

Unpacking Organizational Attraction: A Process Model

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Abstract

Applicant attraction has been investigated in terms of three overarching metatheories focusing on environment processing, interactionist processing, and self-processing. This paper contributes two additional pieces to the interwoven jigsaw puzzle that was proposed by Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005). First, it develops an organizational attraction five-stage model that suggests perceptions of organizational attraction and Person-Organization 'fit' change across five stages of an individual's relationship with an organization: from a pre-relationship stage to an embedded and/or evaluative stage. Second, it links the different respective attraction stages to existing research and potential avenues for new organizational attraction research.

Keywords: Organizational attraction, social identity, social information processing, attractiveness, recruitment, corporate social responsibility, attraction, Person-Organization 'fit'

1. Introduction

The concept of organizational attraction (OA) is significant to the recruitment of employees and has captured the imagination of practitioners and scholars from various organizational fields such as; Organizational Behavior, Human Resources, Psychology, Marketing, And Strategy. However, we still have very few insights about what actually draws people to an organization. Driven by global competition and technological advances, organizations are looking for ways to attract applicants that are in line with the fast pace of a technology-driven society (Ehrhart, Mayer, & Ziegert, 2012; Allen, Scotter, & Otondo, 2004). Shortages in qualified applicants and changes in employee demographics to include women and minorities as a larger percentage of the workforce have caused many traditionally white male-dominated organizations to question how best to attract qualified employees (e.g., Avery & McKay, 2006; Ng & Burke, 2005;).

Three reasons stand out as the most significant for the promotion of OA as a research topic. First, OA can potentially improve the quantity and quality of applicants that consider initiating the recruitment process with a particular organization (Turban & Cable, 2003). Second, OA, as an antecedent to post entry person-organization (P-O) fit, positively correlates to desired organizational outcomes such as improved productivity and reduced absenteeism or turnover (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Finally, OA is important because it signals to primary stakeholders that an organization is doing the right things (Masterson, 2001).

This paper proposes a process model of OA. This model will help scholars formulate future research to understand how an individual's perceptions of attractiveness change as their relationship and involvement with an organization evolves. Conceptualizing OA as changing facilitates the creation of measures for each stage. New measures could be used to optimize recruitment efforts, training, socialization processes, organizational change, and the benefits of organizational commitment.

'Fit' occurs when two or more entities share characteristics or attributes that make them compatible. This concept applies at both an individual and organizational level.

The common belief is that, when entities are in ‘fit’ (e.g., career choice and vocation, skills and job choice, values and practices), the results or outcomes produced by their interaction are enhanced and are intricately tied to measures of organizational attraction (Chapman, Uggerslev, & Carroll, 2005; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Researchers have conceptualized Person-Organization fit (P-O fit) as a congruence between an individual's values and his or her perceptions of an organization's values based on practices (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996). The perceived P-O fit is believed to be an indicator of applicant organizational attractiveness (Sekiguchi, 2007). However, some investigators have tested and found support for models that suggest the perceptions of P-O fit predict organizational attractiveness (e.g., Turban, Lau, Ngo, & Chow, 2001), while others have found organizational attractiveness mediates the relationship between person-job (P-J) fit and job acceptance intention. Several studies support the notion that individual preferences affect what different organizational factors are attractive (e.g., Rentsch & McEwen, 2002).

The literature on OA and P-O fit is significant but disjointed. Most researchers have focused on OA as an antecedent of or moderator to positive recruitment outcomes (e.g., Collins & Han, 2004; Kanar, et al., 2010). The literature mix indicates that OA has implications at multiple levels and multiple points during an individual's involvement with an organization (e.g., 1997; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). However, confusion and contradictions in OA research reflect potential gaps in the existing conceptualization of the OA construct. While several definitions of OA exist, none effectively describe the role it plays in individual-organization interactions through the lifetime of the relationship. A process view of OA suggests, that OA is based on perceived or subjective common values and desires that motivate individuals to initiate, develop, nurture, and maintain a positive relationship with an organization. An individual perceives common values and desires by evaluating organizational features and characteristics via the organization's reputation and indirect or direct contact with the organization. Therefore, focusing on OA at just one or a few points in the P-O relationship can potentially lead researchers to overlook aspects of OA that might advance understanding and lead to enhanced organizational performance.

Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005: 902) suggest that applicant attraction needs to be investigated in terms of “three overarching metatheories focusing on environment processing, interactionist processing, and self-processing.”

“(In) the environment processing metatheory ... actual environment characteristics predict perceived environment characteristics which in turn predict attraction. The interactionist processing metatheory provides the basis for the interplay of actual environmental characteristics and person characteristics in predicting objective fit and for the interplay of perceived environmental characteristics and person characteristics in predicting subjective fit. Finally, the self-processing metatheory (reflects) the moderating role of person characteristics between subjective fit and attraction.” Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005: 910)

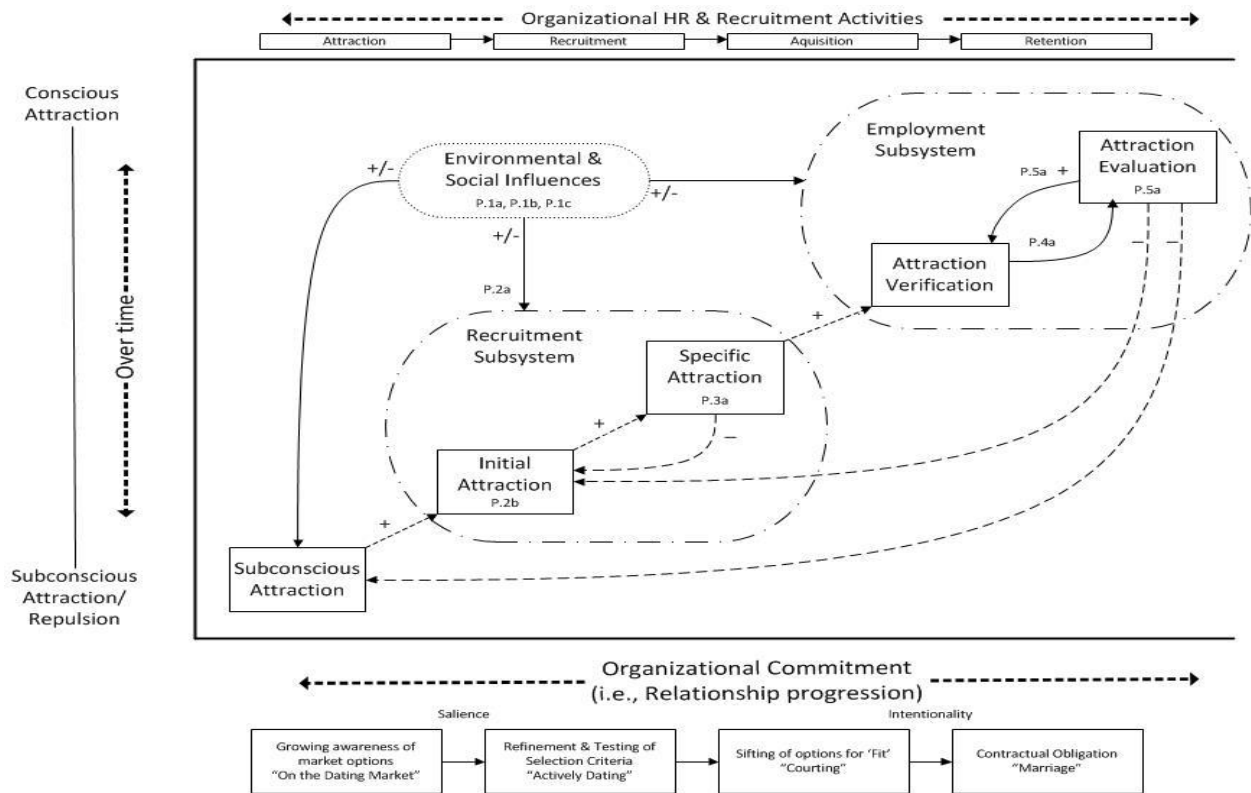
The proposed Organization Attraction Five-stage (OA5S) model supports Ehrhart and Ziegert's conceptualization of three overarching attraction metatheories but suggests that each attraction theory is more salient at different OA stages. This paper contributes two significant pieces to the interwoven jigsaw puzzle they outlined. First, it proposes an OA5S model that suggests perceptions of OA and ‘fit’ change across five stages of an individual's relationship with an organization: from a pre-relationship stage to ultimately an embedded and/or evaluative stage. Second, this paper links the existing research and the potential avenues for new OA research to the respective OA stages.

The OA5S model will help researchers identify what an individual finds attractive at the different stages of their relationship with an organization. As such, it should help researchers reduce and/or avoid confusion and contradictions in the OA literature. Starting with Turban and Greening (1997), researchers have advanced knowledge of OA by conceptualizing and empirically testing how and why different organizational attributes and characteristics indicate various perceptions of OA. The proposed OA5S model will help researchers investigate what organizational features are most important for increasing and maintaining organizational attractiveness when a potential applicant is at different stages of the Person-Organization relationship. Figure 1 depicts the five proposed OA stages. Table 1, links the five stages to the three overarching applicant attraction theories with other existing research and provides specific theories that might be used to investigate attraction at each stage.

The rest of this paper has three major sections. The first section develops the theoretical and practical implications of conceptualizing OA as a process. The second section reviews existing organizational behavior, organizational attractiveness, and P-O fit literature and links it to the proposed OA5S model.

The last section discusses the implications of a stage (process) OA approach and potential for research and implications for several organizational fields: Organizational Behavior, Human Resources, Marketing, and Strategy.

Figure 1 –The 5-stage Model for Organizational Attractiveness



2. Organizational Attraction as a Process

Evaluating expectancy theory, Wanous, Keon and Latack, (1983) suggested the best use was in the prediction of occupational and organizational choices using measures for within the subject of organizational attractiveness. They reviewed 16 studies, found support for their hypothesis and suggested “the context of occupational/organizational choice appears to be an appropriate situation to test expectancy theory ... because choices tend to be rather distinct in most people’s minds because they occur infrequently” (Wanous et al., 1983: 82). Expectancy theory is still very useful but more recent research seems to indicate that other factors are crucial to the understanding of organizational choice: the organizational attractiveness, the availability of information, and the individual-organization interactions.

OA has been investigated as an antecedent to P-O fit (e.g., Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) or as outcomes of P-O and person-job (P-J) fit (Carless, 2005; Rentsch et al., 2002). Rynes and Barber (1990), suggest that three attraction strategies (recruitment, inducement, and applicant pool) are influence by several contingencies including the phase of the attraction process, but as they perceive “the most fundamental objective of attraction activities is to fill vacancies” (288), so they only hypothesize at the recruitment stage. In a process model, OA can be an antecedent to other organizational phenomena (e.g., intentions to interview, job choice, and organizational commitment), an outcome of measures or activities undertaken during different stages of the individual-organization interaction (e.g., socialization, or empowerment), or both depending on stage and nature of the individual-organization interaction. The main difference between OA and other measures of individual-organizational interaction (e.g., P-O or P-J fit, and organizational commitment) is that OA informs and affects every stage of the individual-organization interaction.

2.1 Attraction and Repulsion versus Attractiveness

Attraction and repulsion are the unobservable phenomena that lead to increased or decreased affinity toward an organization (Clark & Mills, 1979). There are a host of observable variables that signal attraction and can be conceptualized and used to measure attractiveness.

Attractiveness variables might be actual or perceived manifestations of an organization's attributes or characteristics of an individual's cognitive processes. Many variables such as personality, goals (Rentsch et al., 2002), values (Cable & Judge, 1996), self-esteem (Turban & Keon, 1993), reputation (Turban et al., 2003) and behavior been investigated in relation to organizational attractiveness. However, no framework exists to examine how attraction changes across context and stages of the relationship. This model does not attempt to integrate all prior attractiveness research: instead, it facilitates future theoretical and empirical research that focuses on the dynamic nature of attraction. It creates a framework for the integration process. In the future, the opposite of attraction – repulsion should be considered as an avenue of research, especially when the individual has many choices.

The fit, attractiveness, and recruitment literature all discuss the predominantly positive affects of OA (e.g., Carless, 2005; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995; Turban, 2001). However, the organizational attractiveness research seems fragmented and does not directly investigate the underlying causes of OA. Most studies only investigate what organizational characteristics are perceived as attractive. Only a few studies have investigated OA or P-O fit with a longitudinal experiment or field test (e.g., Cable et al., 1996; Carless, 2005). However, these studies only suggest two or three related stages and do not make predictions about what creates attraction to an organization. The underlying argument for investigating OA as a process is that an individual's attraction to an organization is a moving target.

2.2 Social Information Processing and Organizational Attraction

Motivation is one of the most investigated facets of organizational behavior. The design of work to increase motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and social information processing (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) explains how to increase employee motivation and improve performance (e.g., Griffin, 1991). Here OA is conceptualized as a source of motivation.

Improving job/work design and understanding the effects of social information (i.e. cues) are important for increasing employee satisfaction and motivation. However, while job/work design is a factor in some of the five stages, the proposed model focuses on social information processing, which is an active component in all five OA stages. Salancik & Pfeffer (1978) suggest that individuals process social cues to create needs and expectations, and to make sense of social interactions and organizational practices in relation to context. Here, social information processing serves as an umbrella term for Ehrhart and Ziegert's (2005) three processing metatheories: environment processing, interactionist processing, and self-processing.

2.3 The Five Stages of Organizational Attraction

The proposed five OA stages are: Subconscious Attraction, Initial Attraction, Specific Attraction, Attraction Verification, and Attraction Evaluation. These stages are developed based on literature that investigates organizational attractiveness or applicant attraction at one or more of these theoretical stages (e.g., Chapman et al., 2005). Different aspects of social information processing are more salient at each of the five stages. The five stages as specified in the model are theoretical and may have substantial overlap depending on the perceived importance and availability of the three types of inputs: environmental, interactional, and self-reinforcing. The proposed stages also group into three decision-making subsystems: on the Market, dating, and marriage. These three subsystems reflect moving from indirect interaction to direct (formal and informal) interaction, an increase of the individual's involvement with the organization and an increase in salience.

The underlying argument is that an individual's attraction to an organization changes in relation to the degree and satisfaction of their communication (information) and involvement (interaction) with the organization.

2.4 Boundary Conditions

An attraction process model has applications for research in various fields including Organizational Behavior, Human Resources, Psychology, and Strategy. In particular, it directs investigators to formulate research in stages that take into account the dynamic nature of individual-organization interactions. This model however has some specific boundary conditions. First, the affect of social information and outcome options will vary with the number of choices available to the individual. Therefore, this framework investigates organization attraction at different interaction points for individuals with a wide variety of choices. Second, the types of organizations are significant as an individual's perceptions of the organization are based on its characteristics.

Parts of the model are applicable to any type of organization; however, under conditions of uncertainty and change that are inherent in the proposed OA process model, economic exchange between an organization and the individual is a primary assumption for attraction (Podolny, 1994). Third, the model focuses on *what* makes an organization attractive *when* an individual is at different stages of individual-organization interaction. The task of integrating *why* and *how* specific factors create or increase organizational attractiveness is beyond the scope of the proposed OA5S model but should be considered for future research.

3. The Organizational Attraction Five- Stage Model

The OA process consists of five stages that group into three decision-making subsystems: On the Market, Dating, and Marriage. Each serves as a closed-loop information processing subsystem until the individual-organization interaction changes.

On the Market: this system consists of indirect interaction and only has one stage –Subconscious attraction (stage 1). During the Subconscious attraction stage, the individual has no intention to seek a job with the organization. Subconscious attraction is the most critical (Carlson, Connerley, & Mecham, 2002) and least researched of the five OA stages. This is a closed system until a job search, triggered by an environmental cue, is initiated: e.g., a plant closing forces an individual to look for new employment.

Dating: this system is during the recruitment process and consists of both direct and indirect interactions between the individual and prospective organization. The dating subsystem, the most researched in terms of OA, has two stages - Initial attraction (stage 2) and Specific attraction (stage 3). Stage three, Specific attraction, feeds back to stage two, Initial attraction, if an employment offer is not given or if an offer is rejected.

Marriage: The marriage system, normally investigated in relation to satisfaction or performance, consists of two stages– attraction verification (stage 4)and attraction evaluation (stage 5). In *marriage*, attraction is related to but unique from other organizational phenomena such as organizational commitment (for review: Mathieu & Zajac, 1990) and socialization (Feldman, 1981). The employment process consists of direct (formal and informal) interactions. The fifth stage, Attraction evaluation, feeds back to Subconscious attraction, Initial attraction, Specific attraction or Attraction verification, depending on the evaluation outcomes of the individual.

Table 1 details some of the interaction sources at each of the five attraction stages. It also lists the input processes, research, and theories that could be linked to each stage.

Table 1 – Descriptions of OA Five-Stages

Organization Attraction Stages	OA Source Characteristics	Ehrhart&Ziegert (2005) Inputs	Research Focus	Suggested Theories for Stage Research
Stage 1 General Attraction Pre-Job Search Reputation Building	- Secondary information - Personal opinions - Peer inputs - Past experiences	Environment and Self-processing	Social Identity and Corporate Social Responsibility	Social Identity Image Signaling Theory
Stage 2 Initial Attraction Initial Job Search Continuous and Implicit Recruitment	- Secondary information - Personal opinions - Peer evaluations - Organization Image - Limited contact	Environment and Interaction Processing	Image, Reputation, perceived P-O fit, and Continuous Recruitment	Exposure-Attitude Hypothesis P-O Fit Interactional Psychology
Stage 3 Specific Attraction Interview view process Specific Recruitment Employment offer	- Org. specific information - Research - Direct/personnel contact - Org. characteristics - Extrinsic motivators	Interaction and Self-processing	Organizational Characteristics, perceived P-J fit, Realistic job previews, and job choice	Consistency Social Cognition Social Learning P-O Fit
Stage 4 Attraction Verification Employment acceptance Organization-Job Choice	- Socialization process - Value congruence - Social cues - Needs satisfaction	Interaction, Environment, and Self-processing	Work design, Job Enrichment, Role Breath Self-efficacy, and Organizational Commitment	Exposure-Attitude Hypothesis Work Adjustment ASA Socialization
Stage 5 Attraction Evaluation Socialization Embeddedness Retreat	- Personal opinions - Peer inputs- - Past experiences - Value congruence - Social cues - Needs satisfaction	Self and environment processing	Perceived organizational support, OCB, and Cynicism about Organizational Change	Consistency Social Identity Image Signaling Theory

3.1 On the Market – Attraction System

Subconscious Attraction – Stage 1 is the most important and least understood of the five OA stages. Therefore, most of the propositions derived from a process approach to investigating applicant-OA are elaborated at the Subconscious Attraction stage. At this stage an individual's perceptions and therefore attraction to an organization is influenced primarily by factors outside the direct control of the organization such as reputation, media, perceived identity or social responsibility). The Subconscious attraction stage is a uniquely important stage. First, because the organization must be perceived as attractive before the individual initiates the recruitment process. Second, because Subconscious attraction also applies to interactions with other actors which can influence the activities of the organization (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Several studies could be mistaken as investigating Subconscious attraction (e.g., Rentsch et al., 2002); however, most use individuals already involved in the recruitment process. Stage 1 is pre-recruitment and therefore must be investigated with the general population.

Understanding the Subconscious attraction stage is critical for an organization's long-term success because attractions formed during this stage are what draws prospective applicants into the recruitment process (Roberson, Collins, & Oreg, 2005). The first proposition is developed drawing from Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005) and the general nature of this attraction stage.

Proposition 1a: At the Subconscious attraction stage, General attraction perceptions are formed by continuous inputs, primarily from environmental information, that will occur even when the individual is at another stage of the attraction process. General attraction also influences stakeholder relations.

The Subconscious attraction stage suggests that individuals process information and develop attractiveness perceptions about organizations from their environment. The amount and quality of the information received, as well as any involvement with the organization, will influence OA perceptions. This stage is unique from the other four stages as it is always on – people continually form subconscious attraction perceptions.

Environmental cues trigger Subconscious attraction which is controlled by self-processing. Albinger and Freeman (2000) proposed that social identity and corporate social performance (CSP) correlate with attractiveness during recruitment. However, these two theoretical constructs are more closely related to the Subconscious attraction stage. Social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) is used to “explain group processes and intergroup relations” in which “a multifaceted and dynamic self-mediates the relationship between social structures and individual behavior” (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995: 255). Ashforth & Mael (1989: 20) suggest that social identification regulates activities so they are congruent with and support “stereotypical perceptions of self and others.” One consequence of social identity processing is that individuals will select activities that resemble and reinforce the salient aspects of their identity. Therefore, individuals will have a natural and subconscious attraction to organizations they perceive share in their identity. Perceived social identity is derived from public information about an organization, from prior experiences, or contact with others that might have information and/or direct knowledge about an organization (Ashforth et al., 1989; Elsbach, 1999; Hogg & Terry, 2000). While social identity is active and informs at all of the attraction stages, the arguments at the subconscious attraction stage suggests the following proposition.

Proposition 1b: An individual's positive social identification with an organization and how well an organization handles its social responsibilities (CSR) are an antecedent to OA.

SIT and CSP have been theoretically and empirically linked to OA (e.g., Greening et al., 2000). The implication is organizations can use CSP to attract job applicants and that CSP perceptions signal employment intention. However, the measure of CSP indicates awareness and most individuals are not aware of specific socially responsible practices or activities of the firms with which they are in contact (Sen, Bhattacharya, & Korschun, 2006). However, the broader social construct, corporate social responsibility (CSR), can help create perceptions of subconscious attraction. CSR defines what is expected of an organization and CSP is the actual activities that an organization undertakes (Wartick & Cochran, 1985).

Drawing on Carroll's definition of CSR, “The social responsibility of business encompasses the *economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary* expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time” (Carroll, 1979: 500), we propose the following

Individuals will base their perceptions on public information about an organization's general activities, on prior experiences with an organization (e.g., as a customer or supplier), and by contact with others that might have information and direct knowledge about an organization (e.g., Salmons, Crespo, & Bosque, 2005). The CSR, policy (Bonardi & Keim, 2005), and attraction literature (van Hove & Lievens, 2005) all indicate that negative publicity and poor social responsibility reputation creates negative impressions about the organization. Often these negative impressions will last longer and become salient while positive images or perceptions are forgotten quickly. The relative strength of bad information suggests the following proposition.

Proposition 1c: An individual's negative perceptions of how well an organization handles its social responsibilities will lead to organizational repulsion. Repulsion will have a stronger relative effect than attraction.

The next four stages are conceptualized and empirically tested in existing management literature. Therefore, the discussion about these stages is limited to literature that supports a process approach for investigating OA and propositions based on Ehrhart and Ziegert's (2005) environment processing, interactionist processing, and self-processing metatheories. While each stage has theoretical and some empirical underpinning, the OA process model contributes to existing knowledge by suggesting that each phenomena is actually part of a large organizational attraction process that has yet to be investigated and a framework to move this research forward.

3.2 Dating – Recruitment Subsystem

The dating system has been investigated from an organizational perspective as the recruitment process in prior works.

Barber (1998) categorized the recruitment process as having three stages: generating applicants, maintaining applicants, and job choice. In the OA model, Initial attraction (stage 2) and Specific attraction (stage 3) are from an individual's perspective and equivalent to generating and maintaining. For detailed reviews of the recruitment literature, see Rynes(1991) and Chapman et al., (2005). Chapman et al., (2005) meta-analyzed recruitment studies that investigated four outcome variables (job pursuit intentions, job-organization attraction, applicant intentions, job choice) and six predictor variables (job and organization characteristics, recruiter characteristics, perceptions of the recruitment process, perceived fit, perceived alternatives, and hiring expectancies). This meta-analysis supported prior findings that pay was not as significant as other factors in predicting the proposed outcomes and that out of work environment, PO fit, organizational image, and perceptions of justice were all strong predictors of job pursuit intentions; PO fit was the strongest. These findings suggest that understanding what drives OA during the recruitment process is an important factor for retaining applicants during the process. The dating (recruitment) subsystem is composed of two stages distinguished by differences in the level of communication and contact.

3.2.1 Initial Attraction – Stage 2 is characterized by communication that is limited and indirect. However, the individual is aware of the organization and is receptive to both positive and negative information about the organization.

Stage 2 begins once an individual starts to consider a job search. The main difference between stage 1 and stage 2 is the information gathering process and the intentions. At the start of the initial attraction stage, individuals might not even realize that they are gathering information about an organization. However, at some point, they cognitively identify the organization as distinct from the numerous organizations they are aware of during the initial Subconscious attraction stage. They start to gather information without a clear intention to take the process further. The recruitment process research typically does not distinguish between the initial attraction stage and the specific attraction stage. Avery and McKay (2006) suggest managing organizational impressions to attract minority and female applicants but do not consider prospective applicants. In attempts to understand how communication affects OA, researchers have investigated numerous variables like the affect of reputation on an applicant pool (Turban et al., 2003), negative publicity (van Hove et al., 2005), organizational attributes (Roberson et al., 2005), CSP (Turban et al., 1997), and the level of recruitment involvement (Collins et al., 2004) in relation to OA. Most of the research suggests that communication with applicants should be screened and managed to increase attraction.

Recruitment efforts can consist of batch or continuous recruitment (Carlson et al., 2002). The message individuals are receiving about the organization during the initial attraction stage will be associated with an organization's continuous recruitment efforts and information gathered from other sources. At this stage, the attraction will typically be based on indirect information and minimal contact or involvement with the organization. Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005) propose that interactionist processing results in attraction due to "the interaction between person characteristics and environmental characteristics" (2005: 906). Drawing from their processing options and the characterization of the initial attraction stage suggests the following two propositions. The propositions for stages two to five are also based on the quality of information and the context of involvement.

Proposition 2a: At the initial attraction stage, environmental processing creates the context for interpreting organizational information.

Proposition 2b: At the initial attraction stage, interactionist processing of limited exposure to indirect organizational information determines organizational attraction perceptions and allowance to advance in the attraction process.

The move from stage 2 to stage 3 reflects a significant increase in individual-organizational interaction. It also signals commitment to the attraction process by the individual, the organization, or both.

3.2.2 Specific Attraction – Stage 3 begins once an individual identifies a specific prospective partner (organization) and ends when he or she has selected that partner (accepted a job). Although this stage is the most researched attraction stage in the recruitment literature, most studies do not investigate the role specific attraction plays in moving the OA process forward.

This stage is pivotal because individuals are processing information to make a specific decision about an organization that can lead to only one of three potential outcomes: return to the initial attraction stage, switch to specific attraction with another organization, or the acceptance of a job with the target organization.

The specific attraction stage is also critical to the organization. At this stage, the organization is investing to attract and retain a specific individual. Organizations have to decide on one of two choices: to make or not make an offer to the individual. The communication at the specific attraction stage is often tailored by both the organization (Avery et al., 2006) and the individual (Werbel, 2000) to both investigate and indicate PO fit. At the specific attraction stage, researchers have investigated the influence of PO or P-J fit on attraction (Carless, 2005), the recruitment experience (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991), values (Rentsch et al., 2002), personality characteristic and goals (Rentsch et al., 2002), organizational characteristics (Chapman et al., 2005), familiarity (Turban, 2001), and reputation (Turban et al., 2003). The number of choices that an individual has during the recruitment process plays a role in the significance (Albinger et al., 2000) and interpretation (Ng et al., 2005) of attraction signals. In the case of higher quality applicants, recruitment delays have been shown to have a negative effect on attraction and recruitment outcomes (Turban et al., 2003).

During the selection process P-J fit perception and intentions to accept a job were mediated by perceptions of OA and Carless (2005) concluded that it is very important “that applicants have sufficient information about the job during the recruitment and selection process” (2005: 411). The realistic job preview literature also indicates that giving applicants more information will lead to perceived importance by the individual and better selection outcomes (Saks, Wiesner, & Summers, 1994).

At the Specific attraction stage, communication with the organization is direct; contact between the individual and the organization is direct but limited. Interactionist processing is intensified, and the availability of choices plus other factors such as value and goal congruence result in self-processing. Interactionist processing means that the individual is now exposed to perceived and actual organizational characteristics that influence perceptions of subjective and objective fit. Two propositions are developed based on processing options and characteristics of the specific attraction stage.

Proposition 3a: At the specific attraction stage, choices, values, and other factors activate intentional self-processing of attraction options and interactionist processing of limited direct organizational information and contact which lead to decisions regarding the advancement in the attraction process.

Some individuals are forced or need to take jobs with no consideration of P-O fit perceptions, value congruence, or attraction. However, individuals with choices enter stage 4 with clear perceptions of what the job will be like. Theories investigating consistency, social cognition, social learning, or P-O fit could be useful in defining why and how an individual make employment decisions. At this point in the OA process, the desired outcome of the organization is hiring a highly qualified and motivated employee that fits the organization’s needs and culture. The individual believes he is joining an organization that matches his/her values and that will facilitate realizing needs, and desires. The transition from stage 3 to stage 4 would be equivalent to job choice.

4. Marriage – Employment Subsystem (Direct Interaction)

The importance of attraction to individual-organizational interactions does not end when a job is accepted. However, being paid does not ensure that either the individual or the organization will be satisfied or reap adequate benefits from the relationship. At the final two stages of the proposed OA5S model, individuals are directly and contractually involved with the organization. The literature on employment fit processes seems to indicate that organizational attractiveness and P-O and P-J fit have a reciprocal relationship.

Attraction and ‘fit’ are used as synonyms in most of the literature that discusses post-entry attraction. Kristof (1996) in her review of P-O fit literature suggests the broad definition of fit as “the compatibility between the individual and organizations” (p. 3). Muchinsky and Monahan (1987) conceptualized fit as supplementary and complementary. Supplementary P-O fit is the compatibility of fundamental characteristics (e.g., values, goals, and norms) and complementary P-O fit is the compatibility of supply and demand needs (e.g. time, rewards, and experience) (Kristof, 1996). Chatman (1989) suggested that P-O fit is based on value congruence between the individual and the organization. Validation of the Organization Cultural Profile made value congruence the accepted operationalization of P-O fit (Kristof, 1996).

Kristof-Brown's et al., (2005), meta-analytic review of the consequences of an individual's fit at work, found that P-J fit had strong positive correlations with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and negative correlations with intentions to quit. P-O fit indicated similar correlations with job satisfaction and intentions to quit and even stronger correlations for organizational commitment and organizational satisfaction. Attraction is typically investigated as a variable within a larger study in the post-entry fit literature or as implicit in the OB motivation literature. We propose investigating what creates attraction and when attraction changes during the marriage (employment) subsystem can help solidify fit perceptions and increase motivation.

The marriage subsystem, stages 4 and 5 in the model, signal an expansion of the environment for the individual and normally indicates a significant increase in communication and involvement with the organization. The importance of attraction and how it affects other processes is implicit in a host of existing OB theories like motivation – expectancy theory and social information processing; leadership – LMX and transformational. Attraction should also be investigated as an antecedent or moderator to a host of new OB constructs (e.g., perceived organizational support (POS) (Eisenberger, et al, 2001) and cynicism about organizational change (CAOC)) to find ways to maximize positive organizational outcomes and minimize the loss of talented individuals. However, the discussion of the employment subsystem stages focusing on the processes suggested by Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005) will help us effectively understand OA.

4.1 Attraction Verification – Stage 4 is characterized by direct and formal or informal individual-organization interactions. Most of the socialization processes suggested occurs during this stage. Individuals will interact with various levels within the organization. Interactionist processing intensifies within the organizational environment: social information processing is dynamic. During stage 4, attraction will increase due to propinquity (closeness) (Newcomb, 1956) and feelings of belonging and identification (Hogg et al., 2000; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). In a study of museum members, identification was found to be positively related to perceived organizational prestige (Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995). Attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) cycle research and theory (Schneider et al., 1995) indicates that organizations via the ASA process tend to become more homogenous over time. The following proposition is based on Ehrhart and Ziegert's 2005 processing options and the characterization of the attraction verification stage.

Proposition 4a: The attraction verification stage reflects the dynamic and constant interaction between the individual and the organization, interactionist processing of direct organizational information and direct social cues will determine the ongoing organizational attraction perceptions.

While employment might initially increase OA, an individual's values, experiences, personality traits, or goals might not be in harmony with those of the organization (Elsbach, 1999). Organizations believe employees need to be both controlled and motivated to perform. Within organizations, performance appraisals are a source of stress and potential conflict (Kikoski, 1999). In some cases, socialization is not successful and stress, conflict, and other factors that occur during stage 4 lead employees to evaluate OA.

4.2 Attraction Evaluation – Stage 5 is the final stage in the OA5S model. Attraction evaluation is characterized by cycles of commitment and evaluation. As the individual-organization interaction matures, the individual will begin to take stock of his/her values, needs, and desires, and make judgments on how they are met by the organization.

Organizational attraction will reflect positive results of these evaluations and complementary and/or supplementary fit. Maintaining attraction at this stage will be associated with positive organizational satisfaction, performance, and commitment and negative intentions to quit. We suggest most tenured employees with employment alternatives are constantly evaluating organizational attraction. Therefore, at the Attraction evaluation stage, individuals use social cues, self-processing, and attractiveness perceptions about organizations from the environment to judge their current organization. The last proposition is suggested by the Attraction evaluation stage.

Proposition 5a: At the Attraction evaluation stage, individuals are always evaluating organizational attraction of their current organization compared to that of other organizations in their environment using environmental and self-processing.

The underlying argument that supports the proposed OA5S model is that an individual's attraction to an organization changes in relation to the degree and satisfaction of their communication (information) and involvement (interaction) with the organization.

As shown in figure 1, each stage acts as an input for the subsequent stage and as a closed system or potential input for prior stages within and between the subconscious attraction, recruitment, and employment subsystems.

5. Discussion and Research Implications

Applicant attraction is an important factor for obtaining and retaining quality applicants. The broader social construct of attraction is appealing and important for scholars and practitioners because it is the bedrock of human interaction. Organizations are challenged to manage their multiple stakeholder relationship and to increase their social involvement. Each of us is attracted to organizations that make us feel good, feel like we belong and feel like they are interested in us as an individual. New technology has dramatically increased our access to organizational information. Therefore, managing organizational attraction is critical to the success of an organization.

Recruitment scholars have served organizations and managers well during the last three decades by identifying organizational characteristics that might be attractive to an applicant. However, the proposed OA5S model suggests attraction needs to be investigated as a process and not limited to applicant recruitment. Today, scholars need to focus their attention on the attraction phenomena from an individual's perspective in order to make the organization a magnet that draws in the talented individuals needed for future success. Our attraction toward an organization, that force that draws us toward an organization or repels us, does not start and end with the recruitment process.

This model will help scholars formulate research to understand how an individual's perceptions of attractiveness change as their relationship and involvement with an organization continues to change. Conceptualizing OA as changing facilitates the creation of measures for each stage. New measures could be used to optimize recruitment efforts, training, socialization processes, and the benefits of organizational commitment. An OA process view also has implications for social issues and strategy research by suggesting new ways to investigate how stakeholder satisfaction and OA are related.

Ehrhart and Ziegert's(2005) proposal married with the attraction process model should facilitate research on factors that cause attraction. Research can refine existing attraction knowledge and find new indicators of attraction at the general and employment attraction stages. The first thing on a research agenda should be to verify the five attraction stages. One way to verify the OA model stages is with a combination of open-ended questionnaires on attraction, used to identify what individuals perceive as attractive at each of the five stages, followed by surveys to verify that the five stages exist. A logical second step would be to initiate new research on attractiveness at each stage and subsystem. A third step would be to investigate the affect of attraction directly with known or theoretical organizational behaviors such as retention, commitment, corporate citizenship behavior, or cynicism of organizational change. Attraction research could then shift to organizational and external outcomes that can improve an organization's advantage over local and/or global competitors.

This paper introduces an OA5S process model and develops propositions at the Subconscious Attractionstage based on an individual's interaction with the environment. Looking at environment processing as a source if organizational attraction is important because the pre-recruitment subconscious attraction stage precedes and informs all subsequent attraction stages. The paper also describes the other four stages and develops propositions on the types of interactions researchers should investigate, on the three proposed overarching metatheories: environment processing, interactionist processing, and self-processing.

Attraction has predominantly been investigated by social psychologist as an antecedent to interpersonal interaction and communication behavior. However, attraction and repulsion are actually forces that permeate all social interaction. Most, organizational behavior, motivation and leadership theories implicitly include perceptions about organizational attraction. These theories and other OB theories could be enriched by investigating, for example, how attractive a goal, or outcome is to the individual in the context of his/her environment. Attraction could potentially play a larger role in increasing satisfaction and performance over time, as well as a more significant role than has already been identified during the recruitment process.

Currently, most of the organizational management research focuses on how to maximize the utility of an individual and how to sustain an organization. Today, qualified individuals can and do ask to maximize their utility from the organization. Some have questioned "the moral status of the worker, is he or she an instrument for organizational ends and/or an ends in him or herself?"

(Michaelson, 2005) Today the question is how we can better understand the individual-organization attraction process in order to make individuals partners in organizational outcomes.

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