., 2012), up until the job offer is actually extended. From this perspective, hiring likelihood captures the perceived probability of achieving a very concrete goal of job applicants – getting a job.

At the same time, however, it is important to note that hiring likelihood expectations can represent a much more complex and multi-faceted phenomenon because they likely encompasses a whole host of goals in addition to acquiring employment with a firm. In their review of the job search literature, Boswell and colleagues (2012) noted a wide variety of reasons individuals might search for jobs including: gaining negotiation leverage, comparing employment to other opportunities, developing a professional network, staying aware of job alternatives, etc. Amongst this diversity, the common link between many of these objectives is the fact that they require some minimal level of belief on the part of the job applicant that he/she has a chance to receive a job offer. For example, searching for a job will only result in negotiation leverage if there is some, however small, chance that a job offer is tenable; employers will hardly be swayed by pipe dreams because unattainable jobs do not result in applicant power over the employer (Emerson, 1962). Likewise, job search as a means to compare opportunities and stay aware of job alternatives is not useful if the opportunities are not realistically achievable and the job in question does not provide a reasonably possible alternative to one's current situation. In this way, a likely job offer serves as a foundational and necessary proxy for other practical and instrumental concerns of job applicants, ultimately resulting in hiring likelihood perceptions being one of the most fundamental driving forces of job applicant behavior.

Beyond simply securing employment, meta-analyses suggest that being attracted to an organization, or viewing the organization as a desirable place to work (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005; Rynes, 1991), is a salient goal and concern for job applicants during the entire recruiting process (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012)—from as early as

the first recruitment message (Roberson, Collins, & Oreg, 2005) to the final stages of applicants' eventual job choice (Chapman et al., 2005). Stated another way, job applicants not only want to find any job with any organization, but they also want to actually like the organization and the job they are applying for. From this perspective, job applicants are discerning and selective; they are sensitive to organizations' behavior and, throughout the entire recruitment process (Uggerslev et al., 2012), are constantly trying to pick up on any type of signal or information that might indicate whether an organization is a desirable or undesirable place to work (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991).

To a certain extent, job applicants' hiring likelihood and attraction goals could potentially conflict with each other. For example, meta-analyses (Uggerslev et al., 2012) find that a wide variety of individuals are attracted to certain desirable aspects of organizations, such as prestige and the availability of flextime and work-life balance (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012). Given the wide appeal of particular organization characteristics and the limited number of jobs available at these desirable organizations, logic would dictate that the more attractive an organization is the more competition there would be for a position - ultimately decreasing the perceived likelihood each individual applicant holds for obtaining a job offer. Likewise, noncompensatory models of career decision making suggest that individuals require certain necessary, but not sufficient, attributes (e.g., location or job security) to be present for a job to even be considered a viable option (Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001). Given this decision making process, one easy way for applicants to meet their goal of obtaining employment and avoiding unemployment would be to enlarge their choice set of potential employers (Stevens, 1998b) by eliminating some "required" organization attributes. However,

applying to and considering an increasingly broader set of less-than-ideal organizations is a trade-off; job applicants increase the probability of receiving a job offer at the cost of reduced organization attraction. When considering these job applicant goals in isolation and separate from organization goals, one would expect an inherent conflict between job applicant attraction and hiring likelihood goals, resulting in a negative relationship between these two goals. Yet, meta-analyses find that hiring likelihood expectations and attraction are correlated at a $\rho = .26$ level (Chapman et al., 2005). This suggests that these job applicant goals have the potential to be reconciled. Social exchange theory provides some insight into this phenomenon by proposing that job applicant cognitions and attitudes are not formed in isolation from the organization but are likely dependent on the nature and extent of resource exchange with the hiring organization. In this way, a consideration of the relationship between job applicants and organizations, as well as their respective goals, may reveal that organizations' actions can actually reconcile and simultaneously fulfill, at least in part, both job applicant goals.

2.1.2 Organizational goals

Organization interest in personnel selection can be traced back to the birth of industrial and organizational psychology, with early applied scientists being concerned with developing means to determine “the best possible man” (Munsterberg, 1913: 25) for a job. Since then, the literature has flourished and resulted in the examination of a variety of selection techniques, from more traditional methods such as: personality tests (Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Judge, 2007), situational judgment tests (McDaniel, Hartman, Whetzel, & Grubb, 2007), cognitive ability tests (Schmidt & Hunter, 2004), and employment interviews (McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994) to newer and

more technologically advanced social media screening techniques (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009). Yet, the ultimate goal of all these selection techniques remains the same: differentiate the best candidates from the worst candidates and eliminate poor candidates from the hiring process.

As a whole, extant research does support the validity of many selection procedures in the prediction of job performance (Hough & Oswald, 2000). In a meta-analysis of 85 years of selection research covering 19 selection procedures, Schmidt and Hunter (1998) found that at least 17 different selection procedures provide unique incremental validity in predicting employee performance. Given the potential for high performers to disproportionately impact long-term organizational success (Aguinis & O'Boyle, 2014), it becomes clear why organizations have gone to great lengths to eliminate low potential candidates and narrow the pool of candidates to only those most likely to succeed. In light of research supporting the unique incremental validity of many different forms of selection procedures (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998), organizations might even be motivated to subject applicants to comprehensive batteries of these procedures to eliminate as many low potential candidates as possible. Yet, researchers have noted that organizations (and job applicants) often face limited resources and cannot feasibly administer (and participate in) all of these selection procedures (Terpstra & Rozell, 1997). Adding to this difficulty are the adverse attitudes toward pre-employment testing that job applicants might have, with some estimates suggesting that more than a third of Americans have an unfavorable opinion toward such testing (Schmit & Ryan, 1997) and statistics showing that methods such as graphology, honesty tests, personal contacts,

biodata, and personality tests have a mean of less than three on five-point scales assessing favorability (Hausknecht et al., 2004).

Compounding this complexity are historical changes in the employment landscape that have brought to light additional issues for organizations, forcing managers to consider not only issues of employee selection but also employee attraction as well. Whereas earlier research regarding employee selection occurred in a generally loose labor market (due to a growing number of first-time workers and increased female labor force participation), later research occurred in the context of predicted widespread labor shortages and thus attempted to address concerns surrounding the attraction of the dwindling number of potential job candidates (e.g., Rynes & Barber, 1990). Indeed, this “war for talent” is still ongoing today and continued robust research streams seek to examine the process through which job applicants become attracted to organizations (for a recent meta-analysis see, Uggerslev et al., 2012).

Compared to employee selection, which seeks to narrow the field of potential candidates and eliminate some candidates from consideration, employee attraction emphasizes enlarging a potential pool of candidates to get as many individuals as possible to: like the organization and job, pursue the job opening, accept the job offer, etc. (Chapman et al., 2005; Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). Thus, at first glance, employee attraction and selection concerns seem to be forcing organizations to choose between two distinct, and conflicting, goals.

2.1.3 Potentially conflicting goals between organizations and job applicants

Adding to the complexity stemming from the potentially conflicting goals *within* job applicants and organizations are the frequently conflicting goals *between* job

applicants and organizations. Some scholars have recently noted that organizations and individuals in personnel selection situations often behave in an antagonistic fashion that is characteristic of opponents in game theory and competitors in evolutionary biology (Bangerter et al., 2012). Within this paradigm, applicants are naturally motivated to deceive organizations by inflating their qualifications and fit through actions such as buying a fake degree (Bear & Ezell, 2005), padding their resume (Kidwell, 2004), or simply lying (Weiss & Feldman, 2006). In response, organizations often take counter-measures such as conducting reference and background checks (Levashina & Campion, 2009) as well as integrity tests (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Schmidt, 1993). Similarly, organizations might be tempted to gain an upper-hand over job applicants by engaging in potentially privacy-breaching behaviors such as social media screening (Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, & Thatcher, in press), to which job applicants might react by engaging in online impression management (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011). Altogether this line of thinking positions organizations and job applicants as two parties in a game of one-upmanship with inherently conflicting objectives driving both initial behaviors and reactions.

2.2 Utilizing Social Exchange to Navigate the Potentially Conflicting Goals Within and Between Organizations and Job Applicants

When considering the multitude of goals both within and between organizations, it begins to seem impossible for individuals to become employees in organizations at all. This feels especially challenging given the long-term stakes and consequences stemming from the staffing process. However, I suggest that upon closer examination, the goals both within and between organizations and job applicants are not necessarily at odds with

each other and, in fact, can be reconciled. To accomplish this I draw upon social exchange theory to provide insight into how organizations can balance the need to simultaneously fulfill applicant attraction and selection responsibilities all while meeting the multiple goals of job applicants.

2.2.1 Social exchange theory

Social exchanges are perhaps best understood via comparisons with economic exchanges. On the one hand, economic exchanges represent a short-term, strictly-enumerated, and specified exchange where organizations offer some explicit inducement for an individual's contribution (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Hite, 1995). In contrast, social exchanges are diffuse, long-term, and open-ended exchanges of benefits that occur between two parties (Blau, 1964) and are guided by norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). In social exchanges, the provision of a benefit by party A to party B results in the non-explicit obligation for party B to provide a commensurate benefit back to party A (Blau, 1964). This reciprocity then cycles back and forth overtime resulting in the mutual long-term exchange of benefits between parties (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Compared to economic exchanges, which some scholars have likened to spot contracts, social exchanges have been conceptualized as mutual investments between individuals and organizations wherein both parties behave in ways that eventually benefit everyone, even at short term detriments to the self (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). For example, Tsui and colleagues (1997: 1092-1093) note that in social exchanges employees are likely willing to decrease their marketability in the labor force by learning "firm-specific skills that are not readily transferable to other employers because he or she trusts such investments will be reciprocated over the long term." Likewise, healthy social

exchange relationships can shift an organization's strategic emphasis from a strict focus on current levels of job performance to an extended consideration of employee well-being and life satisfaction. For job applicants and hiring organizations who are mutually dependent on each other for scarce resources and limited in formal employment contracts under an at-will employment legal tradition (Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989), social exchange provides a conceptual framework where job applicants and hiring organizations can come to voluntarily cooperate to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. While some hiring cycles may only last a few weeks, the multiple stages of recruitment (Barber, 1998) and selection (Gilliland & Hale, 2005) within all hiring cycles provide an ample opportunity for the multiple cycles of benefit provision and reciprocation that are a hallmark of social exchanges. More importantly, the possibility of a career with the hiring organization, regardless of recruiting cycle length, provides the potential long-term focus that is characteristic of social exchange. In sum, social exchange theory describes how different parties develop healthy exchange relationships that potentially work in the interest of both parties by meeting their respective needs and desires over time through the reciprocation of benefits. As a result, a social exchange perspective on recruiting and selection might provide insight into the conditions and processes through which the potentially conflicting goals of job applicants and organizations might be reconciled.

A social exchange perspective on the relationship between job applicants and organizations offers several unique contributions and strengths. First, social exchange theory provides a complementary lens to “the theory most often used to explain recruitment phenomena—signaling theory” (Walker et al., 2012: 1326). Signaling theory suggests that job applicants attempt to scan the actions of an organization to ascertain the

characteristics and intentions of the organization in order to come to an understanding of how an individual might be treated by an organization once they are employees (Turban, 2001; Walker et al., 2012). Social exchange theory supplements signaling theory by recognizing that the relationship between an organization and individual does not come into existence only once the individual becomes an employee of the organization, but is actually established as early as the first instance of contact between the two parties. Instead of being passive information absorbers that base job acceptance and attraction decisions on organizational characteristics and intentions, social exchange theory positions job candidates as active exchange partners that react to and reciprocate benefits given to them by organizations not only once they are employees but while they are still searching and applying for jobs.

The depth of social exchange theory serves as a complement to broad theories of staffing (e.g., signaling theory), which have the ability to explain relationships between a large number of variables in a parsimonious manner (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005), by allowing for more specific predictions regarding the nature of applicant reactions to organizational actions. Of particular relevance is the resource theory of social exchange (U. G. Foa & Foa, 1974, 1980). In line with aforementioned distinctions between social and economic exchanges, Foa and Foa (1974, 1980) explicitly recognized that social exchanges need not only involve the exchange of monetary resources with strict economic value but also the exchange of resources with more symbolic, rather than material, value. In total, Foa and Foa (1974, 1980) identified six types of resources that could be exchanged: money, goods, service, love, status, and information. Money refers to any currency that has a standard unit of value; goods refer to tangible products;

services refer to labor and tasks accomplished by one party; love is the expression of warmth, affection, and comfort; status is a judgment of esteem and regard; and information includes opinions, enlightenment, and advice. In contrast to other resources (e.g., money, goods, service, and love), information is conceptualized as a more symbolic resource (i.e., one that is less concrete in benefit), which tends to be exchanged through verbal and paralinguistic behavior. Compared to services, goods, and money (which are likely not exchanged until a formal employer-employee relationship has been established), information is a highly salient resource for both job applicants and hiring organizations during the recruiting process and thus the nature of the information exchange between these two parties likely affects social exchange relationship quality.

Another major tenet of the resource theory of social exchange is the concept of reciprocation in kind (E. B. Foa & Foa, 2012). Reciprocation in kind refers to the tendency for individuals to reciprocate the receipt of one resource with the same resource. Compared to broader theories, the elucidation of the notion of in-kind exchanges allows for more precise prediction regarding the nature and form of reciprocation that organizations will likely receive when they offer information-related benefits to job applicants. For example, when a job applicant receives information-based benefits from the hiring organization, the resource theory of social exchange predicts that the job applicant will not only reciprocate with some benefit in return but that the form of this reciprocal benefit will usually be information-based (i.e., information itself or related to information).

Finally, social exchange theory recognizes that most relationships involve not only benefits but costs as well. Costs are any type of activity that has negative value to a

party (Homans, 1961), be it negative elements imposed on the focal party by the other party, as in the case of punishments (Donnenwerth & Foa, 1974), or social resources that must be given up in order to supply a benefit to the other party (Blau, 1964), such as opportunity costs. The viability of social exchange relationships are predicated on both parties perceiving that the expected benefits of engaging in an exchange relationship with the other party is commensurate with the expected costs (Emerson, 1976). This perception is primarily conceptualized as the ratio of benefits to costs associated with a particular exchange partner (Adams, 1965). To the extent that each party's ratio of benefits to costs is greater than one they will view the other party as a "good" social exchange partner and continue to engage in a social exchange relationship. If the reverse case is true and the costs of a relationship are expected to continually exceed the benefits, then there will likely be some form of corrective action, such as a decrease in the benefits reciprocated, retaliation or punishment against the other party, or simply the extinguishment of the social exchange relationship (Molm, 1994).

2.2.2 Felt obligation as a social exchange-based job applicant goal

In a general sense, a job applicant likely wants to work for an organization with which they will have a healthy exchange of resources. While the applicant attraction literature, which based on meta-analyses, finds that job applicants are generally attracted to (i.e., desire) certain organizational characteristics such as prestige and the availability of flextime and work-life balance (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012), social exchange theory suggests that more relationship-oriented concerns might be just as salient to job seekers. In particular, I posit that applicants appreciate working for an organization they have a felt obligation toward. Although it is somewhat counter-intuitive

to suggest that individuals appreciate being obligated toward another party, a closer look at the definition of felt obligation suggests that felt obligation is the basis of a positive exchange relationship between parties. In particular, felt obligation captures “the belief regarding whether one should care about the organization’s well-being and should help the organization reach its goals (Eisenberger et al., 2001: 42).” Because of this, some scholars have noted that felt obligation, due to the norm of reciprocity, serves as a “starting mechanism” for healthy social exchange relationships (Aselage & Eisenberger, 2003: 492). In this way, job applicants might evaluate organizations with which they have a felt obligation toward more favorably because caring about the organization’s well-being and goals serves to increase the “win-win” mentality conducive to social exchange relationships and likely indicates the potentially positive future exchange relationship that a job applicant might have with an organization. In this way, felt obligation toward an organization is a relationship-oriented construct that captures applicants’ desire to have a relationship with an organization that is characterized by reciprocity (Blau, 1964).

2.2.3 Hiring likelihood as a social exchange-based job applicant goal

As stated throughout this paper, a primary goal of job applicants is to get a job offer and secure employment. In fact, a logical extension of the social exchange literature to recruiting and selection would suggest that the perception that one has the chance of receiving a job offer is actually an implicit requirement for the development of social exchanges; without some level of hiring likelihood perceptions, job applicants will not believe that a longer-term relationship with the firm (e.g., being an employee) is possible which would reduce the likelihood of future reciprocal benefits from the organization. In

turn, the job applicant will not behave with a long-term mindset and instead engage in spot transactions that maximize short-term benefits as well as hold other attitudes, such as low commitment (van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006), that are more typical of economic exchanges (Tsui et al., 1997). This dissertation supplements current conceptualizations of hiring likelihood estimates with a social exchange perspective to suggest that hiring likelihood perceptions themselves are made according to the dynamics of benefits and costs as outlined in social exchange theory. Altogether, hiring likelihood perceptions are an important indicator of social exchange relationship potential that represents the likelihood of achieving one of the primary goals of job applicants – securing employment.

There are reasons to believe that appraisals of hiring likelihood follow the basic dynamics of benefit and cost analysis that are an integral part of social exchange theory. Scholars have previously stated that “because job seekers are frequently uncertain about their marketability, they have been hypothesized to grasp at any available information that might help them estimate their chances of receiving offers” (Rynes, 1989: 134). In line with this assertion, researchers have found that job applicants often consider both the positive experiences provided by organizations during the recruiting process, such as interacting with a friendly (Chapman & Webster, 2006) and personable (Harris & Fink, 1987) recruiter with positive affect (Rynes & Miller, 1983), as well as the negative experiences, such as an intimidating recruiter (Turban & Dougherty, 1992), when estimating their perceived hiring likelihood. I suggest that these perceptions of positive and negative experiences can be conceptualized as the provision of benefits and the imposition of relational costs by organizations, respectively. In this way, hiring likelihood

perceptions operate as an assessment of social exchange relationship quality and viability from the job applicant's perspective. By comparing the relative balance of positive benefits provided by the organization to the negative costs, job applicants can assess the current social exchange relationship with a potential employer; an employer that provides more benefits than costs creates a high quality exchange relationship that can be expected to last long into the future.

2.2.4 Recruitment and selection as information exchange

Information represents a particularly valuable resource for both hiring organizations and job applicants within the context of employee recruitment and selection. Models of the recruitment process position information exchange as the first step in recruiting (Breaugh, 1992; Breaugh & Starke, 2000), suggesting that social exchange dynamics are relevant throughout the entire recruiting process. For most job applicants, this first step is represented by the job posting where organizations disclose information about the nature of the organization (e.g., mission statement), describe the job, and set relevant deadlines. However, any exchange of advice, opinions, instruction, or enlightenment (U. G. Foa & Foa, 1974, 1980), whether disclosed or sought out by the organization, can be considered a social exchange that is relevant to the relationship between job applicants and hiring organizations.

The conceptualization of recruiting and selection activities as information-based phenomena is a theme throughout much of their respective literatures. For example, scholars have acknowledged that “the selection process is a two-way interaction where applicants and organizations gather information about one another and react to this information while making employment decisions” (Bauer, Maertz, Dolen, & Campion,

1998: 892). Furthermore, scholars have noted that “during the interview, a myriad of pieces of applicant information are received, interpreted, and evaluated by the interviewer in an attempt to “score” the applicant and ultimately make an accept-or-reject decision” (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009: 1395). Finally, job search itself has been defined as “the process of gathering information about potential jobs” (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994: 739). In accordance with social exchange theory, information represents a valued resource with symbolic but no less important implications and, as a result, the robust reciprocal exchange of information between job applicants and hiring organizations should lead to high quality relationships.

However, selection and recruitment activities are also high-stakes, somewhat contrived, social exchanges between strangers which tend to elicit impression management and self-presentation concerns in both job applicants (Barrick et al., 2009) and organizations (Avery & McKay, 2006). While perhaps harming the social exchange quality between the job applicant and the organization, meta-analytical evidence suggests that individuals are often quite justified in their desire to engage in impression management since organizations often times place too much emphasis on irrelevant criteria when they evaluate job applicants (Barrick et al., 2009). Given these pressures, job applicants and recruiters could be tempted to withhold or manipulate information, which creates a situation that might ultimately leave these two parties thinking, “What I saw is not what I got.”

2.3 Model Summary

With the war for talent raging on and the increased importance of attracting high quality candidates for competitive advantages (Coff & Kryscynski, 2011), it is incumbent

on organizations to resolve the above dilemmas. This is especially true since organizations, compared to job applicants, likely have more direct discretion to affect the nature and structure of the recruiting and selection processes. For these reasons, the theoretical model in Figure 1 begins with organizations' information-related actions and focuses on the way organizations might resolve the above tensions by simultaneously balancing attractive selection activities (i.e., positive diagnostic information seeking) with necessary, but perhaps off-putting, selection activities (i.e., negative diagnostic information seeking) to develop healthy social exchange relationships with job applicants. The most proximal result of these activities will be the fulfillment of the two aforementioned social exchange-based goals, hiring likelihood perceptions and felt obligation. The former likely acts as an important contingency factor in the development of social exchange relationships while the latter should drive reciprocation in the form of information-based benefits, such as: the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines and the minimization of these deadlines, more positive word of mouth, less negative word of mouth, and less applicant faking.

At this point, it is important to make explicit some of the implicit assumptions and logic underlying the theoretical model. Due to the fact that social exchange theory addresses the exchange of resources with symbolic (and often times objectively incalculable) value, the social exchange literature does suggest that it is the subjective perception and weighing of the other party's behavior and provided benefits, and not necessarily the actual behavior and benefits, that most accurately predict the nature and extent of reciprocation—for it is only in the eye of the beholder that value and benefit from a symbolic resource can adequately be judged (Emerson, 1976). As evidence of this

theoretical perspective, the most popular scale utilized in social exchange (Colquitt, Baer, Long, & Halvorsen-Ganepola, 2014), perceived organizational support, asks employees their perceptions of whether organizations seem to help them, care about their well-being, value their contributions, and consider their goals and values (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Applied to the present study, the social exchange literature's overall emphasis on perceptions means that it is likely the case that perceptions of organizations' information-related actions are just as important as organizations' actual behavior in predicting job applicants' reciprocal behavior. At the same time, it is likely that the actual information-related behaviors that organizations engage in during the recruiting process are the most proximal predictors of the perceptions that job applicants are likely to form regarding these behaviors. Therefore, I expect the model and hypotheses outlined below to apply to both perceptions of organizations' information-related behavior as well as organizations' actual information-related behavior. For the sake of parsimony, the theory and hypothesis development below is couched from the perspective of actual organizational behaviors. While it is out of the scope of this paper to examine the ways or conditions in which job applicant's perceptions might be "wrong" and diverge from the actual behavior of organizations, I will nonetheless test the theoretical model based on both perceptions of behaviors (through a field study) and actual behaviors (as manipulations in an experimental design). By examining actual behaviors, the results will hopefully be more relevant to organizations by providing practical and actionable ways for organizations to develop healthy social exchange relationships with job applicants. Altogether, this paper

theoretically and empirically examines both the perceptions associated with and behaviors of organizations' during information-related exchanges.

CHAPTER 3

MODEL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The Role of Organizations' Information Seeking in Meeting Organizational Goals

Of the 19 most popular selection methods identified by Schmidt and Hunter (1998) in their meta-analysis (e.g., GMA tests, interviews, job knowledge tests, peer ratings, etc.), almost all rely on some type of information about the job candidate. Moreover, a study by Macan & Dipboye (1990) found that interviewers spent 36% of the interview time gathering information from the job applicant. These facts should come as no surprise given that the selection of one job candidate over another should ideally be based on some information that differentiates and identifies a candidate as being superior, or inferior, to the rest of the pool of job candidates. This idea is best captured by the concept of diagnosticity, which is defined as “the extent to which a given piece of information discriminates between alternative hypotheses, interpretations, or categorizations” (Herr et al., 1991: 457). While the ultimate categorization task for hiring organizations is whether or not a job applicant should be given a job offer, organizations make numerous smaller categorization decisions through the multiple stages of the selection process (Gilliland & Hale, 2005). To accomplish this, organizations often times seek out diagnostic information about a job applicant through various selection methods (e.g., biodata, interview questioning, letters of recommendation, etc.). Drawing from extant research (Sackett, 1982), I suggest that the diagnosticity of information can stem from its revelation of positive or negative aspects of a job applicant. For example,

organizations might seek information regarding the awards or honors that an applicant has earned. The diagnosticity of this information lies in its ability to identify those with more awards (i.e., more positive information) and those with less awards (i.e., less positive information). On the other hand, organizations also conduct criminal background checks. In this case, the diagnosticity of this information lies in its ability to identify those with more extensive criminal histories (i.e., more negative information) and those with less extensive criminal histories (i.e., less negative information). I argue that distinguishing between: (1) organizational actions that are aimed at gathering information that discriminates between candidates that should get a job offer and those that should not get a job offer based on positive aspects of a job applicant (what I refer to as positive diagnostic information seeking) versus (2) organizational actions that are aimed at gathering information that discriminates between candidates that should get a job offer and those that should not get a job offer based on negative aspects of a job applicant (i.e., negative diagnostic information seeking) is important because job candidates are likely to react differently to these two information seeking strategies. Based on social exchange theory, it is probable that job applicants see positive diagnostic information seeking as a social exchange benefit while negative diagnostic information seeking is likely seen by job applicants as a social exchange cost.

Positive diagnostic information seeking captures those selection behaviors that are intended to produce information that is useful to organizational decision making because it differentiates candidates based on positive job applicant information (Sackett, 1982). A related meta-construct is the idea of “selecting in” job candidates (e.g., Bartram, 2000), where a selection tool focuses on finding information that distinguishes a particularly

good candidate from amongst the applicant pool. Given the focus on positive information, these organizational behaviors are opportunities for candidates to present favorable images of themselves to organizations (Barrick et al., 2009; Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke, 2002) and, as organizations collect more of this favorable information, the job applicant begins to look more well-suited to be a future employee. In this way, positive diagnostic information seeking can fulfill one of the core goals of organizations during the hiring process (i.e., applicant attraction), as meta-analyses have shown that giving job applicants the opportunity to perform and show their competency is positively related to applicant attraction (Chapman et al., 2005). At the same time, these behaviors also help address organizations' selection concerns by identifying promising employees which is a primary goal of organizations during the staffing process.

On the other hand, negative diagnostic information seeking represents organizational selection behaviors that are intended to produce information that is useful to organizational decision making because it differentiates candidates based on negative information about the job applicants (Sackett, 1982). In contrast to positive diagnostic information seeking, negative diagnostic information seeking behaviors can be described as "selecting out" job applicants (e.g., Bartram, 2000) and are designed to identify and remove particularly poor candidates from the job applicant pool. Well-established selection practices, such as drug testing (Normand, Salyards, & Mahoney, 1990) and integrity assessments (J. W. Jones, 1991), and newer methods such as the examination of social media profiles (Roth et al., in press) are mostly used to gather negative information about a candidate to assess and screen out applicants with abnormalities and flaws rather

than ascertain applicant strengths. Within the interview context, Sackett (1982) has found that certain questions, such as “tell me about any conflicts you have had with co-workers on any of your previous jobs” and “what would others see as your weaknesses,” are perceived by observers as intending to seek out potentially negative information about a job candidate. Indeed, interviews can often be seen as having a selection focus which is characterized, in part, by questions that are more likely to lead to candidate disqualification (Rynes, 1989). In this way, negative diagnostic information seeking behaviors likely work in the opposite direction of positive diagnostic information seeking behaviors by selecting worse candidates for removal from further consideration.

While positive or negative information about an individual need not be diagnostic, diagnostic information should have an associated positive or negative valence as completely neutral information would not have any implications for hiring decisions. At the same time, it is important to note that positive and negative diagnostic information seeking behavior captures organizations’ intentions and not the actual information that is generated as this information depends, in part, on applicants’ responses (Morrison, 1993). For example, applicants may avoid a question or change the subject in response to either positive or negative diagnostic information seeking. In line with social exchange theory, the important aspect of information seeking behaviors are the symbolic implications of seeking positive or negative diagnostic information. In particular, I posit that positive and negative diagnostic information seeking by organizations during the hiring process are likely a form of social exchange benefit and cost, respectively. While Foa and Foa’s (2012; 1974, 1980) resource theory of social exchange outlines advice, opinions, or enlightenment as prototypical examples of information resources, the consideration of

Homans' (1961: 13) broad definition of social exchange “as an exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, and more or less rewarding or costly, between at least two persons” suggests that information-related activities, such as information seeking behaviors, can be conceptualized as a form of information reward (or cost) within social exchange relationships. In line with Homans' (1961) definition, I outline below how positive diagnostic information seeking behaviors by organizations likely act as an information resource offered by organizations because they represent an intangible activity that is rewarding to job applicants while negative diagnostic information seeking behaviors by organizations are likely an intangible activity that is costly to job applicants.

3.2 The Role of Organizations' Information Seeking in Meeting Job Applicant Goals

For the job applicant, positive diagnostic information seeking is beneficial because it allows the job applicant the chance to distinguish themselves as a superior candidate and is an important component of being seriously considered by an organization. While technically possible, one would be hard pressed to find an employee who received his/her job by merely providing less negative information than other candidates to their employer during the selection process. From this perspective, an organization's positive diagnostic information seeking behaviors are likely to be viewed as opportunities to perform, which are defined as the extent to which selection procedures allow a job applicant the chance to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities (Gilliland, 1993). Based on this, I argue that positive diagnostic information seeking likely impacts the conclusions applicants draw about their obligation toward the organization and their perceived chances of receiving a job offer with the organization.

Scholars have noted that opportunity to perform is the selection-context analogy of the organizational justice concept of voice (Gilliland, 1993), which captures the extent to which employees are given the opportunity to express themselves prior to a decision (Greenberg & Folger, 1983). Like voice (van den Bos, Lind, Vermunt, & Wilke, 1997), extant work supports the notion that these opportunities to perform are highly valuable to job candidates, above and beyond whether applicants ultimately do or do not get the job (Schleicher, Venkataramani, Morgeson, & Campion, 2006). In this way, positive diagnostic information seeking behaviors are, in part, symbolic resources that are valued because they represent the conveyance of benefits such as status and respect (Tyler, 1989; Tyler & Blader, 2003) which can be important for the development of social exchange relationships (E. B. Foa & Foa, 2012; U. G. Foa & Foa, 1974, 1980). As with voice, it is also possible that job applicants hold the belief that sufficient opportunities to present positive information about themselves to organizations is even a moral imperative and something organizations just ought to do (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). Organizational adherence to this moral mandate can lead job applicants to develop the trust that is crucial to social exchange relationships (Blau, 1964; Lind, 2001).

In general, job applicant felt obligation is based on the provision of benefits and resources to the focal party by the other party (Eisenberger et al., 2001). All else equal, the provision of benefits by the organization to job applicants should result in an increase in felt obligation toward the organization. This dynamic is in line with the original elucidation of social exchange theory that is based in large part on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) which suggests that social benefits (or costs) provided by party A

increases (or decreases) a sense of obligation in party B to return resources back to party A (Eisenberg et al., 2001).

Hypothesis 1: Positive diagnostic information seeking is positively related to job applicants' felt obligation toward the organization.

Besides the symbolic benefit of being allowed to present their knowledge, skills, and abilities, positive diagnostic information seeking likely simultaneously carries instrumental importance to job candidates by increasing their chances of being given a job. In particular, an organization's positive diagnostic information seeking gives job candidates the chance to directly differentiate themselves from the rest of the pack via positive information about themselves; in fact, some scholars have even suggested that these opportunities are a requirement for performing well on a task (Ford, Quiñones, Segó, & Sorra, 1992). In this way, positive diagnostic information seeking by organizations likely serves an instrumental purpose in shaping applicant success and, consequently, hiring likelihood perceptions during the selection process. By way of logical deduction, it is likely that positive diagnostic information seeking can also be considered a benefit or resource offered in a social exchange relationship. To the extent that organizations provide this benefit, job applicants likely perceive that organizations are more invested in the relationship and thus job applicants should view a longer-term relationship with the organization as more likely because it allows the opportunity for organizations to benefit from future applicant reciprocation (Blau, 1964).

Beyond this, positive diagnostic information seeking likely provides the additional benefit of allowing candidates to fulfill their need for self-enhancement, or the need to view oneself favorably (Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Pratt, 1998; Sedikides &

Strube, 1997), during an important transition period between roles (Ashforth, 2001). In addition to initiating a healthy social exchange relationship, self-enhancement has also been shown to increase subsequent self-esteem (E. E. Jones, Rhodewalt, Berglas, & Skelton, 1981) which is directly relevant to an individual's hiring likelihood perceptions (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Vroom, 1964). As a result, when organizations give job applicants more opportunities to provide favorable information about themselves via positive diagnostic information seeking, job applicants should hold higher levels of hiring likelihood perceptions.

Hypothesis 2: Positive diagnostic information seeking by the hiring organization is positively related to job applicants' perceptions of hiring likelihood.

In contrast, negative diagnostic information seeking is likely to be seen as a cost within a social exchange relationship and, as a result, should decrease job applicants' felt obligation toward the organization. In a broad sense, job applicants likely react to negative diagnostic information seeking in a generally adverse way (Rosse, Miller, & Stecher, 1994). This could be due, in part, to the fact that negative diagnostic information seeking likely provokes privacy concerns, which some scholars have defined as the ability, or lack thereof, for individuals to manage or control information about themselves and the subsequent impressions that others form of them (Stone & Stone, 1990). This is an especially salient issue for job applicants given the fact that they are constantly trying to manage the impressions that organizations have of them during the recruiting and selection process (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). To make matters worse, this is made even more difficult by negative diagnostic information seeking since it is most useful to organizations for selecting-out candidates when there is something worse than average

that is revealed about the candidate. For example, negative diagnostic information seeking might result in the revelation of socially undesirable behaviors such as dishonesty (J. W. Jones, 1991) or a poor credit score (Bernerth, Taylor, Walker, & Whitman, 2012; Kuhn & Nielsen, 2008). An empirical study by Stone-Romero, Stone, and Hyatt (2003) seems to support this link by showing a positive correlation between the invasiveness of a selection method and the potential for a selection method to reveal negative information about a candidate. From a social exchange perspective, it seems that negative diagnostic information seeking is likely to be considered an information-based cost associated with interacting and having a relationship with an organization that engages in this type of selection behavior. As a result, job applicants should feel lower levels of obligation toward the hiring organization.

Hypothesis 3: Negative diagnostic information seeking by the hiring organization is negatively related to job applicants' felt obligation toward the organization.

Similarly, the seeking of negative information might “turn off” job applicants (Schmit & Ryan, 1997) and cause them to believe that the organization would not be interested in a long-term social exchange relationship with them (i.e., decreasing estimates of the likelihood of a job offer). To be more precise, the seeking out of negative information about a job candidate likely elicits feelings of threat concerning one’s competency (Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989), which is associated with stress and anxiety (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981). Due to these unpleasant situations, negative information seeking places a relational cost on job applicants (and not organizations) which can be interpreted by the job applicant to mean that the organization can sever their relationship at any time without losing anything. Social exchange theory also

suggests that it is the exchange of benefits, and not the imposition of relational costs, that initiates healthy social exchange relationships (Blau, 1964). Therefore, the levying of these relational costs, all else equal, suggests to the job applicant that the organization is not really interested in a longer term exchange of resources (Blau, 1964). Furthermore, threat decreases the probability of agreement in negotiations (Hornstein, 1965) which may cause the job applicant to believe that a continuing healthy social exchange relationship is not possible as negotiations can be an important and necessary step during recruiting and selection (e.g., salary negotiations; Gerhart & Rynes, 1991). Finally, the recollection of negative information about themselves is likely to affect candidates' perceptions of success given that past failures have been predictive of individuals' future expectation of failure (Feather, 1966).

Hypothesis 4: Negative diagnostic information seeking by the hiring organization is negatively related to job applicants' perceptions of hiring likelihood.

Recall that social exchanges are characterized by a long-term exchange of resources over time (Tsui et al., 1995). Thus, a condition for the development of social exchanges is the possibility that a relationship can extend into the future. For job applicants, this is best represented by perceptions of hiring likelihood which likely act as an important contingency factor in predicting their felt obligation toward the organization. In this way, social exchange benefits and costs (i.e., positive and negative diagnostic information seeking) are less likely to have an impact on job applicant's felt obligation to reciprocate when applicants perceive a low probability of being hired by the organization. Under conditions of low hiring likelihood, job applicants are likely to construe their interactions with hiring organizations as economic, rather than social,

exchanges, and thus are less likely to develop any feelings of obligation toward the organization in response to social exchange benefits and costs, such as positive and negative diagnostic information seeking.

Hypothesis 5a: Job applicants' perceptions of hiring likelihood moderate the positive relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation toward the organization; such that, greater hiring likelihood weakens the positive relationship.

Hypothesis 5b: Job applicants' perceptions of hiring likelihood moderate the negative relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation toward the organization; such that, greater hiring likelihood weakens the negative relationship.

3.3 Applicant Reciprocation Outcomes

As mentioned, the basic premise of social exchange theory is that the receipt of benefits by the focal party from another party leads the focal party to reciprocate a benefit back to the other party (Blau, 1964). Therefore, any paper would be amiss if these reciprocating benefits were not examined. However, benefits can be defined quite broadly (e.g., Homans, 1961) and so the possibility exists that job applicants can exchange an innumerable variety of resources as reciprocation. To this end, the resource theory of social exchange (E. B. Foa & Foa, 2012; U. G. Foa & Foa, 1974, 1980) provides needed specificity by suggesting that information benefits will be reciprocated with information benefits. More precisely, I predict that higher levels of felt obligation will result in: the establishment and minimization of self-imposed decision deadlines, more positive word of mouth, less negative word of mouth, and less applicant faking.

3.3.1 Self-imposed decision deadlines

For organizations with the goal of attracting and selecting the best candidates, time is often of the essence. One need only consider the popularity of exploding offers (e.g., Robinson, 1995) to see that timely information regarding an applicant's intentions serves a vital purpose in managing the logistics and costs associated with recruiting (Sterling, 2014) and is thus a valuable resource for organizations participating in the labor market (Niederle & Roth, 2009). However, after receipt of a job offer, applicants might delay their decision-making due to their preoccupation with other job search efforts or because they are awaiting an alternative job offer from another company (W. J. Becker, Connolly, & Slaughter, 2010). Interestingly, interviews conducted by Boswell and colleagues (Boswell, Roehling, LePine, & Moynihan, 2003) found that a large portion (about 30%) of job applicants actually voluntarily self-imposed deadlines for their job offer decision. In contrast to exploding offers, which are organization-imposed deadlines for deciding on a job offer (Robinson, 1995), self-imposed decision deadlines are voluntarily set by job applicants themselves and reflect the extent to which job applicants desire to make a prompt decision on their job offer (Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002; W. J. Becker et al., 2010). While typically studied in the context of self-regulation (e.g., Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002), I suggest that self-imposed decision deadlines represent one way in which job applicants might reciprocate information benefits to hiring organizations.

First, a desire to reciprocate informational benefits back to the organization due to felt obligation likely provides the impetus necessary for the self-regulation associated with the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines (Ariely & Wertenbroch, 2002). As opposed to simply responding whenever convenient, at the last minute, as soon as

possible, or never, self-imposed decision deadlines represent a conscious intention to act, which can be used by job applicants to benefit the organization. Similarly, the social exchange forces described thus far could also drive the applicant to minimize the length of time for the self-imposed decision deadlines that they do make. As opposed to “stringing along” organizations, shorter self-imposed decision deadlines are likely an additional way in which job applicants might provide hiring organizations with useful information regarding what they intend to do with a potential job offer (W. J. Becker et al., 2010). Given folk beliefs regarding the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), even job applicants that eventually do not accept a job offer can potentially set self-imposed decision deadlines as a form of reciprocity. Furthermore, research suggests that individuals appreciate the provision of timely communications regarding decisions (Shapiro, Buttner, & Barry, 1994) which means that job applicants likely recognize the potential benefits to organizations of setting and minimizing the length of time associated with self-imposed decision deadlines. Together with the resource theory of social exchange (E. B. Foa & Foa, 2012; U. G. Foa & Foa, 1974, 1980), job applicants’ felt obligation toward the organization should result in job applicants being more likely to: (1) set self-imposed decision deadlines and (2) set shorter self-imposed decision deadlines.

Hypothesis 6a: Job applicants’ felt obligation toward the organization is positively related to the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines.

Hypothesis 6b: Job applicants’ felt obligation toward the organization is negatively related to the length of self-imposed decision deadlines.

3.3.2 Word of mouth

While benefits reciprocated by job applicants can be provided directly to the hiring organization, social exchange theory takes a rather broad definition of benefits with Homans (1961: 13) defining it as any “activity, tangible or intangible, that is more or less rewarding...” and Blau (1984) describing benefits as rewarding services or gifts. From this perspective, the defining feature of reciprocating benefits is that they provide some type of reward to the social exchange partner. Based on this, reciprocation by job applicants to hiring organizations need not necessarily involve the hiring organization at all but merely, in some manner, involve benefit to the organization. One possible way this might occur in the present context is the phenomenon of word of mouth (e.g., Van Hove & Lievens, 2007), which is defined as an “interpersonal communication, independent of the organization’s marketing activities, about an organization or its products” (Van Hove & Lievens, 2009: 342). It is important to note that word of mouth is company independent information about the organization and, while not typically thought of as a social exchange benefit, is an important activity that does have the potential to have a large impact on the success or failure of recruiting efforts primarily because it is not seen as being driven by self-interest (Van Hove & Lievens, 2009). In terms of potential reciprocation, job applicants can spread either positive or negative word of mouth, which are two theoretically (Harrison-Walker, 2001) and empirically distinct (De Matos & Rossi, 2008) constructs. In relation to the organization, maximizing positive word of mouth while minimize negative word of mouth likely represent increased social exchange benefits and decreased social exchange costs, respectively.

Interestingly, word of mouth represents a unique means by which job applicants might reciprocate benefits back to the hiring organization in the sense that word of mouth

does not disadvantage applicants in the recruiting and selection process. In reaction to higher levels of felt obligation, applicants can provide recommendations to friends or acquaintances without sacrificing any strategic advantage such as time to respond to a job offer (i.e., self-imposed decision deadlines) or the possibility of faking. Similarly, negative word of mouth is also a potential reaction to low levels of felt obligation and a means by which applicants may harm an organization while minimizing their chances of being caught or punished. Altogether, word of mouth represents a particularly viable means through which applicants might reciprocate benefits (or costs) back to a hiring organization.

Hypothesis 7a: Job applicants' felt obligation toward the organization is positively related to positive word of mouth.

Hypothesis 7b: Job applicants' felt obligation toward the organization is negatively related to negative word of mouth.

3.3.3 Faking

One large concern for organizations as they navigate the selection process is applicant faking. In contrast to impression management, which may not necessarily be deceptive, faking is defined as the conscious distortion of information in an attempt to obtain a better score on selection instruments and/or otherwise create favorable perceptions (Levashina & Campion, 2007). This represents a potential area of conflicting goals between job applicants and hiring organizations. On one hand, applicants may desire to distort information to gain an advantage in the selection process or simply be viewed in a socially desirable way (Levashina & Campion, 2007). On the other hand, the efficacy of organizational selection tools such as: biodata (T. E. Becker & Colquitt,

1992), personality measures (Birkeland, Manson, Kisamore, Brannick, & Smith, 2006), and interviews (Levashina & Campion, 2007), depend on accurate information provided by applicants. Based on this, decreased amounts of faking represent one valuable information resource that job applicants can potentially reciprocate to organizations as a result of a positive social exchange relationship. It is important to note that faking is a conscious process that involves intentional moral violations (Marcus, 2009) and as a result, applicants likely have the ability to control the levels of faking with respect to some organizations versus other organizations. Furthermore, faking behavior requires sufficient motivation on the part of the job applicant (Snell, Sydell, & Lueke, 1999) which I argue is predominantly captured by the levels of felt obligation a job applicant has toward the organization. Given that felt obligation is centered on a job applicant's level of care toward the organization's goals (Eisenberger et al., 2001), the conscious distortion of information in selection scenarios (i.e., faking), which necessarily undermines the organization's goal of effective selection, is incompatible with a felt obligation toward the organization. Thus,

Hypothesis 8: Job applicants' felt obligation toward the organization is negatively related to applicant faking.

3.4 Moderated Mediation

Overall, the social exchange-based model outlined in Figure 1 suggests that organizations' information-based actions can indirectly affect benefits and costs returned to the organization from the applicant through the social exchange mechanism of felt obligation. At the same time, the development of a social exchange relationship, and thus the reciprocation of resources from the job applicant back to the hiring organization, is

contingent on applicants' perceptions of hiring likelihood. In other words, social exchange dynamics and the mechanism of these exchanges (i.e., felt obligation) are suppressed under conditions of low perceived hiring likelihood and organizations' efforts to manage levels of felt obligation by way of different information seeking strategies (i.e., positive and negative diagnostic information seeking) may be less effective under such circumstances. Empirically, this is represented by a first-stage moderated mediation model (Hayes, 2013).

Hypothesis 9a-e: Job applicants' felt obligation toward the organization mediates the relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and (a) the establishment and (b) length of self-imposed decision deadlines, (c) positive word of mouth, (d) negative word of mouth, and (e) job applicant faking.

Hypothesis 10a-e: Job applicants' felt obligation toward the organization mediates the relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and (a) the establishment and (b) length of self-imposed decision deadlines, (c) positive word of mouth, (d) negative word of mouth, and (e) job applicant faking,

Hypothesis 11a-e: The relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking, felt obligation, and (a) the establishment and (b) length of self-imposed decision deadlines, (c) positive word of mouth, (d) negative word of mouth, and (e) job applicant faking, will be conditional on job applicants' perceptions of hiring likelihood.

Hypothesis 12a-e: The relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking, felt obligation, and (a) the establishment and (b) length of self-imposed decision deadlines, (c) positive word of mouth, (d) negative word of mouth, and (e) job applicant faking, will be conditional on job applicants' perceptions of hiring likelihood.

CHAPTER 4

METHODS

4.1 Research Design Overview

The research design utilizes a multimethod approach, composed of an experiment and a field study, that seeks to balance both the strengths and the weaknesses inherent in utilizing a single method (Brewer & Hunter, 1989). From a broad perspective, the use of experimental and field methods balance internal and external validity concerns, with experiments maximizing internal validity and field surveys maximizing external validity (McGrath, 1981). More specifically, the experiment will lend support to the causal interpretations (James, Mulaik, & Brett, 1982) implied by social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) while the field survey will support the generalizability of the results. Both experimental and field survey designs are quantitative methods which are appropriate for investigating well-developed theories and phenomena such as social exchange theory and recruitment (Edmondson & McManus, 2007).

4.2 Study 1: Experiment

4.2.1 Sample and design

Participants were recruited from introductory organizational behavior and human resources classes at a university in the southeastern United States. Participation in the experiment was one option to fulfill a course requirement. Diagnostic information seeking (positive, negative, both positive and negative, and control) was manipulated, resulting in a one factor, between-subjects design. Contrasting the positive (negative) diagnostic information seeking condition with the control condition will serve to test the hypotheses regarding the impact of positive (negative) diagnostic information seeking on

the dependent variables of interest through felt obligation. The addition of a condition with both positive and negative diagnostic information seeking was included for exploratory purposes. While not formally hypothesized, a logical possibility based on the theoretical framework proposed would be that applicants might, through mental calculus, net the effects of positive diagnostic information seeking and negative diagnostic information seeking together in their determination of felt obligation, such that the effects of these differing information seeking strategies might somehow “cancel” each other out in an additive fashion. However, for reasons detailed below, based on the manipulation check results, this additional condition was instead combined with the control condition ultimately resulting in a more conservative test of the hypotheses. The final sample (i.e., after exclusion of the subjects in the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition which is described below) was composed of 162 participants with the following characteristics: 58.02% female; average age of 20.83 (s.d. = 2.50); 67.28% Caucasian, 7.41% Black, 3.09% Hispanic, 14.81% Asian, and 7.41% Other; 50% were employed either part-time, full-time, or self-employed; and on average subjects had 25.03 months of work experience (s.d. = 45.87).

4.2.2 Procedure

Upon entering the lab, subjects were directed to a private computer workstation where they were informed that an organization has requested assistance in evaluating its recruiting practices and their task today is to take the role of an active job seeker and complete the application materials as if they were trying to obtain employment with the organization. Students were told that, in an effort to increase the realism of the study, the organization would evaluate the applications as if they were real and award a \$5 gift card

to those students they chose to give a “job offer” to. Prior studies have similarly provided extra credit or cash as an incentive to increase effort (e.g., Liden, Martin, & Parsons, 1993; Martin & Nagao, 1989; Potosky & Bobko, 1997). In actuality, there was no organization and the application was the means of delivering the manipulations and measuring the variables of interest. Subjects were randomly assigned to one of the following conditions outlined below. The complete experiment procedures are included in Appendix A.

Diagnostic information seeking manipulations. The positive, negative, and positive and negative diagnostic information seeking manipulations, as well as the control, were delivered through a series of open-ended questions that subjects were asked to complete as part of the application. To prevent ordering effects, the order of the items in each manipulation was randomized.

Positive diagnostic information seeking manipulation. Drawing from prior work (Sackett, 1982), subjects in the positive diagnostic information seeking condition received the following questions as part of their application:

1. “Describe a time when your work was praised.”
2. “What is your strongest subject in school?”
3. “What has been your most rewarding extracurricular activity (e.g., job, interest club, athletics, sorority/fraternity)?”
4. “Please describe a time where you helped improve your community.”
5. “What has been your biggest accomplishment to date (academic, personal, or professional)?”
6. “What skill or expertise do you feel you’ve mastered?”
7. “Describe an academic, personal, or professional experience you’ve had that will help you be a good employee.”
8. “What would others see as your personal strengths that might assist you in achieving your academic and professional goals?”

Negative diagnostic information seeking manipulation. Subjects in the negative diagnostic information seeking condition were asked the following questions:

1. "Describe a time when your work was criticized."
2. "What is your weakest subject in school?"
3. "Describe your most severe violation of the academic honor code (e.g., cheated during an exam, copied homework, helped someone cheat during an exam, stolen an exam, etc.)?"
4. "Please describe any convictions you have had for a criminal offense, felony, or misdemeanor."
5. "What has been your biggest failure to date (academic, personal, or professional)?"
6. "What skill or expertise do you feel you're lacking?"
7. "Describe a conflict you have had with co-workers or classmates at any of your previous jobs or classes."
8. "What would others see as your personal weaknesses that might prevent you from achieving your academic and professional goals?"

Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking manipulation. Subjects in the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition were asked the following questions:

1. "What skill or expertise do you feel you've mastered?"
2. "What skill or expertise do you feel you're lacking?"
3. "What has been your biggest accomplishment to date (academic, personal, or professional)?"
4. "What has been your biggest failure to date (academic, personal, or professional)?"
5. "Describe an academic, personal, or professional experience you've had that will help you be a good employee."
6. "Describe a conflict you have had with co-workers or classmates at any of your previous jobs or classes."
7. "What would others see as your personal strengths that might assist you in achieving your academic and professional goals?"
8. "What would others see as your personal weaknesses that might prevent you from achieving your academic and professional goals?"

Control condition. Subjects in the control condition were asked the following:

1. "What is your preferred method of communicating with co-workers (e.g., e-mail, instant message, face-to-face, phone, video chat, or text message)?"
2. "What personality type do you prefer to work with?"
3. "When trying to make progress on an important project, do you usually stay late at work or go in early to work? Why?"
4. "What functional area of an organization (e.g., human resources, marketing, IT, accounting, finance, operations management, etc.) do you think is most important? Why?"
5. "How did you go about choosing a major?"

6. “How do you organize your work day?”
7. “What would you do if you were in a team meeting that was going over its scheduled time and you had another obligation to attend to?”
8. “What is one question you would ask a potential employer before accepting a job?”

4.2.3 Mediator

Felt obligation. Felt obligation was measured utilizing seven likert-type items from the scale developed by Eisenberger and colleagues (2001) with $\alpha = .85$

1. I feel a personal obligation to do whatever I can to help the organization achieve its goals.
2. I owe it to the organization to give my energy to the organization's goals during the recruiting process.
3. I have an obligation to the organization to ensure that I behave in a high-quality way during the recruiting process.
4. I owe it to the organization to do what I can to ensure that the organization is well served and satisfied.
5. I would feel an obligation to help the organization if it needed my help.
6. I would feel guilty if I did not meet the organization's expectations of me.
7. I feel that the only obligation I have to the organization is to fulfill the minimum expectations of a job applicant.

4.2.4 Moderator

Hiring likelihood. Hiring likelihood perceptions were measured utilizing an adaptation of the four item likert-type scale developed by Chapman, Uggerslev, and Webster (2003) with $\alpha = .89$:

1. I am certain I will be offered a job with this organization.
2. I expect to get a job offer as a result of my performance on the application.
3. I will probably not get hired for this job. (R)
4. I feel positive about the outcome of this job application.

4.2.5 Dependent variables

Self-imposed decision deadlines. The establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines was assessed by asking subjects, “If this company gave you a job offer with a deadline for responding, what is the probability that you would respond earlier than the

deadline (0% = no chance; 100% = absolute certainty)?” The length of self-imposed decision deadlines was measured by asking subjects “How many days earlier than the deadline would you respond?”

Positive word of mouth. Positive word of mouth was assessed utilizing an adaptation of the likert-type scales developed by Alexandrov, Lilly, and Babakus (2013) and Van Hove and Lievens (2009) with $\alpha = .96$:

Based on your experiences with the organization today, how likely would you be to do any of the following if given the opportunity...

1. Say positive things about this organization.
2. Recommend this organization to others.
3. Recommend this organization to someone else who seeks your advice.
4. Spend time telling people positive things about the organization.
5. Spend time recommending the organization as an employer to family, friends, or acquaintances.

Negative word of mouth. Negative word of mouth was measured utilizing an adaptation of the likert-type scales developed by Alexandrov, Lilly, and Babakus (2013) and Van Hove and Lievens (2009) with $\alpha = .95$:

Based on your experiences with the organization today, how likely would you be to do any of the following if given the opportunity...

1. Warn my friends and relatives not to apply to this organization.
2. Complain to my friends and relatives about this organization.
3. Say negative things about this organization to other people.
4. Spend time telling people negative things about the organization.
5. Spend time advising against the organization as an employer to family, friends, or acquaintances.

Faking. Subject faking was assessed by asking participants to complete a variation of the adding-to-10 task developed by Mazar, Amir, and Ariely (2008) as part of the supposed job application. The instructions stated that the organization was evaluating candidates' tolerance for the complexity inherent in the recruitment process through the evaluation of their performance on a task. In this task, subjects were

presented with 10 matrices each containing 12 three-digit numbers (e.g., 3.14) and were instructed to solve as many matrices as possible in 2 minutes by identifying a pair of numbers in the matrix that equal to 10 when they are summed (e.g., 3.14 and 6.86). The instructions stated that the subjects must solve the matrices in order and could not skip a matrix. After the time elapsed, subjects were told that an average job candidate should be able to solve at least 3 matrices and they were asked to report the number of matrices they solved to the organization as part of the job application. In actuality, the third matrix was unsolvable. Faking was measured as a continuous variable with subjects coded as zero when they reporting solving two or less matrices and subjects being coded as 1 (2, 3, 4, etc.) when they reported solving 3 (4, 5, 6, etc.) matrices.

4.2.6 Manipulation check items

Developing positive and negative diagnostic information seeking measures.

Building on prior research on information diagnosticity and interview questioning intentions (Herr et al., 1991; Sackett, 1982), two measures were created to assess the success of the diagnostic information seeking manipulations. Based on scale development guidelines promulgated by Hinkin (1995, 1998), an iterative process was used wherein items were matched to the definitions for positive and negative diagnostic information seeking while ensuring sampling from the relevant theoretical domain. This process resulted in the following items:

Positive diagnostic information seeking, $\alpha = .91$.

1. The organization seeks out positive information about job applicants in order to select an appropriate person to hire.
2. The organization tries to discover positive things about job applicants in order to identify a good job applicant.
3. The organization looks for desirable attributes about job applicants in order to pick a quality candidate.

4. The organization attempts to learn favorable information about job applicants in order to find the ideal person to hire.

Negative diagnostic information seeking, $\alpha = .96$.

1. The organization seeks out negative information about job applicants in order to eliminate them from consideration.
2. The organization tries to discover negative things about job applicants in order to “weed them out.”
3. The organization looks for undesirable attributes about job applicants in order to disqualify them from hiring.
4. The organization attempts to learn unfavorable information about job applicants in order to screen them out.

Following this, a pilot study was conducted to ensure that the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking measures had adequate discriminant and convergent validity with each other and related measures (e.g., opportunity to perform and invasion of privacy). The pilot study recruited subjects from MTurk who were compensated \$0.52 for completing a job application task (with accompanying cover story) similar to the main study wherein positive, negative, and both positive and negative diagnostic information seeking were manipulated and contrasted with a control condition. The final sample was composed of 92 participants with the following characteristics: 38% female; average age of 35.17 (s.d. = 12.16); 84.78% Caucasian, 7.61% Black, 3.26% Hispanic, 1.09% Native American, and 3.26% Asian; 1.09% completed some high school, 15.22% were high school graduate, 19.57% completed some college, 13.04% completed associate’s degree, 33.70% obtained bachelor’s degree, 15.22% earned a master’s degree, and 2.17% have a doctorate; 36.96% were currently actively looking for a job; 65.22% were employed either part-time or full-time.

Subjects were instructed to complete the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking measures based on their experiences on the job application. In addition, subjects also completed the following opportunity to perform (Bauer et al.,

2001) and information privacy (Alge, Ballinger, Tangirala, & Oakley, 2006) measures. All measures were assessed utilizing a five-point scale from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”.

Opportunity to Perform. Opportunity to perform was measured utilizing the four item scale developed by Bauer and colleagues (2001) with $\alpha = .94$:

1. I could really show my skills and abilities during the hiring process.
2. The hiring process allowed me to show what my job skills are.
3. The hiring process gives applicants the opportunity to show what they can really do.
4. I was able to show what I can do during the hiring process.

Information privacy. Information privacy was measured utilizing the four item scale developed by Alge and colleagues (Alge et al., 2006) with $\alpha = .93$:

1. I was able to keep the organization from collecting personal information about me that I would have liked to keep secret.
2. I determined the types of information that the organization could store about me.
3. I am completely satisfied that I was able to keep the organization from collecting personal information about me that I wanted to keep from them.
4. I am satisfied in my ability to control the types of personal information that the organization collected on me.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) completed in the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) for the R environment (R Development Core Team, 2015) supports the discriminant validity of the measures with a four-factor structure ($\chi^2 = 141.73$ [$df = 98$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .97; SRMR = .04) fitting the data significantly better than a three-factor model combining positive diagnostic information seeking and opportunity to perform ($\chi^2 = 418.21$ [$df = 101$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .78; SRMR = .13), a two-factor model combining positive diagnostic information seeking and opportunity to perform and negative diagnostic information seeking and information privacy ($\chi^2 = 713.82$ [$df = 103$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .57; SRMR = .21), and a one-factor model combining positive diagnostic information seeking, negative diagnostic information seeking, opportunity to perform,

and information privacy ($\chi^2 = 981.46$, [$df = 104$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .38; SRMR = .21). In addition, a non-nested three factor model combining positive diagnostic information seeking and negative diagnostic information seeking fit the data poorly ($\chi^2 = 362.92$ [$df = 101$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .81; SRMR = .14).

The pattern of correlations between positive diagnostic information seeking, negative diagnostic information seeking, opportunity to perform, and information privacy support the convergent validity of the diagnostic information seeking measures. As expected positive diagnostic information seeking was positively correlated with opportunity to perform ($r = .46$) and negatively correlated with negative diagnostic information seeking ($r = -.54$). Similarly, negative diagnostic information seeking was negatively correlated with information privacy ($r = -.17$). Given the reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity of the newly developed positive diagnostic information seeking and negative diagnostic information seeking measures, these measures were used to conduct the manipulation check for the main experiment.

4.2.7 Control variables

Plausible alternative mechanisms, as suggested by extant literature, were statistically controlled for². In particular, the mediating effect of another indicator of organization desirability, prestige (Highhouse et al., 2003) was controlled. Given that prestige captures “a social consensus on the degree to which the company’s characteristics are regarded as either positive or negative” (Highhouse et al., 2003, p. 989), prestige might be related to the extent applicants intend to engage in word of mouth, which is an inherently social form of information reciprocation (Van Hove &

² A summary of results excluding control variables are presented as part of supplementary analyses (Appendix J). Results improved after excluding control variables.

Lievens, 2009). Moreover, organizations that engage in relatively more negative diagnostic information seeking might be viewed as signaling higher prestige, since they are presumably seeking to narrow down their relatively larger applicant pool. Positive and negative affect (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) were also input as control variables; it seems plausible that answering more negative questions about one's self (as a result of negative diagnostic information seeking) could influence negative mood, which could have the same effect on the proposed mediators and dependent variables. Similar logic applies for the inclusion of positive diagnostic information seeking and positive affect.

Prestige. Prestige was measured utilizing the five item scale developed Highhouse and colleagues (Highhouse et al., 2003) with $\alpha = .93$.

1. Employees are probably proud to say they work at this company.
2. This is a reputable company to work for.
3. This company probably has a reputation as being an excellent employer.
4. I would find this company a prestigious place to work.
5. There are probably many who would like to work at this company.

Positive affect. Positive affect was assessed utilizing the ten item PANAS scale developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988) with $\alpha = .92$. Subjects were given the following list of words and asked to indicate to what extent they felt this way right now at the present moment.

1. Interested
2. Excited
3. Strong
4. Enthusiastic
5. Proud
6. Alert
7. Inspired
8. Determined
9. Attentive
10. Active

Negative affect. Negative affect was assessed utilizing the ten item PANAS scale developed by Watson et al. (1988) with $\alpha = .79$. Subjects were given the following list of words and asked to indicate to what extent they felt this way right now at the present moment.

1. Distressed
2. Upset
3. Guilty
4. Scared
5. Hostile
6. Irritable
7. Ashamed
8. Nervous
9. Jittery
10. Afraid

4.2.8 Preliminary analyses

Manipulation check. The success of each manipulation was assessed with ANOVA in SPSS 22.0 by examining whether there was a statistically significant main effect on the manipulation check by the intended manipulation. Each condition was dummy coded. Tukey post hoc comparisons show that subjects in the positive diagnostic information seeking condition reported higher levels of positive diagnostic information seeking by the organization ($M = 4.22, SD = .54$) compared to subjects in the control condition ($M = 3.72, SD = .56; p < .01$) and the negative diagnostic information seeking condition ($M = 2.83, SD = 1.21; p < .01$). Similarly, subjects in the negative diagnostic information seeking condition reported higher levels of negative diagnostic information seeking by the organization ($M = 3.90, SD = .90$) compared to subjects in the control condition ($M = 2.47, SD = .79; p < .01$) and the positive diagnostic information seeking condition ($M = 1.82, SD = .68; p < .01$).

However, manipulation check results with respect to the third condition of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking were inconclusive and do not lend themselves to clear unambiguous interpretations of subject responses in this condition. In particular, the responses to the positive diagnostic information seeking manipulation check items by subjects in the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .48$) were not significantly different from responses by subjects in the control condition ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .56$; $p > .05$). However, responses on the negative diagnostic information seeking manipulation check from subjects in the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.08$) were significantly different from the control condition ($M = 2.47$, $SD = .79$; $p < .05$) and the negative diagnostic information seeking condition ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .90$; $p < .05$). As a result, interpreting the results from the subjects in the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition would be difficult because these subjects seem to be equivalent to the control condition subjects on their perceived level of positive diagnostic information seeking manipulated in the experiment but different from the control condition on their perceived level of negative diagnostic information seeking; in this sense, it is unclear whether subjects in the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition recognized the positive diagnostic information seeking manipulation (vis-à-vis the control condition subjects). This result may be happening due to subjects' difficulty in distinguishing between high levels of negative diagnostic information seeking and low levels of positive diagnostic information seeking or the notion that "bad is stronger than good" (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001). To prevent ambiguous interpretations of regression results, this condition was excluded from further

analysis. All results presented below do not include subjects from the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition³. A separate set of exploratory analyses were assessed with this condition and presented following the discussion.

As a supplement to the manipulation checks, participants' actual responses to the manipulations were qualitatively coded (on a 1 to 5 scale) by a research assistant based on the extent to which subjects' responses contained positive information and negative information. Results from this coding are shown in Figure 2A and 2B. With respect to the positive diagnostic information seeking manipulation, participant responses were consistent with what would be expected. In particular, the extent of positive responses was significantly greater in the positive diagnostic information seeking condition ($M = 4.10$) than in the control condition ($M = 1.90, p < .05$). Similarly, the extent of negative responses was significantly greater in the negative diagnostic information seeking condition ($M = 4.16$) than in the control condition ($M = 1.31, p < .05$). Altogether, these results suggest that there is a match between the type of information sought by an organization (i.e., positive or negative information) and the actual information that is provided by the job applicant.

Confirmatory factor analysis. A CFA was completed on the hiring likelihood, felt obligation, positive word of mouth, and negative word of mouth variables in the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) for the R environment (R Development Core Team, 2015). Faking, the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines, and the length of

³ A summary of hypotheses testing combining the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition with the control condition is presented as part of supplementary analyses (Appendix J). Given the significantly larger effect of the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking manipulation (compared to the control condition) on the negative diagnostic information seeking check, this represents a more conservative test of the effects of negative diagnostic information seeking. Interestingly, results improved slightly as a result of combining these two conditions. This may be due to an increase in sample size compared to excluding the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition ($n = 162$ to $n = 210$)

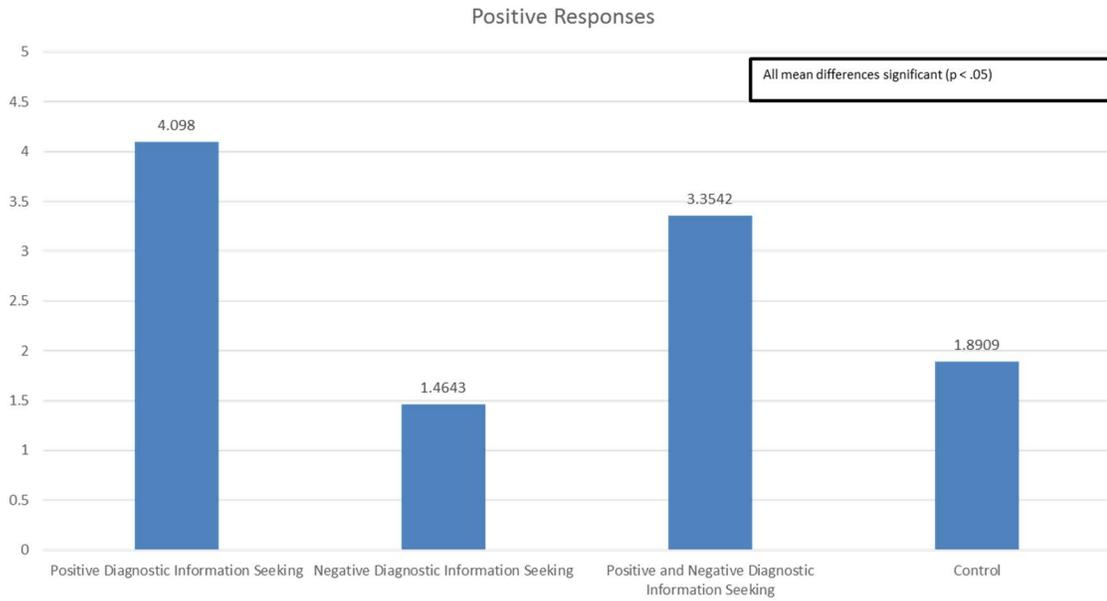


Figure 2A
Supplemental analysis - Study 1: Positive responses provided by subjects by condition

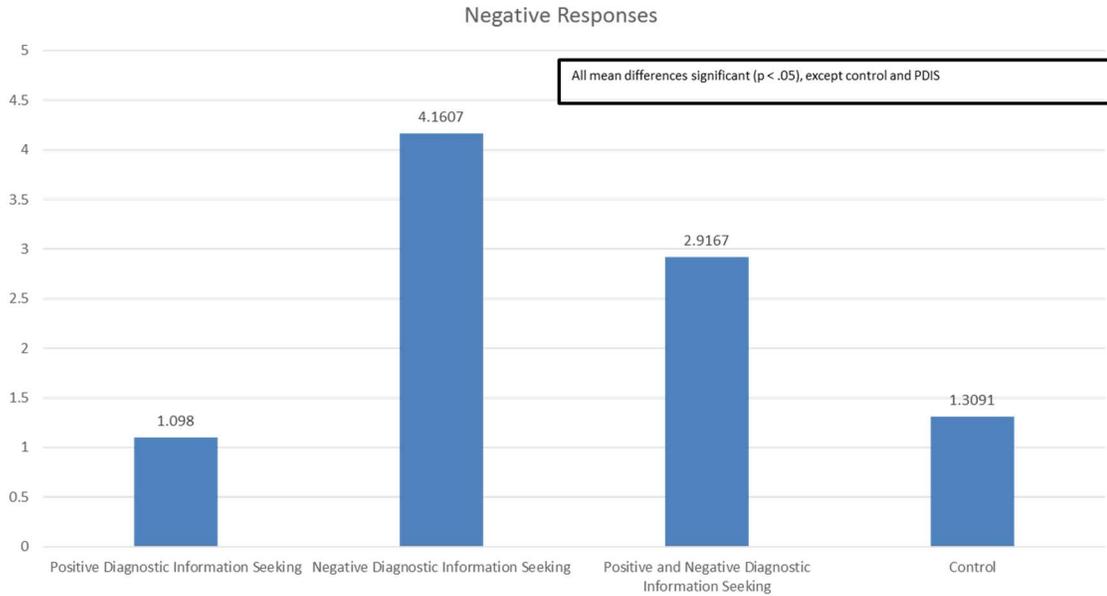


Figure 2B
Supplemental analysis - Study 1: Negative responses provided by subjects by condition

self-imposed decision deadlines were excluded based on suggestions that two indicators is the minimum amount required for a factor due to model identification issues (Kline, 2015). The correlation between the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines and the length of self-imposed decision deadlines was .40 and Cronbach's alpha was .57, suggesting that there is ample discriminant validity between these measures⁴. Results from the CFA support the discriminant validity of the measures. Based on criteria proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999), a four-factor structure containing hiring likelihood, felt obligation, positive word of mouth, and negative word of mouth. ($\chi^2 = 354.00$ [$df = 183$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .94; SRMR = .06) fit the data significantly better than a three-factor model combining positive and negative word of mouth ($\chi^2 = 1077.18$. [$df = 186$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .70; SRMR = .12); a two-factor model combining positive and negative word of mouth and combining hiring likelihood and felt obligation ($\chi^2 = 1409.89$ [$df = 188$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .59; SRMR = .17); and a one-factor model combining all four measures ($\chi^2 = 1686.77$ [$df = 189$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .50; SRMR = .16).

4.2.9 Results

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 2.

⁴ A CFA utilizing all 9 variables results in the same conclusions: a 9 factor model (CFI= .95) fit the data significantly better than an 8 factor model combining negative diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation (CFI = .92), a 7 factor model combining negative diagnostic information seeking, positive diagnostic information seeking, and felt obligation (CFI=.92), a 6 factor model combining positive diagnostic information seeking, negative diagnostic information seeking, felt obligation, and hiring likelihood perceptions (CFI=.90), and other rival models combining the dependent variables.

Table 1
Summary of hypotheses testing

	Hypothesis	Study 1	Study 2
H1	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation	n.s.	n.s.
H2	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> hiring likelihood	n.s.	p ≤ .05
H3	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation	n.s.	n.s.
H4	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> hiring likelihood	p ≤ .09	n.s.
H5a	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation	n.s.	p ≤ .05
H5b	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation	n.s.	n.s.
H6a	Felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.
H6b	Felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	p ≤ .05	n.s.
H7a	Felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	p ≤ .01	n.s.
H7b	Felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	n.s.	n/a
H8	Felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	n.s.
H9a	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.
H9b	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	p ≤ .05	n.s.
H9c	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	p ≤ .06	n.s.
H9d	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	n.s.	n/a
H9e	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	p ≤ .07
H10a	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.
H10b	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	p ≤ .06	n.s.
H10c	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	p ≤ .09	n.s.
H10d	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	n.s.	n/a
H10e	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	n.s.
H11a	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.
H11b	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.
H11c	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood-> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	n.s.	n.s.
H11d	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	n.s.	n/a
H11e	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	p ≤ .09
H12a	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.
H12b	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.
H12c	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood-> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	n.s.	n.s.
H12d	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	n.s.	n/a
H12e	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	n.s.

Table 2
Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Study 1)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Positive affect	2.33	0.88	---										
2. Negative affect	1.31	0.40	.07	---									
3. Prestige	3.12	0.66	.42**	-.12	---								
4. Positive diagnostic info. seeking ¹	0.31	0.47	.12	-.18*	.24**	---							
5. Negative diagnostic info. seeking ²	0.35	0.48	-.12	.25**	-.20*	-.49**	---						
6. Hiring likelihood	3.04	0.80	.42**	-.20*	.52**	.14	-.24**	---					
7. Felt obligation	3.67	0.73	.37**	-.02	.41**	.22**	-.21**	.35**	---				
8. Self-imposed decision deadline	6.03	3.19	.33**	-.14	.41**	.11	-.18*	.43**	.29**	---			
9. Self-imposed decision deadline length	2.70	3.26	.13	-.09	.24**	-.02	.11	.18*	.24**	.40**	---		
10. Positive word of mouth	2.97	0.86	.45**	-.19*	.74**	.19*	-.27**	.56**	.46**	.45**	.18*	---	
11. Negative word of mouth	2.22	0.87	-.23**	.31**	-.47**	-.31**	.51**	-.42**	-.28**	-.36**	-.13	-.51**	---
12. Faking	1.17	1.56	.13	.08	.16*	.08	.08	.05	.07	.02	.08	.17*	.02

Note: N = 162.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Hypotheses 1-7b were tested utilizing multiple regression analysis in SPSS 22.0. Model 2 in Table 3 shows the results of the test of Hypothesis 1 which argues for a positive relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation toward the organization. There was no support for this hypothesis as positive diagnostic information seeking was not significantly related to felt obligation ($\beta = .09, p > .05$) after the control variables. Hypothesis 2 posited a similar positive relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and perceptions of hiring likelihood. As outlined in Model 5 of Table 3, Hypothesis 2 not supported ($\beta = -.08, p > .05$).

Hypotheses 3 and 4 proposed a negative relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and both felt obligation and perceptions of hiring likelihood. Based on Model 2 of Table 3, Hypothesis 3 was not supported ($\beta = -.10, p > .05$). Hypothesis 4 was not supported as Model 5 of Table 3 shows a marginally significant negative relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and perceptions of hiring likelihood ($\beta = -.13, p < .10$), after the effect of control variables.

Hypothesis 5a proposes a moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation. Model 3 of Table 3 evidences a non-significant moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions ($\beta = -.05, p > .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 5a was not supported. Similarly, Hypothesis 5b, which proposes a moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation was not supported ($\beta = .02, p > .05$).

Table 3
Summary of regression results on felt obligation and hiring likelihood (Study 1)

Variable	Felt Obligation			Felt Obligation			Felt Obligation			Hiring Likelihood			Hiring Likelihood		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β
Constant	2.16**	0.32		2.20**	0.32		2.41**	0.35		-1.58**	0.32		-1.49**	0.32	
Controls															
Positive affect	0.20**	0.07	0.24**	0.19**	0.07	0.23**	0.17**	0.07	0.20*	0.24**	0.07	0.26**	0.23**	0.07	0.26**
Negative affect	-0.01	0.13	0.00	0.06	0.14	0.03	0.11	0.14	0.06	-0.35**	0.13	-0.18**	-0.32*	0.14	-0.16*
Prestige	0.34**	0.09	0.31**	0.31**	0.09	0.28**	0.23*	0.10	0.21*	0.48**	0.09	0.39**	0.47**	0.09	0.39**
Predictors															
Positive diagnostic information seeking ¹				0.14	0.13	0.09	0.18	0.13	0.11				-0.13	0.13	-0.08
Negative diagnostic information seeking ²				-0.15	0.13	-0.10	-0.11	0.13	-0.07				-0.22†	0.13	-.13†
Hiring likelihood							0.14	0.12	0.15						
Interactions															
Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood							-0.08	0.17	-0.05						
Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood							0.03	0.16	0.02						
<i>R</i>			.46**			.48**			.50**			.59**			.60**
<i>R</i> ²			.21**			.24**			.25**			.35**			.36**
ΔR^2						.02†			.01						.01
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²			.20			.21			.21			.34			.34

Note: *N* = 162.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

† *p* ≤ .10. * *p* ≤ .05. ** *p* ≤ .01.

Hypothesis 6a posits a positive relationship between felt obligation toward the organization and the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines while Hypothesis 6b suggests a positive relationship between felt obligation toward the organization and the length of self-imposed decision deadlines. After controlling for positive affect, negative affect, prestige, and the direct effects of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking, Hypothesis 6a was not supported ($\beta = .10, p > .05$; see Model 3 of Table 4); on the other hand, Hypothesis 6b was supported ($\beta = .21, p < .05$; see Model 6 of Table 4) above and beyond the controls.

Hypothesis 7a, which hypothesizes a positive relationship between felt obligation and positive word of mouth, was supported ($\beta = .16, p < .01$, see Model 3 of Table 5), above and beyond the effects of positive affect, negative affect, prestige, and the direct effects of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking. Hypothesis 7b, which hypothesizes a negative relationship between felt obligation and negative word of mouth, was not supported after controlling for the effects of positive affect, negative affect, prestige, and the direct effects of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking ($\beta = -.05, p > .05$, see Model 6 of Table 5).

Hypothesis 8 proposes a negative relationship between felt obligation and faking. After controlling for the effects of positive affect, negative affect, prestige, and the direct effects of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking, Hypothesis 8 was not supported ($\beta = -.01, p > .05$).

Hypotheses 9a through 9e propose that felt obligation mediates the indirect effects of positive diagnostic information seeking on the dependent variables. Table 7 displays

Table 4
Summary of regression results on establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines and length of self-imposed decision deadlines (Study 1)

Variable	Self-Imposed Decision			Self-Imposed Decision			Self-Imposed Decision			Self-Imposed Deadline Length			Self-Imposed Deadline Length			Self-Imposed Deadline Length		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β
Constant	0.94	1.40		1.22	1.42		0.24	1.61		-0.25	1.55		-0.73	1.56		-2.82	1.74	
Controls																		
Positive affect	0.78**	0.28	0.22**	0.76**	0.29	0.21**	0.68*	0.29	0.19*	0.15	0.32	0.04	0.21	0.31	0.06	0.03	0.32	0.01
Negative affect	-0.94	0.58	-0.12	-0.82	0.60	-0.10	-0.84	0.60	-0.11	-0.57	0.64	-0.07	-0.95	0.65	-0.12	-1.00	0.64	-0.12
Prestige	1.45**	0.38	0.30**	1.43**	0.39	0.30**	1.29**	0.40	0.27**	1.07*	0.42	0.22*	1.21**	0.43	0.25**	0.92*	0.44	0.19*
IVs																		
Positive diagnostic information seeking ¹				-0.34	0.57	-0.05	-0.40	0.57	-0.06				-0.09	0.62	-0.01	-0.23	0.61	-0.03
Negative diagnostic information seeking ²				-0.66	0.56	-0.10	-0.59	0.56	-0.09				1.27*	0.61	0.19*	1.41*	0.60	0.21*
Mediator																		
Felt Obligation							0.44	0.35	0.10							0.95*	0.38	0.21*
<i>R</i>			.46**			.47**			.47**			.25*			.31**			.36**
<i>R</i> ²			.21**			.22**			.23**			.06**			.10**			.13**
ΔR^2						.01			.01						.03†			.04*
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²			.20			.19			.20			.05			.07			.10

Note: *N* = 162.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

† *p* ≤ .10. * *p* ≤ .05. ** *p* ≤ .01.

Table 5
Summary of regression results on positive word of mouth and negative word of mouth (Study 1)

Variable	Positive Word of Mouth			Positive Word of Mouth			Positive Word of Mouth			Negative Word of Mouth			Negative Word of Mouth			Negative Word of Mouth		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	B	SE(β)	β															
Constant	0.29	0.28		0.39	0.28		-0.02	0.31		3.32**	0.36		3.05**	0.33		3.17**	0.38	
Controls																		
Positive affect	0.18**	0.06	0.19**	0.18**	0.06	0.18**	0.14*	0.06	0.15*	-0.08	0.07	-0.08	-0.05	0.07	-0.05	-0.04	0.07	-0.04
Negative affect	-0.28*	0.11	-0.13*	-0.25*	0.12	-0.11*	-0.26*	0.11	-0.12*	0.89**	0.15	0.27**	0.39**	0.14	0.18**	0.39**	0.14	0.18**
Prestige	0.84**	0.08	0.64**	0.84**	0.08	0.64**	0.78**	0.08	0.60**	-0.54**	0.10	-0.41**	-0.47**	0.09	-0.36**	-0.46**	0.10	-0.34**
IVs																		
Positive diagnostic information seeking ¹				-0.12	0.11	-0.07	-0.15	0.11	-0.08				0.00	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.00
Negative diagnostic information seeking ²				-0.22*	0.11	-0.12*	-0.19†	0.11	-0.11†				0.70**	0.13	0.38**	0.70**	0.13	0.38**
Mediator																		
Felt Obligation							0.18**	0.07	0.16**							-0.05	0.08	-0.05
R			.76**			.77**			.78**			.54**			.66**			.66**
R ²			.58**			.59**			.61**			.30**			.43**			.43**
ΔR^2						0.01			.02**						.13**			.00
Adjusted R ²			.58			.58			.60			.28			.41			.41

Note: N = 162.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

† p ≤ .10. * p ≤ .05. ** p ≤ .01.

Table 6
Summary of regression results on faking (Study 1)

Variable	Faking			Faking			Faking		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>B</i>)	β
Constant	-0.65	0.75		-0.89	0.76		-0.84	0.87	
Controls									
Positive affect	0.11	0.15	0.06	0.12	0.15	0.07	0.13	0.16	0.07
Negative affect	0.37	0.31	0.09	0.30	0.32	0.08	0.30	0.32	0.08
Prestige	0.34†	0.21	0.15†	0.34	0.21	0.14	0.34	0.22	0.15
IVs									
Positive diagnostic information seeking ¹				0.45	0.30	0.14	0.45	0.30	0.14
Negative diagnostic information seeking ²				0.54†	0.30	0.17†	0.54†	0.30	0.16†
Mediator									
Felt Obligation							-0.02	0.19	-0.01
<i>R</i>			.20†			.25†			.25
<i>R</i> ²			.04†			.06†			.06
ΔR^2						.02			.00
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²			.02			.03			.03

Note: *N* = 162.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

† *p* ≤ .10. * *p* ≤ .05. ** *p* ≤ .01.

Table 7
Unstandardized indirect effect of positive diagnostic information seeking (through felt obligation) and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 1)

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Negative Word of Mouth	Faking
Positive diagnostic information seeking ^{1,2}	0.11 (-.04, .49)	0.23* (.01, .76)	0.04† (-.00, .13)	-.01 (-.10, .03)	-.01 (-.13, .09)

Note: $N = 162$.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Controls (mediator): prestige, positive affect, and negative affect; controls (independent variable): negative diagnostic information seeking

† $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

the results of five tests of indirect effects utilizing 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). After controlling for the potential alternative mechanisms of positive affect, negative affect, and prestige, Hypotheses 9a, 9d and 9e are not supported (i.e., all 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals contain zero). Thus, there is no support for the mediating role of felt obligation in the indirect relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and: the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines, negative word of mouth, and faking. On the other hand, Hypothesis 9b received support (95% CI: .01, .76) providing evidence for the mediating role of felt obligation in the indirect relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and the length of self-imposed decision deadlines. Hypothesis 9c was not supported. However, though the 95% confidence interval contained zero (-.00, .13), the 90% confidence interval did not contain zero (.00, .12).

Hypotheses 10a through 10e propose the mediating role of felt obligation in the indirect effect between negative diagnostic information seeking and the dependent variables. Hypotheses 10a through 10e were tested in the same manner as Hypotheses 9a through 9e. Table 8 displays the results of these five tests of indirect effects. Although all of the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals contain zero, the 90% bootstrapped confidence intervals testing Hypotheses 10b (self-imposed decision deadline length; CI: -.62, -.02) and 10c (positive word of mouth; CI: -.11, -.00) did not contain zero and were in the expected direction. Overall, Hypotheses 10a through 10e were not supported.

Table 8
Unstandardized indirect effect of negative diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 1)

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Negative Word of Mouth	Faking
Negative diagnostic information seeking ^{1,2}	-.09 (-.45, .04)	-.20† (-.73, .00)	-0.04† (-.13, .00)	.01 (-.02, .10)	.00 (-.07, .13)

Note: $N = 162$.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Controls (mediator): prestige, positive affect, and negative affect; controls (independent variable): positive diagnostic information seeking
 † $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Hypotheses 11a through 11e propose a moderated mediation model wherein the mediating role of felt obligation in the relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and the dependent variables is a process that is contingent upon levels of hiring likelihood perceptions. Table 9 shows the results of these analyses utilizing 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). In sum, Hypotheses 11a through 11e were not supported; the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals for the index of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2013) all contained zero.

Table 9
Index of moderated mediation and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 1)
Moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the effect of positive diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Negative Word of Mouth	Faking
Positive diagnostic information seeking ^{1,2}	-.05 (-.39, .08)	-.10 (-.52, .17)	-.02 (-.10, .03)	.01 (-.02, .08)	.00 (-.04, .10)

Note: $N = 162$.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Controls (mediator): prestige, positive affect, and negative affect; controls (independent variable): negative diagnostic information seeking and hiring likelihood
 † $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Similarly, Hypotheses 12a through 12e propose a moderated mediation model wherein the mediating role of felt obligation in the relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and the dependent variables is a process that is contingent upon levels of hiring likelihood perceptions. Results displayed in Table 10 show that

Hypotheses 12a through 12e were not supported since the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals for the index of moderated mediation all contained zero.

Table 10
Index of moderated mediation and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 1)
Moderating effect of hiring likelihood perception on the effect of negative diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Negative Word of Mouth	Faking
Negative diagnostic information seeking ^{1,2}	.06 (-.05, .41)	.13 (-.09, .67)	.02 (-.02, .11)	-.01 (-.09, .02)	.00 (-.11, .05)

Note: $N = 162$.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Controls (mediator): prestige, positive affect, and negative affect; controls (independent variable): positive diagnostic information seeking and hiring likelihood

† $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

4.2.10 Study 1 discussion and limitations

Some support was found for the proposed hypotheses. The hypotheses that were supported do suggest that positive diagnostic information seeking seems to operate, in part, through the mechanism of felt obligation (i.e., Hypothesis 9b was fully supported). The potentially critical role that felt obligation plays in job applicant-organization relationships is further evidenced by the direct effect felt obligation had in predicting the length of self-imposed decision deadlines and positive word of mouth. Interestingly, felt obligation did not significantly predict the likelihood that an individual would establish a self-imposed decision deadline. This finding further supports the discriminant validity between the likelihood of establishing self-imposed decision deadlines and the length of self-imposed decision deadlines. In line with goal-setting theory, which distinguishes between the level of the set goal and goal commitment (Klein, Wesson, Hollenbeck, & Alge, 1999), the length of a self-imposed decision deadline might be more akin to the level of a set goal while the likelihood of a self-imposed decision deadline may be more analogous to goal commitment. Altogether, there seems to be both theoretical and

empirical reasons for researchers to study the establishment and length of self-imposed decision deadlines as related but distinct constructs.

Several reasons potentially account for the lack of support for the proposed hypotheses. The first reason relates to difficulty manipulating and assessing positive diagnostic information seeking. The second possibility is that, given the multitude of potential constructs that mediate social exchange effects (Colquitt et al., 2014), felt obligation is not the most appropriate social exchange mechanism to examine.

With respect to the effect of positive diagnostic information seeking, one potential explanation for the lack of significant results could be insufficient strength of the positive diagnostic information seeking manipulation. Compared to the control condition, mean responses to the positive diagnostic information seeking manipulation check items were only .50 greater in the positive diagnostic information seeking condition. This could be due to the well-documented “bad is stronger than good” effect (Baumeister et al., 2001). However, given the weaker manipulation, finding any significant results associated with positive diagnostic information seeking represents a more conservative test of the mediation hypotheses. While positive diagnostic information seeking seemed difficult to manipulate experimentally in the lab, a field study might reveal some significant effects of positive diagnostic information seeking for several reasons. First, due to the probable increased realism and salience of positive diagnostic information seeking (and the job search process in general), utilizing a sample of individuals undergoing an actual job search with real organizations might increase the strength of the relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation. Furthermore, assessing positive diagnostic information seeking based on job applicants’ perceptions (something

not possible in the lab experiment) might also increase the effect sizes, as they may be a more proximal predictor of job applicants' felt obligation; in this way, there may potentially be "noise" between organizations' actual positive diagnostic information seeking behaviors and applicants' perception of the organizations' positive diagnostic information seeking behaviors. Altogether, a field study may add increased realism and theoretical precision in measurement which could increase the possibility of revealing the significant effects of positive diagnostic information seeking.

On the other hand, negative diagnostic information seeking, while significantly predicting hiring likelihood perceptions (Hypothesis 4 was supported), was not a significant predictor of felt obligation. In contrast to positive diagnostic information seeking, which did not exhibit any direct effects on dependent variables, negative diagnostic information seeking exhibited some direct effects on the dependent variables (specifically, self-imposed decision deadline length and negative word of mouth, $p < .05$). This opens the possibility that other mechanisms could exist that might play a more integral part in transmitting the effects of negative diagnostic information seeking. In line with this is the observation that the direct relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and self-imposed decision deadline length was opposite to what would be expected based on the above theorizing. Rather than responding later, negative diagnostic information seeking led subjects to intend to respond earlier to job offers. This effect could be due to the possibility that negative diagnostic information seeking was so unattractive to applicants that they would be poised to reject a job offer very quickly. Of interest though, is the indirect effect of negative diagnostic information seeking on self-imposed decision deadline length which was in the expected direction. This suggests that

the modeling of additional parallel mediators might shed more light on the indirect relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and self-imposed decision deadline length. In particular, additional parallel mediators might act in a direct opposite of felt obligation.

To address the above issues, a field study could be conducted. While providing the possibility to examine the causal relationships implied by social exchange theory, reduced generalizability and realism (McGrath, 1981) are inherent limitations of experimental designs, especially with respect to the proposed mediator of felt obligation. A field study where positive diagnostic information seeking is not manipulated but instead reported by the job applicant would not only be consistent with social exchange theory's emphasis on perceptions (Homans, 1961) but also allow for the potential to observe stronger effects of positive diagnostic information seeking because applicant perceptions of organizational actions are likely more proximal to applicant cognitions and attitudes (e.g., felt obligation). Following the same logic, stronger effects of negative diagnostic information seeking might also be observed which could result in felt obligation being shown as a significant mediator. Though the subjects in the experiment were told that they would be judged by the organization and potentially rewarded by the organization based on their responses, it could be argued that felt obligation is less relevant in an experimental design given that the relationship between a hypothetical organization and a subject cannot extend beyond these few exchanges. Furthermore, the cover story associated with this experimental design urged subjects to imagine that they were applying for the organization, which could potentially decrease the realism (and hence effect sizes) associated with either positive or negative diagnostic information

seeking. Moreover, subjects in this study were students. Though 82.71% of the subjects reported that they sought employment opportunities the same semester the experiment took place (e.g., full-time job, part-time job, co-op, internship, or development program), a sample of active job seekers with actively hiring organizations would lend credence to the generalizability of the findings.

Finally, extant models of the recruiting process outline three stages in the recruiting process - generating applicants, maintaining applicant status, and influencing job choices (Barber, 1998). In order to support the notion that the social exchange dynamics outlined in this paper are germane to the entire recruiting cycle, an additional study, which surveys participants during latter stages of the recruiting cycle, would help to examine the phenomena outlined in this paper throughout their entire theoretical domain. To address the concerns outlined and potentially replicate the above findings, a field study was conducted.

4.2.11 Study 1 exploratory analyses

An exploratory data analysis was conducted to ascertain the effect of providing subjects with both positive and negative diagnostic information seeking together. An additive effects perspective grounded in the theoretical framework proposed might suggest that a combination of both positive and negative diagnostic information seeking together could potentially result in null effects. At the same time, a “bad is stronger than good” perspective (Baumeister et al., 2001) might suggest that combining both positive and negative diagnostic information seeking together (to equal extents) could actually result in net lower perceptions of felt obligation and hiring likelihood as the negative effects of negative diagnostic information seeking could overpower the positive effects of

positive diagnostic information seeking. Given these two competing explanations, these exploratory hypotheses mirror the formal hypotheses presented in the main data analysis except there are no predictions regarding the direction of potential effects. The exploratory analyses were conducted utilizing the same statistical techniques in the main analyses with the same controls (i.e., positive affect, negative affect, and prestige).

Results are summarized in Appendix B. Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Appendix C and regression results for each exploratory hypothesis are presented in Appendix D through Appendix I. As a robustness check, a summary of results without control variables is also presented in Appendix B. Overall, only one relationship was significant (the negative relationship between the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking manipulation and hiring likelihood perceptions). This finding is consistent with a “bad is stronger than good” (Baumeister et al., 2001) perspective of diagnostic information seeking. However, this result was not robust to the removal of control variables, so caution should be heeded in interpreting the results and future research may attempt to further evidence any presence of a “bad is stronger than good” (Baumeister et al., 2001) effect associated with the combination of both positive and negative diagnostic information seeking.

4.3 Study 2: Field Study

4.3.1 Field site and participants

Participants for the field study were recruited through a university career services center. The career services center serves as the official body in charge of organizing on-campus interviews for all students at the university. 71 organizations interviewed through the career services center during the data collection period and conducted over 1,400

interviews. All students contacted had completed at least one on-campus interview. A recruitment flyer and initial survey were sent via e-mail the week following on-campus interviews with various organizations. Participants were instructed to fill out the below measures with respect to the most recent organization they interviewed with under the condition that they were still pursuing employment with that organization. A second survey was sent to participants a week after and a final survey was sent to participants after the close of the semester. The vast majority of participants (75.5%) were still in a recruiting relationship with the organization by the time of the second survey (i.e., have not been rejected from the organization and are still pursuing a job with the organization). In exchange for completing each survey, individuals were entered into a raffle drawing for various prizes and were given a \$5 gift card for completion of all three surveys. Due to an insufficient response rate on the final survey, only the first two surveys were utilized; this represented 114 of 949 (12.01%) potential participants. The final sample had the following characteristics: 45.6% female; average age of 22.60 (s.d. = 3.87); 49.12% Caucasian, 3.51% Black, 5.26% Hispanic, 39.47% Asian, and 2.63% Other; 39.47% were employed either part-time or full-time; and on average subjects had 2.63 months of work experience relevant to the job they were applying for (s.d. = 1.58).

4.3.2 Measures

Positive diagnostic information seeking. Positive diagnostic information seeking was assessed on the first survey utilizing the manipulation check measure from Study 1 with the stem of the measure changed to the following ($\alpha = .89$):
Based on your experiences with the organization thus far, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements below.

Negative diagnostic information seeking. Negative diagnostic information seeking was assessed on the first survey utilizing the manipulation check measure from Study 1 with the stem of the measure changed to the following ($\alpha = .92$):

Based on your experiences with the organization thus far, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statements below.

Felt obligation. Felt obligation was assessed on the second survey with the same measure as Study 1 ($\alpha = .84$).

Hiring likelihood. Hiring likelihood was assessed on the first survey with the same measure as Study 1 ($\alpha = .87$).

Self-imposed decision deadlines. The establishment and length of self-imposed decision deadlines was assessed on the second survey with the same measures as Study 1.

Positive word of mouth. Positive word of mouth was assessed on the second survey utilizing the same scale as Study 1 adapted to focus on self-reports of past behavior ($\alpha = .91$):

To what extent have you...

1. Said positive things about the organization to others.
2. Recommended the organization to others.
3. Recommended the organization to someone else who sought your advice.
4. Spent time telling people you talk to positive things about the organization.
5. Spent time recommending the organization as an employer to family, friends, or acquaintances.

Faking. Prior research suggests that deviant behavior, such as faking, can be measured validly by self-report (e.g., Ones et al., 1993) because individuals that engage in these actions likely believe that such behaviors are commonplace (American Psychological Association, 1991; Murphy, 1993) and often find it difficult to anticipate how individuals that do not engage in these behaviors would actually respond to self-

report items (Cunningham, Wong, & Barbee, 1994). To serve as a complement to the behavioral measure in Study 1, faking was measured utilizing the four item likert-type scale developed by Levashina and Campion (2009) on the second survey ($\alpha = .89$).

Based on your interactions with the organization, please indicate the extent to which you've engaged in the following actions:

1. I enhanced my fit with the job in terms of attitudes, values, or beliefs.
2. I inflated the fit between my values and goals and the values and goals of the organization
3. I inflated the fit between my credentials and the needs of the organization.
4. I tried to use information about the company to make my answers sound like I was a better fit than I actually was.

4.3.3 Control variables

Following similar logic outlined in Study 1, prestige (Highhouse et al., 2003) was entered as a control as it represents a potential alternative mediator. Because this data collection effort occurred over a period of a week, positive and negative affect were not necessary controls as in Study 1. However, additional controls were necessary for this study given that it occurred in a field setting. Specifically, participant characteristics such as ethnicity (coded 0 = Caucasian, 1 = other), GPA (out of four points), major, job search effort (Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010), progress with the focal organization (as a percentage of the number of interviews they have been invited to compared to the total number of interviews for the organization), and job type (coded 0 = full-time employment, 1 = other) were controlled for as these factors may affect felt obligation perceptions and the dependent variables of interest. In particular, given that social exchange addresses, in part, the symbolic meaning behind actions rather than their instrumental values, controlling for the above factors, which might impact applicant outcomes, provides results that emphasize organizational actions over and above outcomes.

4.3.4 Preliminary analyses

Confirmatory factor analysis. A CFA was completed on the positive and negative diagnostic information seeking, hiring likelihood, felt obligation, positive word of mouth, and faking variables in the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) for the R environment (R Development Core Team, 2015). The establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines and the length of self-imposed decision deadlines were excluded based on suggestions that two indicators is the minimum amount required for a factor (Kline, 2015). As would be expected, the smaller sample size unfavorably hampered the fit indices (Tanaka, 1987), yet after random item parceling, a six-factor structure containing positive diagnostic information seeking, negative diagnostic information seeking, hiring likelihood, felt obligation, positive word of mouth, and negative word of mouth fit the data adequately ($\chi^2 = 309.69$ [$df = 194$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .93; SRMR = .08) and significantly better than a five-factor model combining positive and negative diagnostic information seeking ($\chi^2 = 558.26$ [$df = 199$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .77; SRMR = .12); a four-factor model combining positive and negative diagnostic information seeking and combining hiring likelihood and felt obligation ($\chi^2 = 757.55$ [$df = 203$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .64; SRMR = .15); a three-factor model combining positive and negative diagnostic information seeking, hiring likelihood and felt obligation, and positive word of mouth and faking ($\chi^2 = 919.84$ [$df = 206$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .54; SRMR = .17); a two-factor model combining (1) positive and negative diagnostic information seeking, hiring likelihood, and felt obligation and (2) positive word of mouth and faking ($\chi^2 = 1097.04$ [$df = 208$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .42; SRMR = .17); and a one-factor model containing all

variables ($\chi^2 = 1272.24$ [$df = 209$], $p < 0.01$; CFI = .31; SRMR = .18). Therefore, the data provided the most support for a six factor model which evidences discriminant validity.

4.3.5 Results

Descriptive statistics are displayed in Table 11.

Table 11
Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Study 2)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Ethnicity ¹	0.51	0.50	---															
2. GPA	3.53	0.38	-.12	---														
3. Engineering major ²	0.51	0.50	-.02	-.21*	---													
4. Computer science major ³	0.23	0.42	.28**	-.03	-.55**	---												
5. Other major ⁴	0.02	0.13	.13	.07	-.14	-.07	---											
6. Job search effort	3.32	0.78	-.04	-.04	-.17	.00	-.11	---										
7. Job progress	0.71	0.32	-.09	.11	.00	.01	-.15	.28**	---									
8. Non-full-time employment ⁵	0.52	0.50	.14	.06	.07	.11	-.01	.00	.00	---								
9. Prestige	3.86	0.77	-.37**	.08	-.01	-.23*	-.15	.38**	.04	-.04	---							
10. Positive diagnostic info seeking	3.79	0.79	-.19*	-.01	.00	-.17	-.11	.32**	.02	.05	.58**	---						
11. Negative diagnostic info seeking	2.28	0.96	.07	-.12	-.06	.22*	-.04	.07	.05	-.04	-.27**	-.23*	---					
12. Hiring likelihood	3.17	0.81	-.15	-.09	-.07	-.08	-.07	.25**	.17	-.09	.33**	.42**	-.09	---				
13. Felt obligation	3.64	0.69	-.04	.06	.10	-.11	-.03	.21*	.13	.23*	.31**	.31**	-.07	.24*	---			
14. Self-imposed decision deadline	68.63	29.14	.01	.02	.03	-.02	-.10	.16	-.02	.21*	.14	.32**	-.12	.12	.19*	---		
15. Self-imposed decision deadline length	4.25	2.06	-.04	.04	-.19*	.11	-.08	.17	-.02	.07	.15	.14	-.20*	.10	.07	.53**	---	
16. Positive word of mouth	2.89	0.95	-.10	.05	-.14	-.07	.00	.58**	.18	.05	.59**	.44**	.02	.38**	.29**	.10	.17	---
17. Faking	2.65	0.96	.21*	-.14	-.08	-.01	.14	.19*	-.01	.06	-.06	.09	.26**	.03	-.08	.01	.07	.20*

Note: N = 114.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Minority, 0 = Caucasian)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Engineering major, 0 = Business major)

³Dummy Variable (1 = Computer science major, 0 = Business major)

⁴Dummy Variable (1 = Other major, 0 = Business major)

⁵Dummy Variable (1 = Not seeking full-time employment, 0 = Seeking full-time employment)

* p ≤ .05. ** p ≤ .01.

Similar to Study 1, Hypotheses 1-7b were tested utilizing multiple regression analysis in SPSS 22.0. After inputting the control variables in Model 1 of Table 12, Model 2 shows the results of the test of Hypothesis 1 which argues for a positive relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation toward the organization. Hypothesis 1 was not supported ($\beta = .17, p > .05$). Hypothesis 2 posited a similar positive relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and perceptions of hiring likelihood. As outlined in Model 5 of Table 12, Hypothesis 2 was supported ($\beta = .33, p < .01$).

Hypotheses 3 and 4 proposed a negative relationship between both negative diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation and perceptions of hiring likelihood. Based on Model 2 of Table 12, Hypothesis 3 was not supported, as there was not a significant relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation ($\beta = .05, p > .05$). Hypothesis 4 was also not supported, as Model 5 of Table 12 shows a non-significant relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and perceptions of hiring likelihood ($\beta = -.01, p > .05$).

Hypothesis 5a proposes a moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation. Model 3 of Table 12 evidences a significant moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions ($\beta = -.23, p < .05$) but in the reverse direction (see Figure 3). Thus, Hypothesis 5a was not supported. Hypothesis 5b, which proposes a moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation was not supported ($\beta = -.14, p > .05$).

Table 12
Summary of regression results on felt obligation (Study 2)

Variable	Felt Obligation			Felt Obligation			Felt Obligation			Hiring Likelihood			Hiring Likelihood		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β
Constant	1.65*	0.77		1.88*	0.79		2.07*	0.80		2.89**	0.91		2.30*	0.96	
Controls															
Ethnicity ¹	0.07	0.14	0.05	0.07	0.14	0.05	0.07	0.14	0.05	-0.04	0.17	-0.02	-0.05	0.16	-0.03
GPA	0.08	0.17	0.04	0.10	0.17	0.06	0.13	0.17	0.07	-0.34†	0.20	-0.16†	-0.29	0.20	-0.14
Engineering major ²	0.16	0.17	0.11	0.16	0.17	0.12	0.18	0.16	0.13	-0.21	0.20	-0.13	-0.18	0.19	-0.11
Computer science major ³	-0.03	0.20	-0.02	-0.02	0.20	-0.01	-0.06	0.20	-0.04	-0.15	0.24	-0.08	-0.09	0.23	-0.05
Other major ⁴	0.26	0.50	0.05	0.29	0.50	0.06	0.21	0.48	0.04	-0.04	0.59	-0.01	0.04	0.57	0.01
Job search effort	0.09	0.09	0.10	0.06	0.09	0.07	0.07	0.09	0.08	0.07	0.11	0.07	0.03	0.11	0.03
Job progress	0.21	0.21	0.10	0.22	0.20	0.10	0.08	0.21	0.04	0.40	0.24	0.16	0.43†	0.24	0.17†
Non-full-time employment ⁵	0.31*	0.13	0.23*	0.30*	0.13	0.22*	0.31*	0.12	0.23*	-0.08	0.15	-0.05	-0.12	0.14	-0.08
Prestige	0.26**	0.10	0.29**	0.20†	0.11	0.22†	0.16	0.11	0.18	0.30**	0.11	0.28**	0.11	0.13	0.10
Predictors															
Positive diagnostic information seeking				0.15	0.10	0.17	0.05	0.10	0.06				0.34**	0.11	.33**
Negative diagnostic information seeking				0.03	0.07	0.05	0.03	0.07	0.04				-0.01	0.08	-0.01
Hiring likelihood							0.15	0.08	0.18						
Interactions															
Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood							-0.23*	0.09	-0.23*						
Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood							-0.11	0.07	-0.14						
<i>R</i>			.44*			.46*			.53*			.42*			.50**
<i>R</i> ²			.19*			.21*			.28*			.18*			.25**
ΔR^2						.02			.07*						.07**
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²			.12			.12			.18			.10			.16

Note: *N* = 114.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Minority, 0 = Caucasian)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Engineering major, 0 = Business major)

³Dummy Variable (1 = Computer science major, 0 = Business major)

⁴Dummy Variable (1 = Other major, 0 = Business major)

⁵Dummy Variable (1 = Not seeking full-time employment, 0 = Seeking full-time employment)

† *p* ≤ .10. * *p* ≤ .05. ** *p* ≤ .01.

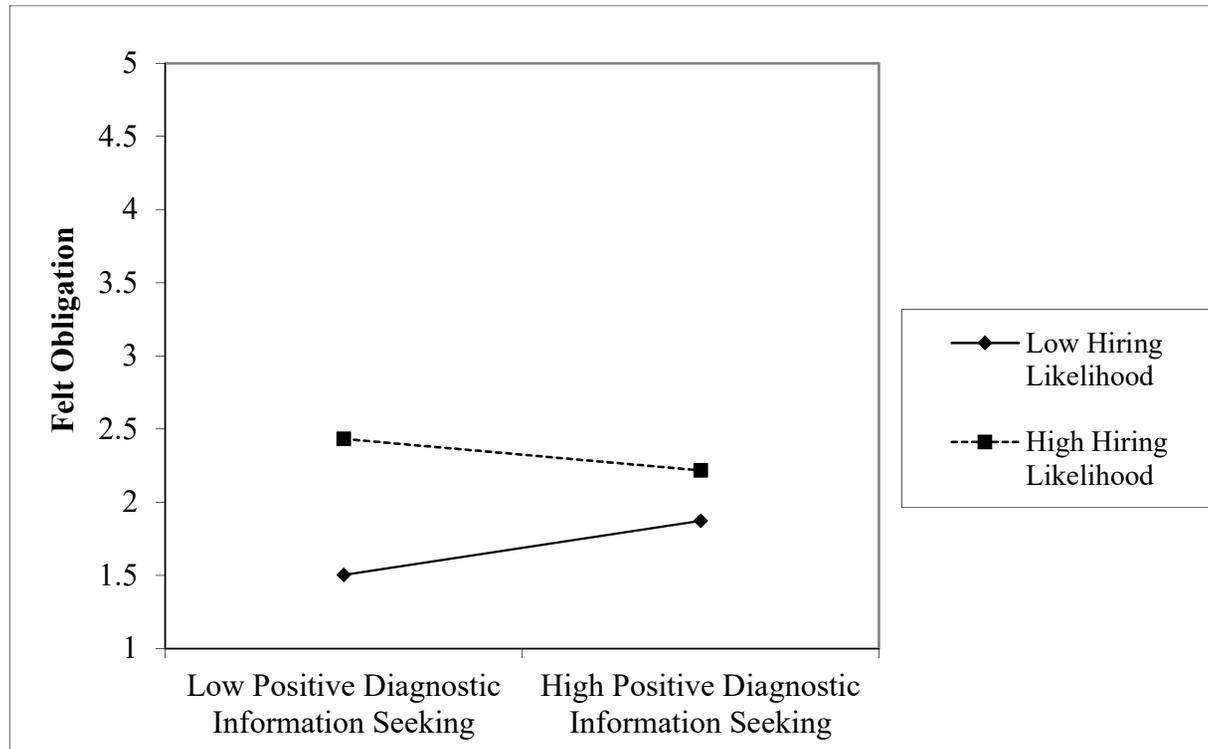


Figure 3
Study 2: Interaction between positive diagnostic information seeking and hiring likelihood

Hypothesis 6a posits a positive relationship between felt obligation toward the organization and the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines while Hypothesis 6b suggests a positive relationship between felt obligation toward the organization and the length of self-imposed decision deadlines. After inputting the control variables in Model 1 and the direct effects of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking in Model 2, Hypothesis 6a ($\beta = .08, p > .05$; see Model 3 of Table 13) and 6b ($\beta = .03, p > .05$; see Model 6 of Table 13) were not supported.

After inputting relevant controls and the direct effects of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking, the positive relationship between felt obligation and positive word of mouth was not significant ($\beta = .04, p > .05$, see Model 3 of Table 14). Thus, Hypothesis 7a was not supported.

Hypothesis 8 proposes a negative relationship between felt obligation and faking. After controlling for relevant variables and positive and negative diagnostic information seeking, Hypothesis 8 was not supported ($\beta = -.16, p > .05$; see Model 6 of Table 14).

Hypotheses 9a, 9b, 9c, and 9e propose that felt obligation mediates the indirect effects of positive diagnostic information seeking on the dependent variables. Table 15 displays the results of four tests of indirect effects utilizing 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). After controlling for the potential alternative mechanisms of prestige and relevant controls as covariates, Hypotheses 9a, 9b, 9c, and 9e were not supported (i.e., all 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals contain zero). However, Hypothesis 9e was marginally significant as the 90% bootstrapped confidence interval did not contain zero (-.17, -.003).

Table 13
Summary of regression results on establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines and length of self-imposed decision deadlines (Study 2)

Variable	Self-Imposed Decision			Self-Imposed Decision			Self-Imposed Decision			Self-Imposed Deadline Length			Self-Imposed Deadline Length			Self-Imposed Deadline Length		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β
Constant	0.30	0.34		0.18	0.36		0.14	0.37		2.73	2.44		4.34†	2.61		4.24	0.27	
Controls																		
Ethnicity ¹	0.02	0.06	0.04	0.01	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.06	0.02	-0.05	0.44	-0.01	-0.14	0.44	-0.04	-0.15	0.44	-0.04
GPA	0.02	0.08	0.02	0.03	0.07	0.04	0.02	0.08	0.03	0.01	0.54	0.00	-0.06	0.54	-0.01	-0.07	0.54	-0.01
Engineering major ²	0.01	0.07	0.01	0.02	0.07	0.04	0.16	0.07	0.03	-0.27	0.53	-0.18	-0.61	0.52	-0.16	-0.66	0.53	-0.16
Computer science major ³	-0.02	0.09	-0.03	0.01	0.09	0.02	0.01	0.09	0.02	0.10	0.63	0.02	0.35	0.63	0.07	0.35	0.64	0.07
Other major ⁴	-0.19	0.22	-0.09	-0.17	0.22	-0.08	-0.18	0.22	-0.08	-1.32	1.58	-0.08	-1.39	1.56	-0.09	-1.41	1.57	-0.09
Job search effort	0.05	0.04	0.14	0.05	0.04	0.13	0.05	0.04	0.12	0.29	0.29	0.11	0.40	0.30	0.15	0.39	0.30	0.15
Job progress	-0.07	0.09	-0.08	-0.06	0.09	-0.07	-0.07	0.09	-0.08	-0.43	0.65	-0.07	-0.43	0.64	-0.07	-0.45	0.65	-0.07
Non-full-time employment ⁵	0.12*	0.06	0.21*	0.10†	0.06	0.18†	0.09	0.06	0.16	0.36	0.40	0.09	0.30	0.39	0.07	0.27	0.41	0.07
Prestige	0.03	0.04	0.09	-0.04	0.05	-0.10	-0.05	0.05	-0.12	0.27	0.30	0.10	0.03	0.35	0.01	0.01	0.36	0.00
IVs																		
Positive diagnostic information seeking				0.12**	0.04	0.32**	0.11**	0.04	0.30**				0.07	0.30	0.03	0.06	0.31	0.02
Negative diagnostic information seeking				-0.03	0.03	-0.08	-0.03	0.03	-0.09				-0.48*	0.22	0.22*	-0.48*	0.22	-0.22*
Mediator																		
Felt Obligation							0.03	0.04	0.08							0.08	0.31	0.03
R			.30			.41†			.41†			.29			.36			.36
R ²			.09			.16†			.17†			.08			.13			.13
ΔR^2															.04†			.00
Adjusted R ²			.01			.07			.07			.01			.03			.02

Note: N = 114.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Minority, 0 = Caucasian)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Engineering major, 0 = Business major)

³Dummy Variable (1 = Computer science major, 0 = Business major)

⁴Dummy Variable (1 = Other major, 0 = Business major)

⁵Dummy Variable (1 = Not seeking full-time employment, 0 = Seeking full-time employment)

† p ≤ .10. * p ≤ .05. ** p ≤ .01.

Table 14
Summary of regression results on positive word of mouth and faking (Study 2)

Variable	Positive Word of Mouth			Positive Word of Mouth			Positive Word of Mouth			Faking			Faking			Faking			
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6			
	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	
Constant	-1.16	0.81		-2.00**	0.86		-2.06*	0.88		3.58**	1.10		2.19†	1.15		2.46*	1.15		
Controls																			
Ethnicity ¹	0.16	0.15	0.08	0.19	0.15	0.10	0.18	0.15	0.10	0.36†	0.20	0.19†	0.42*	0.19	0.22*	0.43*	0.19	0.23*	
GPA	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.05	0.18	0.02	0.04	0.18	0.02	-0.39	0.24	-0.16	-0.32	0.24	-0.13	-0.30	0.23	-0.12	
Engineering major ²	-0.13	0.18	-0.07	-0.14	0.17	-0.08	-0.15	0.17	-0.08	-0.32	0.24	-0.17	-0.35	0.23	-0.18	-0.31	0.23	-0.17	
Computer science major ³	-0.05	0.21	-0.02	-0.10	0.21	-0.04	-0.10	0.21	-0.04	-0.42	0.28	-0.19	-0.52†	0.28	-0.23†	0.52†	0.28	-0.23†	
Other major ⁴	0.76	0.53	0.11	0.82	0.52	0.11	0.80	0.52	0.11	0.69	0.71	0.10	0.78	0.68	0.11	0.85	0.68	0.12	
Job search effort	0.45**	0.10	0.37**	0.39**	0.10	0.33**	0.39**	0.10	0.32**	0.25†	0.13	0.21†	0.16	0.13	0.13	0.18	0.13	0.14	
Job progress	0.23	0.22	0.08	0.24	0.21	0.08	0.23	0.22	0.08	-0.05	0.29	-0.02	-0.03	0.28	-0.01	0.02	0.28	0.01	
Non-full-time employment ⁵	0.12	0.13	0.07	0.12	0.13	0.07	0.11	0.13	0.06	0.14	0.18	0.07	0.14	0.17	0.08	0.21	0.18	0.11	
Prestige	0.60**	0.10	0.49**	0.59**	0.12	0.48**	0.58**	0.12	0.47**	-0.10	0.14	-0.08	-0.08	0.15	-0.07	-0.04	0.16	-0.03	
IVs																			
Positive diagnostic information seeking				0.14	0.10	0.12	0.13	0.10	0.11				0.20	0.13	0.16	0.23†	0.13	0.19†	
Negative diagnostic information seeking				0.16*	0.07	0.16*	0.16*	0.07	0.16*				0.28**	0.10	0.28**	0.29**	0.10	0.29**	
Mediator																			
Felt Obligation							0.05	0.10	0.04							-0.22	0.14	-0.16	
R			.72**			.74**			.74**			.37†			.47**			.49**	
R ²			.52**			.55**			.55**			.14†			.22**			.24**	
ΔR ²						.03*			.00						.08**			.02	
Adjusted R ²			.48			.50			.50			.07			.13			.15	

Note: N = 114.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Minority, 0 = Caucasian)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Engineering major, 0 = Business major)

³Dummy Variable (1 = Computer science major, 0 = Business major)

⁴Dummy Variable (1 = Other major, 0 = Business major)

⁵Dummy Variable (1 = Not seeking full-time employment, 0 = Seeking full-time employment)

† p ≤ .10. * p ≤ .05. ** p ≤ .01.

Table 15
Unstandardized indirect effect of positive diagnostic information seeking (through felt obligation) and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 2)

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Faking
Positive diagnostic information seeking	.01 (-.01, .03)	.02 (-.13, .19)	.01 (-.03, .08)	-0.05† (-.16, .00)

Note: $N = 114$.

Controls (mediator): prestige

Controls (independent variable): negative diagnostic information seeking, ethnicity, GPA, major, job search effort, job progress, non-full-time employment

† $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Thus, there is no support for the mediating role of felt obligation in the indirect relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and: the establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines, the length of self-imposed decision deadlines, positive word of mouth, and faking.

Hypotheses 10a, 10b, 10c, and 10e propose the mediating role of felt obligation in the indirect effect between negative diagnostic information seeking and the dependent variables. These hypotheses were tested in the same way as Hypotheses 9a, 9b, 9c, and 9e. Table 16 displays the results of these four tests of indirect effects. All of the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals contain zero, thus, Hypotheses 10a, 10b, 10c, and 10e were not supported.

Table 16
Unstandardized indirect effect of negative diagnostic information seeking (through felt obligation) and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 2)

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Faking
Negative diagnostic information seeking	.00 (-.01, .01)	.00 (-.04, .05)	.00 (-.01, .02)	.00 (-.04, .03)

Note: $N = 114$.

Controls (mediator): prestige

Controls (independent variable): positive diagnostic information seeking, ethnicity, GPA, major, job search effort, job progress, non-full-time employment

† $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Hypotheses 11a, 11b, 11c, and 11e propose a moderated mediation model wherein the mediating role of felt obligation in the relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and the dependent variables is a process that is contingent upon levels of hiring likelihood perceptions. Table 17 shows the results of these analyses utilizing 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) with the

PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). In sum, these hypotheses were not supported; the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals for the index of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2013) all contained zero. However, the 90% bootstrapped confidence interval associated with the index of moderated mediation for Hypothesis 11e, predicting faking, was marginally significant (.001, .14).

Table 17
Index of moderated mediation and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 2)
Moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the effect of positive diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Faking
Positive diagnostic information seeking	-.01 (-.03, .01)	-.02 (-.21, .13)	-.01 (-.08, .04)	.05† (-.01, .15)

Note: $N = 114$

Controls (mediator): prestige

Controls (independent variable): negative diagnostic information seeking, ethnicity, GPA, major, job search effort, job progress, non-full-time employment

† $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Similarly, Hypotheses 12a, 12b, 12c, and 12e propose a moderated mediation model wherein the mediating role of felt obligation in the relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and the dependent variables is a process that is contingent upon levels of hiring likelihood perceptions. Results displayed in Table 18 show that these hypotheses were not supported since the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals for the index of moderated mediation all contained zero.

Table 18
Index of moderated mediation and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 2)
Moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the effect of negative diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Faking
Negative diagnostic information seeking	.00 (-.02, .00)	-.01 (-.11, .04)	.00 (-.04, .01)	.01 (-.02, .09)

Note: $N = 114$

Controls (mediator): prestige

Controls (independent variable): positive diagnostic information seeking, ethnicity, GPA, major, job search effort, job progress, non-full-time employment

† $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

4.3.6 Study 2 discussion and limitations

Hypotheses were generally not supported in this study. While the field setting of this study could have potentially increased confidence in the generalizability of the findings from Study 1, the significant effects that were found in Study 1 were not replicated in Study 2. Interestingly, the reverse case is also true as the significant effects found in Study 2 were not present in Study 1.

While few hypotheses were supported, Study 2 did evidence a significant effect of positive diagnostic information seeking on hiring likelihood perceptions. Though caution should be exercised in interpreting this effect given that it was not significant in Study 1, the relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and hiring likelihood perceptions is consistent with theoretical work dealing with opportunities to perform (Ford et al., 1992). Moreover, the test of Hypothesis 5a (Figure 3) yielded an interesting significant moderation effect that was in a direction opposite to what was hypothesized. Though the main effects were not significant, this significant interaction effect suggests that hiring likelihood perceptions might change the nature of the relationship between positive diagnostic information seeking and felt obligation. While simple slopes analyses conducted at one standard deviation above and below the mean were not significant, the significance of the interaction term implies that at lower levels of hiring likelihood perceptions, positive diagnostic information seeking may be more likely to engender felt obligation toward the organization while at higher levels of hiring likelihood perceptions, positive diagnostic information seeking may be less likely to increase felt obligation. Though contrary to initial theorizing, a possible explanation for this moderating effect could stem from theoretical underpinnings of social exchange theory. In particular, social

exchange theory emphasizes the voluntariness of exchange relationships (Blau, 1964). It might be that hiring likelihood perceptions could be related to notions that the organization “needs” the employee, which undermines the voluntariness of benefits provided (i.e., positive diagnostic information seeking). For example, in tight labor markets, organizations might offer a whole host of benefits to job candidates in order to entice them to join the organization (Rynes & Barber, 1990), but job applicants might perceive that organizations are only temporarily offering benefits to applicants and cannot be relied upon to voluntarily offer benefits over a longer-term; in turn, this may undermine the obligation felt by job candidates. Perhaps a broader issue, that could explain the results of this study, stems from the nature of felt obligation within the recruiting context. While felt obligation has been a central construct in social exchange theory since its inception (Blau, 1964), the measure utilized in Study 1 and 2 was developed within the context of an existent organization-employee relationship (Eisenberger et al., 2001). It is possible that the nature of the roles and expectations of a job applicant and hiring organization are not precisely the same as that of an employee and organization; this might explain the general lack of significance surrounding the mediating role of felt obligation. As a result, job applicants may have difficulty accurately assessing felt obligation (at least the particular operationalization utilized), since the construct may only become salient in certain relationships, contexts, or points in time. Future research might employ a construct that is more universal in judgment. For example, fairness perceptions may be a more salient and clearly understood construct that might act as a social exchange mediator.

A supplementary perspective to the above interaction finding might simply be that a job applicant that has a high likelihood of receiving a job offer need not reciprocate benefits received. In this sense, a relationship based on a two-way exchange of resources is not necessary because the job applicant might be able to achieve a one-way receipt of benefits without reciprocation, which could help him/her maximize self-interests. In fact, an organization may be providing benefits without the need for information-based reciprocation because they are hoping for reciprocation in other forms, such as an acceptance of a job offer or simply applying to the job.

Finally, while Study 2 provided the potential to examine the generalizability of findings in Study 1 by utilizing a field-based design, rather than an experimental design, both studies still utilize a student population. Though all participants in this sample were actively looking for employment opportunities during the same semester that this study was conducted, and a wide variety of job seekers all hold many similar job search goals (Boswell et al., 2012), an examination of other types of job seekers (e.g., unemployed individuals, full-time employees, part-time employees, etc.) might alleviate some of the inherent concerns related to generalizability due to a student sample.

CHAPTER 5
GENERAL DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH
DIRECTIONS

Figure 1 displays the entire theoretical model which suggests an exchange of social benefits and costs in the staffing process that occurs through felt obligation. As a whole instance of social exchange (wherein a benefit or cost is received, elicits felt obligation, and results in reciprocation), both the lab and field study together provide little support for the particular hypotheses forwarded. Specifically, only one hypothesis relating to indirect effects through felt obligation was supported in Study 1 (i.e., the indirect effect of positive diagnostic information seeking on the length of self-imposed decision deadlines through felt obligation) and this effect failed to replicate in Study 2. With this in mind, the potential theoretical implications outlined below are limited and should be interpreted with caution. However, the theoretical framework proposed throughout this paper may still potentially provide a base for future researchers to build upon, especially if another, more theoretically sound, mediator of social exchange (in lieu of felt obligation) is modeled—a point discussed in the future research directions below.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The current paper presents an integrated social exchange model grounded in the exchange of information-based benefits and costs between a hiring organization and job applicant. In line with social exchange theory, this paper emphasizes the importance of understanding information-related actions in recruiting and selection contexts as symbolic activities that impact applicant reactions. Furthermore, social exchange theory

has the potential to complement the predominant theoretical lens in the recruiting literature, signaling theory (Turban, 2001; Walker et al., 2012), by underscoring the fact that “signals” sent by hiring organizations also have an effect on the pattern of interaction between these two parties during the staffing process, which occurs even before an employee-organization relationship is established. Relatedly, social exchange theory suggests that job applicant reactions to organization recruiting and selection behavior likely include outcomes that extend beyond job choice decisions (e.g., job pursuit and offer acceptance). By integrating the notion of like-kind exchanges into the present model, the resultant hypotheses benefit from an increase in the theoretical precision of the types of outcomes that can be expected by hiring organizations when they provide information-based benefits to job applicants (i.e., information-based reciprocation can be expected from the provision of information-based benefits). In addition, a social exchange-based model allows for the study of recruiting and selection from the perspective of both the job applicant and the hiring organization, and not merely one or the other (cf. Breugh & Starke, 2000; Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005), as social exchange is inherently a two-party process. Finally, social exchange theory provides a temporal and dynamic view of recruiting and selection phenomena. In contrast to signaling or brand equity perspectives (Collins & Han, 2004), which provide snapshots of applicant reactions to certain organizational behavior, social exchange theory provides insight on the nature and extent of subsequent organization and applicant interactions as they exchange resources across time and contexts.

An additional contribution of this work is the detailing of how and why an organization’s information seeking strategies might lead to different levels of applicant

self-imposed decision deadlines, positive word of mouth, negative word of mouth, and faking by drawing on a central construct in social exchange theory, felt obligation, that drives reciprocation toward the organization (Eisenberger et al., 2001). The present studies also represent the initial examination of this construct within the context of recruitment and selection. By doing so, this study extends the notion of obligation from being embedded in existing employee-organization relationships to potentially shorter relationships between job candidates and hiring organizations. Indeed in Study 1, felt obligation was a significant predictor of both the length of self-imposed decision deadlines and positive word of mouth. As a result, this paper theorizes on and finds some support for the potential that job applicant-hiring organization relationships are sufficiently long-term enough for social exchange dynamics (e.g., felt obligation) to be relevant in predicting behavior and attitudes.

In addition, this paper meaningfully extends the work of prior researchers (e.g., Sackett, 1982) by building a theory of diagnostic information seeking. Whereas positive or negative intentioned interview questioning focused on the strategies interviewers use to confirm or disconfirm their a priori beliefs about candidates, the present paper shifts focus to the job applicant and places emphasis on applicant perceptions and reactions and examines these phenomena in the broader course of recruiting and selection cycles in general, not just the interview. Results from Study 1 and 2 empirically highlight the potential of this contribution. For example, negative diagnostic information seeking was a marginally significant predictor of hiring likelihood perceptions in Study 1, which in turn has been shown to be related to applicant attraction on a meta-analytic basis (Chapman et al., 2005). Similarly, positive diagnostic information seeking displayed significant

indirect relationships with the length of self-imposed decision deadlines and a marginally significant indirect effect on positive word of mouth (Study 1). Furthermore, positive diagnostic information seeking had a significant effect on hiring likelihood perceptions in Study 2. Given that the majority of the significant relationships found in the studies were in the expected direction, the results obtained from the studies together demonstrate the potential impact that positive and negative diagnostic information seeking might have on important recruiting outcomes. This effort fits well with the selection literature's more recent trend to carefully consider applicant reactions to selection procedures in addition to the validity of the selection procedures themselves (Hausknecht et al., 2004). Given the relative dearth of research since Sackett's (1979) theorizing on positive and negative intentioned interview questions, the present paper integrates and extends prior work in the selection literature by examining several potentially relevant job applicant reactions.

Finally, the proposed model further integrates the recruitment and selection literatures by outlining the potential effects associated with a critical component of selection, information seeking, and integrating the examination of this selection behavior with the recruiting literature by considering outcomes relevant to recruitment efforts (e.g., word of mouth). As prior scholars have noted, recruitment and selection activities do not act in isolation (Rynes, 1989) and theoretical models that examine both phenomenon simultaneously are more poised to capture the richness and interrelatedness associated with a phenomenon as complex as staffing. By demonstrating that both positive and negative information seeking by the organization can impact dependent variables traditionally thought of as recruitment outcomes, this paper bridges the gap between the

traditionally separate, but conceptually and practically related, fields of recruitment and selection (Bangerter et al., 2012).

5.2 Practical Implications

Beyond theoretical contributions, the model and results presented in this paper carry several points of practical and actionable advice to managers. First, the elucidation of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking provides a classification system for organizations to categorize their information seeking strategies and behaviors. By identifying these specific practices, organizations may be well poised to assess their current selection systems to estimate the extent to which they may reap potential beneficial (or minimize detrimental) information-based outcomes. Though many of the proposed hypotheses were not supported, the indirect and direct effects that were supported in Study 1 and 2 carry important implications for organizations. For example, results from Study 1 suggest that negative diagnostic information seeking exhibits significant direct effects on negative word of mouth and the length of self-imposed decision deadlines. This same effect is replicated for self-imposed decision deadline length in Study 2. In addition, Study 2 demonstrates a significant direct effect of negative diagnostic information seeking on faking. Moreover, marginally significant effects were found for negative diagnostic information seeking on faking in Study 1. The consistent effect of negative diagnostic information seeking on faking suggests that perhaps individuals engage in faking to avoid negative consequences but might be more hesitant to violate ethical norms to gain benefits. Though they were not hypothesized on an a priori basis, these results suggest that organizations should be careful when engaging in negative diagnostic information seeking if they desire to minimize potential detrimental

effects and maximize potential information-based benefits. For example, during the pursuit of a particularly desirable candidate, organizations are likely aware that they should treat him/her with respect and warmth but the research presented here suggests that organizations need to take things a step further and seek to avoid engaging in more negative diagnostic information seeking than is necessary to make valid selection decisions. In the case of a highly desirable candidate (i.e., one that is already determined to be highly qualified for the job), it may even be advisable to customize the selection procedure to minimize negative diagnostic information seeking for this high-value candidate. Conversely, if an organization desires to encourage applicants to self-select out of the recruiting process, they might seek to implement more negative diagnostic information seeking. Either way, organizations should be cognizant of and intentional in their use of negative diagnostic information seeking. For organizations, this paper identifies an actual practice to avoid and elucidates some of the theoretical outcomes, or detriments, associated with this practice.

Moreover, given that hiring likelihood perceptions have been meta-analytically linked to a host of beneficial recruiting outcomes such as job pursuit intentions, attraction, acceptance intentions, and job choice (Chapman et al., 2005), the marginally significant negative impact of negative diagnostic information seeking on hiring likelihood perceptions (evidenced in Study 1) might give managers an additional reason to avoid utilizing negative diagnostic information seeking strategies more than is necessary. In comparison to the opportunity to collect information via positive diagnostic information seeking without negatively impacting hiring likelihood perceptions (positive diagnostic information seeking actually had a significant positive effect on hiring

likelihood perceptions in Study 2), the potentially unfavorable effects of negative diagnostic information seeking on hiring likelihood perceptions might be a nonfinancial cost that should be considered when management calculates the utility of certain staffing strategies.

A particularly effective way to control and optimize the levels of negative diagnostic information seeking in the selection process could be the use of structured interviews. Given the plethora of evidence supporting the selection validity of structured interviews (McDaniel et al., 1994), the ideal level of negative diagnostic information seeking could become formalized and built into the structure of the interview itself. Combined with interviewer training on not only the structured interview but also the effective use of negative diagnostic information seeking, organizations might go far in avoiding the subtle, but potentially damaging, impacts of negative diagnostic information seeking. A corollary of this suggestion is that, without an understanding of negative diagnostic information seeking, organizations might be inadvertently structuring overly high levels of negative diagnostic information seeking into their selection processes without knowing it. This in turn may cause significant damage to the organization if this structure is indeed applied consistently across all job candidates over time.

Conversely, positive diagnostic information seeking may be an information gathering strategy that also results in some additional benefits for organizations. As evidenced in Study 1, positive diagnostic information seeking (indirectly through felt obligation) led participants to intend to respond more quickly to organizations. Given that the management of timing issues are a very practical logistical concern for organizations during the staffing process (W. J. Becker et al., 2010), an information gathering strategy

that not only provides potential useful information for selection but also minimizes the time it would take for applicants to respond to job offers would be a win-win situation for organizations. Though one could argue that positive diagnostic information seeking might be taxing on job applicants' time, the results presented support the notion that positive diagnostic information seeking is seen as a social exchange benefit. This suggests that if organizations utilize positive diagnostic information seeking strategies, they may be able to gather a large amount of information that might aid in selection decisions without negatively impacting applicant reactions. This is especially important given that many selection tools each add unique incremental validity in selection decisions (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998) and depend on the accumulation of information about the job applicant.

From a human capital perspective, positive diagnostic information seeking can even represent a potential source of competitive advantage to organizations. Similar to arguments surrounding the utility of realistic job previews (Landis, Earnest, & Allen, 2014), even small beneficial effects attributable to positive diagnostic information seeking might be of value to organizations as these information gathering strategies are essentially costless from a financial perspective. Results from the two studies identify the potential for organizations to gain benefits from positive diagnostic information seeking. Compared to corporate advertisements, which might have distinct and calculable financial costs (Collins & Han, 2004), favorable applicant perceptions might be bolstered quite economically through purposeful information seeking strategy design, with a particular emphasis on appropriately managing levels of positive diagnostic information seeking. More importantly, positive diagnostic information seeking is a somewhat subtle

behavior that might not be easily imitated by competitors thus potentially providing organizations that utilize positive diagnostic information seeking a source of competitive advantage (Wright, McMahan, & McWilliams, 1994).

5.3 Future Research Directions

The most impactful future research possibility with respect to the present paper would be to investigate the use of another mediator other than felt obligation. Although felt obligation did have significant direct effects on some of the dependent variables of interest and played a significant and marginally significant role as a mediator (Study 1), it is possible that more robust indirect effects for positive and negative diagnostic information seeking might be found by replacing felt obligation with another, more salient, social exchange mechanism. With respect to this, researchers have noted that there are multiple ways to measure the strength of social exchange relationships within the employee-organization relationship (Colquitt et al., 2014) which suggests that there are mediators which might be investigated in lieu of felt obligation. Further examination of results reveal that the direct effects of negative diagnostic information seeking on self-imposed decision deadline length and negative word of mouth were significant (Study 1). In addition, negative diagnostic information seeking had a significant direct effect on self-imposed decision deadline length and faking in Study 2. Compared to the lack of support for indirect effects through felt obligation, finding evidence of these direct effects opens the possibility that other variables might more meaningfully mediate the relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and information-based outcomes. In this way, there seems to be some relationship between information-based resources given to (or information-based costs not imposed on) applicants and the

reciprocation of information-based resources back to the organization. Altogether, future researchers might explore the possible mechanisms that might more substantially mediate the relationship between positive and negative diagnostic information seeking by the organization and applicants' information-based reciprocation. One possible mechanism is organizational fairness. Specifically, Colquitt and Rodell (2015, p. 195) state that "fairness could be acting as one of the sentiments that encourages reciprocation in exchange-based theorizing." Indeed, given the central role of applicants' organizational fairness perceptions in predicting recruiting outcomes (Chapman et al., 2005), it is likely that fairness perceptions predict various beneficial attitudes and behaviors that might be conceptualized as social exchange reciprocation. This rationale is consistent with the findings from Study 2 which show a direct relationship between negative diagnostic information seeking and faking. Moreover, some of the control variables included in the present analyses provide possible ideas for meaningful mechanisms. In particular, prestige seems to play an important role in the information exchange process. While included in the model as a control variable, prestige was a significant predictor of four of the five dependent variables of interest in Study 1 (see Tables 4 and 5) and positive word of mouth in Study 2. Given that prestige represents a social consensus on the degree to which a company's characteristics are regarded as normatively positive (Highhouse et al., 2003), prestige may represent another social exchange mediator that taps into the desirability of a given organization as a social exchange partner. Correlations from Study 1 and Study 2 both support this speculation. Specifically, in Study 1, there was a significant positive correlation ($r = .24$) between positive diagnostic information seeking and prestige while there was a significant negative relationship between negative

diagnostic information seeking and prestige ($r = -.20$). Similarly, positive diagnostic information seeking was significantly positively correlated with prestige in Study 2 ($r = .58$). Moreover, prestige was significantly negatively correlated with negative diagnostic information seeking in Study 2 ($r = -.27$). These results do seem to support the possibility that prestige is related to both diagnostic information seeking and the information-based dependent variables outlined in this paper. This opens the possibility for modeling prestige as a social exchange mechanism.

The results presented might provide a baseline for future researchers to model multiple parallel mediators which may paint a more complex, but accurate, picture of the underlying social exchange phenomena addressed in this paper. In turn, this could allow researchers to examine more nuanced questions surrounding the dynamics of the social exchange process between applicants and organizations, such as competing explanations and questions of relative importance of mediators. Furthermore, future research might even examine the role of multiple mediators acting serially to affect information-based reciprocation. The inclusion of multiple serial mediators might reveal stronger indirect effects for positive and negative diagnostic information seeking and help researchers understand the extent to which positive and negative diagnostic information seeking plays a more distal role in affecting applicant reciprocation.

Additionally, future research might attempt to replicate the significant findings in a field sample with a larger sample size to increase external validity. Beyond a sheer increase in the number of participants, future research should be directed at understanding whether the theoretical framework posited in this paper applies to other types of job seekers (e.g., unemployed individuals, fully employed individuals looking

for alternative opportunities, etc.). Though reviews of the job search literature suggest that a broad array of job seekers share common goals during the job search process (Boswell et al., 2012), it would be beneficial to substantiate this model in another population, perhaps in a full-time employee sample rather than a student sample. At the same time, it is important to note that while different populations of job seekers might have many similarities, the possibility exists that the social exchange processes driving the job search for these different populations might vary in a predictable way. Integrating this rationale with the aforementioned call for the investigation of more potent mediators, it could be possible that certain social exchange mediators might be more salient to certain sub-populations of job seekers (e.g., fully employed individuals might be more sensitive to organization fairness compared to unemployed individuals). As a result, job seeker type might be a relevant moderator that either suppresses or accentuates social exchange processes (i.e., a moderated mediation model). Similarly, researchers could further segment job seeker populations by occupation or industry as norms in these different contexts might act as moderators to social exchange dynamics. For example, negative diagnostic information seeking (e.g., background checks and other security-enhancing screening techniques) may be more prevalent in governmental work given the sensitive nature of the tasks involved.

Although the resource theory of social exchange (U. G. Foa & Foa, 1974, 1980) suggests that reciprocation is most likely made in-kind (i.e., information is reciprocated with information), there still exists instances where resources are not exchanged in-kind but instead other types of resources are reciprocated (e.g., status). For example, an individual might not reciprocate information for information received but instead could

reciprocate status for information received. According to the resource theory of social exchange, these “errors” are most likely to occur for two resources that are similar. Given that status and information share the common attribute of being low in concreteness, future research might examine whether the social exchange model outlined herein extends to other status-based (or even love-based), as opposed to information-based, dependent variables. Within the context of recruiting, organization attraction, which is narrower than prestige as it represents a particular individual’s affective and attitudinal thoughts about a given organization (Highhouse et al., 2003), might be a status-based resource of interest. Theoretical and empirical work in this area could provide a basis for further distinguishing the related constructs of prestige and organization attraction (Highhouse et al., 2003). Drawing again from the resource theory of social exchange, constructs such as organizational identification (Klein, Molloy, & Brinsfield, 2012), which tap into more distally related social resources (under the term “love”), might also prove to be relevant dependent variables. Further, these alternative dependent variables might be more likely to be reciprocated under certain contingencies. For example, an applicant might be more likely to identify with an organization if information reciprocation is somehow restricted due to strict formalization of recruiting and selection procedures. In this way, the voluntariness and free-flowing exchange of resources might be limited and applicant’s reciprocation might be less likely to be in kind.

Similarly, future research may look at the provision of other information-based resources by the organization, most notably information disclosures. Research finds that the amount, specificity, and usefulness of the information provided to job applicants via the initial job advertisement (Feldman, Bearden, & Hardesty, 2006), organizational web

site (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007), job interview (Turban & Dougherty, 1992), and site visit (Saks & Uggerslev, 2010) tend to lead to greater organizational attraction. Indeed on a meta-analytic basis, recruiter informativeness is positively related to applicant's job and organizational attraction (Chapman et al., 2005). In this way, information disclosures might be a form of information-based social exchange benefit provided to job applicants by organizations. Consequently, the theoretical model outlined in this paper might be expanded to include the consideration of information disclosure as an additional independent variable of interest. Furthermore, a subtle distinction exists between information disclosures and information seeking actions. Compared to information seeking, information disclosures do not place a normative burden on job applicants to respond. For example, it would be normatively inappropriate to be asked a question in an interview and not respond. In this way, information disclosures might be seen by job applicants as even more voluntary than information seeking, as there could be fewer expectations associated with information disclosures. As a result, this difference in "voluntariness" might drive different levels of job applicant reciprocation back to the organization depending on the nature of the initial social exchange benefit or cost provided.

While this paper has depicted the social exchange relationship between a hiring organization and job applicant as initiated by actions of the hiring organization (i.e., positive and negative diagnostic information seeking), another perspective on the social exchange dynamics outlined herein could stem from actions of the job applicant that might initiate a positive social exchange between the applicant and representatives of the organization. As an example of a job applicant-initiated information exchange, consider

the situation where an applicant might voluntarily disclose information about themselves to the organization, even information that is not requested, such as their intentions to accept an offer or even reject an offer. In this way, the provision of information regarding acceptance intentions by job candidates might be useful to organizations for planning or logistical purposes, and thus serve as a form of information-based social exchange benefit provided to the organization. As a result, the possibility exists that a job applicant might initiate the social exchange relationship with a hiring organization by engaging in such actions and future research might examine these actions as independent variables that predict organizations' reciprocation.

Moreover, future research might be aimed at understanding the nature, and limitations of, felt obligation within the context of the employment relationship. Perhaps felt obligation is shaped by the context (e.g., job applicant-hiring organization relationship versus extant employee-organization relationship) and the expectations associated with a particular role (e.g., job candidate). For example, it is possible that job applicants' obligations toward an organization can be fulfilled in more subtle ways that are less beneficial to organizations (e.g., simply submitting a job application or showing up to a scheduled interview on time). Qualitative inductive research might be conducted to gain an understanding of the expectations and interaction patterns that are considered normative by job applicants and hiring organizations. In this way, the social exchange mediator of felt obligation might manifest itself in ways unique to the staffing context that might warrant a different operationalization of the felt obligation construct.

While the design of the two studies in this paper complemented each other with respect to examining the entire recruiting cycle (Barber, 1998), future research might aim

to directly address the temporal aspects of diagnostic information seeking by utilizing a completely within-individual design and surveying the same participants over multiple time periods. This research design may allow for the examination of a few interesting questions. For example, it is possible that time itself may moderate the effect of negative diagnostic information seeking where negative diagnostic information seeking conducted early on in the recruiting process might negatively impact candidate attitudes and perceptions (e.g., hiring likelihood perceptions) yet negative diagnostic information seeking conducted in later stages of the recruiting process (e.g., site visit) might be less impactful. Moreover, questions of consistency in information gathering strategy could be more appropriately answered by a within-individual design. For example, the trajectory of negative or positive diagnostic information seeking might uniquely impact applicant attitudes and perceptions as consistency in questioning strategies might serve to reduce applicant apprehension due to uncertainty.

Appendix A

Study 1 Experiment Materials

An organization has requested our assistance in evaluating its college recruiting practices. Your task is to take the role of an active job seeker and complete the organization's application materials as if you are someone trying to obtain employment with the organization. Afterwards, you will be asked to provide your opinion on the application materials. To make the study more realistic, the organization will evaluate your application as if it were real and award a \$5 Starbucks gift card to those students they would choose to "offer a job."

On the next page you will be shown application instructions and questions provided by the organization. When the timer reaches zero, continue to the next page to begin reading through the organization's instructions and completing their application as if you were an active job seeker that has never interacted with this organization before.

Our organization is currently accepting applications for positions. Consideration of candidates will be based on the application materials below. To be considered, please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

(Participants are then randomly assigned to one of four conditions):

Positive diagnostic information seeking manipulation

1. "Describe a time when your work was praised."
2. "What is your strongest subject in school?"
3. "What has been your most rewarding extracurricular activity (e.g., job, interest club, athletics, sorority/fraternity)?"
4. "Please describe a time where you helped improve your community."
5. "What has been your biggest accomplishment to date (academic, personal, or professional)?"
6. "What skill or expertise do you feel you've mastered?"
7. "Describe an academic, personal, or professional experience you've had that will help you be a good employee."
8. "What would others see as your personal strengths that might assist you in achieving your academic and professional goals?"

Negative diagnostic information seeking manipulation

1. "Describe a time when your work was criticized."
2. "What is your weakest subject in school?"
3. "Describe your most severe violation of the academic honor code (e.g., cheated during an exam, copied homework, helped someone cheat during an exam, stolen an exam, etc.)?"
4. "Please describe any convictions you have had for a criminal offense, felony, or misdemeanor."
5. "What has been your biggest failure to date (academic, personal, or professional)?"

6. “What skill or expertise do you feel you’re lacking?”
7. “Describe a conflict you have had with co-workers or classmates at any of your previous jobs or classes.”
8. “What would others see as your personal weaknesses that might prevent you from achieving your academic and professional goals?”

Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking manipulation

1. “What skill or expertise do you feel you’ve mastered?”
2. “What skill or expertise do you feel you’re lacking?”
3. “What has been your biggest accomplishment to date (academic, personal, or professional)?”
4. “What has been your biggest failure to date (academic, personal, or professional)?”
5. “Describe an academic, personal, or professional experience you’ve had that will help you be a good employee.”
6. “Describe a conflict you have had with co-workers or classmates at any of your previous jobs or classes.”
7. “What would others see as your personal strengths that might assist you in achieving your academic and professional goals?”
8. “What would others see as your personal weaknesses that might prevent you from achieving your academic and professional goals?”

Control condition

1. “What is your preferred method of communicating with co-workers (e.g., e-mail, instant message, face-to-face, phone, video chat, or text message)?”
2. “What personality type do you prefer to work with?”
3. “When trying to make progress on an important project, do you usually stay late at work or go in early to work? Why?”
4. “What functional area of an organization (e.g., human resources, marketing, IT, accounting, finance, operations management, etc.) do you think is most important? Why?”
5. “How did you go about choosing a major?”
6. “How do you organize your work day?”
7. “What would you do if you were in a team meeting that was going over its scheduled time and you had another obligation to attend to?”
8. “What is one question you would ask a potential employer before accepting a job?”

You have completed the first part of the application. As mentioned, we are helping the organization assess its recruiting practices. Based on your experiences with the organization today, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below. Please answer honestly. Your responses to the below opinion questions will not be seen or evaluated by the organization and will not impact your chances of receiving the gift card.

(Survey questionnaire administered here)

Thank you for providing your opinions on the first part of the job application. The second part of the application will begin on the next page. In this part, you will complete a task designed by the organization to assess how well a job applicant might deal with the uncertainties in the job search process. The objective in this task is to solve as many matrices as possible in 2 minutes. To solve a matrix you must find a pair of numbers that, when added together, equal 10. For example, the solution to the below matrix is: 4.81 and 5.19. Please note: the organization will consider your performance on this task as part of their evaluation in determining whether you will receive a gift card. To ensure everyone's matrices are the same difficulty, please solve the matrices in the order in which they appear, without skipping any. In other words, solve the first matrix before you move on to the next one. Please keep track of your progress as you will be asked to report how many matrices you solved correctly. Click to continue when you are ready to start the task. The 2 minute timer will begin as soon as you go to the next page.

(Matrix task administered here)

Thank you for completing both parts of the application and opinion sections. Now, we would like to ask a few questions about you. This will help us to analyze our data. Your responses to the rest of the questions will not be seen or evaluated by the organization and will not impact your chances of receiving the gift card.

(Ending survey questionnaire administered here)

Appendix B
Summary of results for exploratory analyses

		Study 1 - Exploratory Analyses with controls	Study 1 - Exploratory Analyses without controls
EH1	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation	n.s	n.s
EH2	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking -> hiring likelihood	$p \leq .01$	n.s
EH3	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation	n.s	n.s
EH4a	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	n.s	n.s
EH4b	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	n.s	n.s
EH4c	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	n.s	n.s
EH4d	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	n.s	n.s
EH4e	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s	n.s
EH5a	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	n.s	n.s
EH5b	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	n.s	n.s
EH5c	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood-> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	n.s	n.s
EH5d	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	n.s	n.s
EH5e	Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s	n.s

Appendix C

Means, standard deviations, and correlations (Study 1 – Exploratory Analysis)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Positive affect	2.38	0.90	---											
2. Negative affect	1.30	0.42	.06	---										
3. Prestige	3.15	0.63	.41**	-.13	---									
4. Positive diagnostic info. seeking ¹	0.24	0.43	.06	-.13	.18**	---								
5. Negative diagnostic info. seeking ²	0.27	0.44	-.13	.21**	-.20**	-.34**	---							
6. Positive and negative diagnostic info. seeking ³	0.23	0.42	.11	-.06	.08	-.31**	-.33**	---						
7. Hiring likelihood	3.01	0.75	.42**	-.17*	.49**	.14*	-.19**	-.06	---					
8. Felt obligation	3.70	0.72	.37**	-.08	.39**	.16*	-.21**	.09	.31**	---				
9. Self-imposed decision deadline	6.22	3.09	.28**	-.08	.39**	.06	-.20**	.11	.37**	.24**	---			
10. Self-imposed decision deadline length	2.62	2.99	.07	-.06	.23**	.00	.11	-.05	.16*	.19**	.41**	---		
11. Positive word of mouth	3.03	0.83	.41**	-.22**	.73**	.13	-.27**	.12	.50**	.45**	.43**	.17*	---	
12. Negative word of mouth	2.22	0.84	-.20**	.32**	-.48**	-.27**	.44**	-.01	-.38**	-.32**	-.33**	-.12	-.50**	---
13. Faking	1.17	1.52	0.15*	.08	0.17*	.07	.07	.00	.04	.05	.02	.07	.12	.03

Note: N = 210.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

³Dummy Variable (1 = Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

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

Appendix D

Summary of regression results on felt obligation and hiring likelihood (Study 1 – Exploratory Analysis)

Variable	Felt Obligation			Felt Obligation			Felt Obligation			Hiring Likelihood			Hiring Likelihood		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i> (<i>B</i>)	β
Constant	2.34**	0.29		2.38**	0.29		2.54**	0.32		-1.57**	0.28		-1.42**	0.28	
Controls															
Positive affect	0.21**	0.06	0.26**	0.20**	0.06	0.25**	0.19**	0.06	0.23**	0.23**	0.05	0.28**	0.24**	0.05	0.28**
Negative affect	-0.10	0.11	-0.06	-0.05	0.11	-0.03	-0.03	0.11	-0.02	-0.26*	0.11	-0.14*	-0.24*	0.11	-0.14*
Prestige	0.32**	0.08	0.28**	0.29**	0.08	0.25**	0.23*	0.09	0.20*	0.43**	0.08	0.36**	0.43**	0.08	0.36**
Predictors															
Positive diagnostic information seeking ¹				0.14	0.13	0.08	0.17	0.13	0.10				-0.11	0.12	-0.07
Negative diagnostic information seeking ²				-0.13	0.13	-0.08	-0.09	0.13	-0.06				-0.24*	0.12	-0.14*
Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking ³				0.07	0.13	0.04	0.10	0.13	0.06				-0.35**	0.12	-0.20**
Hiring likelihood							0.12	0.12	0.12						
Interactions															
Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood							-0.08	0.17	-0.04						
Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood							0.02	0.16	0.01						
Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood							-0.13	0.21	-0.05						
<i>R</i>			.45**			.47**			.48**			.56**			.59**
<i>R</i> ²			.20**			.22**			.23**			.32**			.35**
ΔR^2						.02			.01			.01			.03*
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²			.19			.20			.19			.31			.33

Note: *N* = 210.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

³Dummy Variable (1 = Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

† *p* ≤ .10. * *p* ≤ .05. ** *p* ≤ .01.

Appendix E

Summary of regression results on establishment of self-imposed decision deadlines and length of self-imposed decision deadlines (Study 1 – Exploratory Analysis)

Variable	Self-Imposed Decision			Self-Imposed Decision			Self-Imposed Decision			Self-Imposed Deadline Length			Self-Imposed Deadline Length			Self-Imposed Deadline Length		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>β</i>)	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>β</i>)	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>β</i>)	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>β</i>)	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>β</i>)	<i>β</i>	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>β</i>)	<i>β</i>
Constant	0.54	1.24		0.84	1.27		0.19	1.47		-0.41	1.28		-0.87	1.30		-2.40	1.49	
Controls																		
Positive affect	0.53*	0.24	0.16*	0.49*	0.24	0.14*	0.44†	0.25	0.13†	-0.07	0.25	-0.02	-0.02	0.25	-0.01	-0.15	0.25	-0.04
Negative affect	-0.39	0.47	-0.05	-0.24	0.48	-0.03	-0.23	0.48	-0.03	-0.24	0.49	-0.03	-0.49	0.49	-0.07	-0.46	0.49	-0.07
Prestige	1.56**	0.35	0.32**	1.51**	0.35	0.31**	1.43**	0.36	0.29**	1.12**	0.36	0.24**	1.24**	0.36	0.26**	1.06**	0.37	0.22**
IVs																		
Positive diagnostic information seeking ¹				-0.28	0.56	-0.04	-0.32	0.56	-0.04				-0.03	0.57	-0.01	-0.12	0.57	-0.02
Negative diagnostic information seeking ²				-0.79	0.55	-0.11	-0.75	0.55	-0.11				1.16*	0.56	0.17*	1.24*	0.56	0.19*
Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking ³				0.16	0.56	0.02	0.14	0.56	0.02				-0.11	0.58	-0.02	-0.15	0.57	-0.02
Mediator																		
Felt Obligation							0.28	0.31	0.07							0.64*	0.31	0.16*
<i>R</i>																		
<i>R</i> ²			.42**			.43**			.43**			.23*		.29**				.32**
<i>ΔR</i> ²			.17**			.19**			.19**			.06**		.09**				.06**
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²						.01			.00					.03†				.02*
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²			.16			.16			.16			.04		.06				.07

Note: *N* = 210.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

³Dummy Variable (1 = Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

† *p* ≤ .10. * *p* ≤ .05. ** *p* ≤ .01.

Appendix F

Summary of regression results on positive word of mouth and negative word of mouth (Study 1 – Exploratory Analysis)

Variable	Positive Word of Mouth			Positive Word of Mouth			Positive Word of Mouth			Negative Word of Mouth			Negative Word of Mouth			Negative Word of Mouth		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4			Model 5			Model 6		
	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β	B	SE(B)	β
Constant	0.39	0.24		0.49*	0.25		0.07	0.28		3.39**	0.31		3.07**	0.29		3.39**	0.33	
Controls																		
Positive affect	0.14**	0.05	0.16**	0.13**	0.05	0.15**	0.10*	0.05	0.11*	-0.03	0.06	-0.04	-0.02	0.06	-0.02	0.01	0.06	0.01
Negative affect	-0.28*	0.09	-0.14*	-0.25*	0.09	-0.13*	-0.24**	0.09	-0.12**	0.54**	0.12	0.27**	0.41**	0.11	0.21**	0.41**	0.11	0.20**
Prestige	0.84**	0.07	0.65**	0.84**	0.07	0.64**	0.79**	0.07	0.60**	-0.57**	0.09	-0.43**	-0.51**	0.08	-0.38**	-0.47**	0.08	-0.36**
IVs																		
Positive diagnostic information seeking ¹				-0.12	0.11	-0.06	-0.14	0.11	-0.07				0.00	0.13	0.00	0.02	0.13	0.01
Negative diagnostic information seeking ²				-0.22*	0.11	-0.12*	-0.20†	0.10	-0.11†				0.70**	0.13	0.37**	0.68**	0.13	0.36**
Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking ³				-0.02	0.11	-0.01	-0.03	0.11	-0.02				0.32*	0.13	0.16*	0.33*	0.13	0.16*
Mediator																		
Felt Obligation							0.18**	0.06	0.16**							-0.13†	0.07	-0.12†
R			.75**			.76**			.77**			.55**			.64**			.65**
R ²			.56**			.57**			.59**			.30**			.42**			.40**
ΔR ²						.01			.02**						.11**			.01†
Adjusted R ²			.56			.56			.58			.29			.40			.41

Note: N = 210.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

³Dummy Variable (1 = Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

† p ≤ .10. * p ≤ .05. ** p ≤ .01.

Appendix G
Summary of regression results on faking (Study 1 - Exploratory Analysis)

Variable	Faking			Faking			Faking		
	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>B</i>)	β	<i>B</i>	SE(<i>B</i>)	β
Constant	-0.69	0.66		-0.96	0.67		-0.81	0.78	
Controls									
Positive affect	0.15	0.13	0.09	0.16	0.13	0.10	0.17	0.13	0.10
Negative affect	0.33	0.25	0.09	0.27	0.26	0.08	0.27	0.26	0.08
Prestige	0.34†	0.18	0.14†	0.34†	0.19	0.14†	0.36†	0.19	0.15†
IVs									
Positive diagnostic information seeking ¹				0.44	0.29	0.13	0.45	0.30	0.13
Negative diagnostic information seeking ²				0.55†	0.29	0.16†	0.54†	0.29	0.16†
Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking ³				0.27	0.30	0.07	0.27	0.30	0.08
Mediator									
Felt Obligation							-0.06	0.16	-0.03
<i>R</i>			.21*			.25*			.25†
<i>R</i> ²			.04*			.06*			.06†
ΔR^2						.02			.00
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²			.03			.04			.03

Note: *N* = 210.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Dummy Variable (1 = Negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

³Dummy Variable (1 = Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

† *p* ≤ .10. * *p* ≤ .05. ** *p* ≤ .01.

Appendix H

Unstandardized indirect effect of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking (through felt obligation) and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 1 – Exploratory Analysis)

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Negative Word of Mouth	Faking
Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking ^{1,2}	0.14 (-.06, .52)	0.14 (-.06, .53)	0.07 (-.04, .21)	-0.04 (-.14, .02)	0.02 (-.02, .15)

Note: $N = 210$.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Controls (mediator): prestige, positive affect, and negative affect; controls (independent variable): negative diagnostic information seeking and positive diagnostic information seeking

† $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Appendix I

Index of moderated mediation and the associated 95% confidence intervals (Study 1- Exploratory Analysis) Moderating effect of hiring likelihood perceptions on the effect of positive and negative diagnostic information seeking through felt obligation

	Self-Imposed Deadline	Self-Imposed Deadline Length	Positive Word of Mouth	Negative Word of Mouth	Faking
Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking ^{1,2}	-0.02 (-.30, .10)	-0.04 (-.42, .20)	-0.01 (-.10, .05)	0.01 (-.04, .10)	0.00 (-.05, .12)

Note: $N = 210$.

¹Dummy Variable (1 = Positive and negative diagnostic information seeking condition, 0 = Control)

²Controls (mediator): prestige, positive affect, and negative affect; controls (independent variable): negative diagnostic information seeking, positive diagnostic information seeking, and hiring likelihood

† $p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Appendix J

Summary of hypotheses testing for supplemental analysis

	Hypothesis	Study 1 no controls	Study 1 full sample	Study 1 full sample no controls
H1	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation	p ≤ .08	n.s.	n.s.
H2	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> hiring likelihood	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H3	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation	n.s.	n.s.	p ≤ .05
H4	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> hiring likelihood	p ≤ .05	n.s.	p ≤ .05
H5a	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H5b	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H6a	Felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	p ≤ .01	n.s.	p ≤ .01
H6b	Felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	p ≤ .01	p ≤ .05	p ≤ .01
H7a	Felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	p ≤ .01	p ≤ .01	p ≤ .01
H7b	Felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	p ≤ .05	p ≤ .08	p ≤ .01
H8	Felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H9a	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	p ≤ .07	n.s.	n.s.
H9b	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	p ≤ .05	p ≤ .10	p ≤ .09
H9c	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	p ≤ .08	n.s.	p ≤ .05
H9d	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	p ≤ .07	n.s.	n.s.
H9e	Positive diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H10a	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	p ≤ .08	n.s.	p ≤ .05
H10b	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	p ≤ .06	p ≤ .05	p ≤ .05
H10c	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	p ≤ .10	p ≤ .05	p ≤ .05
H10d	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	p ≤ .09	p ≤ .10	p ≤ .05
H10e	Negative diagnostic information seeking -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H11a	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H11b	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H11c	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood-> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H11d	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H11e	Positive diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H12a	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H12b	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> length of self-imposed decision deadline	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H12c	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood-> felt obligation -> positive word of mouth	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H12d	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> negative word of mouth	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
H12e	Negative diagnostic information seeking X hiring likelihood -> felt obligation -> faking	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

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