

The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework: Organizational Image and Attractiveness of Potential
Applicants and Their Companions at a Job Fair

Greet Van Hoye

Ghent University, Belgium

Alan M. Saks

University of Toronto, Canada

In press at *Applied Psychology: An International Review*

Greet Van Hoye, Assistant Professor, Department of Personnel Management, Work and Organizational Psychology, Ghent University, Belgium; Alan M. Saks, Professor, Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, University of Toronto, Canada.

This research was supported in part by a Postdoctoral Fellow grant from the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) awarded to the first author. We would like to thank An Willems and the Belgian Defense for their help in collecting the data and Dan Turban for his valuable comments on a previous version of this paper. The views, opinions, and findings contained in this paper are solely those of the authors and should not be construed as an official Belgian Defense position, policy, or decision, unless so designated by other documentation. A previous version of this paper was presented at the 23rd Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, San Francisco, CA (April, 2008).

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Greet Van Hoye, Department of Personnel Management, Work and Organizational Psychology, Ghent University, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium. Phone: +32 9 264 64 54, Fax: +32 9 264 64 94, E-mail: greet.vanhoye@ugent.be

Abstract

This study investigates perceptions of organizational image and attractiveness among 200 potential applicants for the Belgian Defense and the person (e.g., friend, parent) accompanying them to a job fair. The instrumental-symbolic framework is applied to conceptualize the key dimensions of an organization's image as an employer. The results indicate that instrumental image attributes predict perceived organizational attractiveness for both potential applicants (social activities, structure, and advancement opportunities) and their companions (educational opportunities). Moreover, consistent with the instrumental-symbolic framework, symbolic image traits explain incremental variance in the attractiveness perceptions of potential applicants (sincerity, excitement, prestige, and ruggedness) as well as of companions (sincerity and ruggedness). Overall, instrumental and symbolic image predict attractiveness more strongly for potential applicants than for their companions and potential applicants have a somewhat more positive view of the organization. In addition, companions' perceived attractiveness positively predicts potential applicants' attractiveness beyond potential applicants' instrumental and symbolic image perceptions.

KEYWORDS: Recruitment, attraction, potential applicants, image, instrumental-symbolic framework, social influence, military, Belgium.

The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework: Organizational Image and Attractiveness of Potential Applicants and Their Companions at a Job Fair

Human capital is one of the most valuable assets a company can have and recruitment serves the important function of attracting the necessary talent to the organization (Rynes & Cable, 2003). Despite economic downturns and upturns, recruitment remains a crucial human resources function for at least three reasons (Taylor & Collins, 2000). First, there will always be hard-to-fill vacancies for which organizations must compete fiercely to attract applicants, even in an otherwise loose labor market (Ployhart, 2006). Second, the most talented job seekers often receive multiple job offers, enabling them to critically evaluate potential employers. Therefore, organizations that wish to attract these highly desired applicants have no choice but to participate in the “war for talent” (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). Third, demographic trends such as a smaller supply of younger workers combined with the retirement of baby boomers will make it increasingly difficult for organizations to fill job openings (Collins & Stevens, 2002).

Prior recruitment research has identified a plethora of factors that might influence job seekers’ attraction to organizations, including fit perceptions, recruiter behaviors, and organizational image (Barber, 1998; Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Chapman et al., 2005; Ployhart, 2006; Rynes & Cable, 2003). An organization’s perceived image as an employer consists of people’s beliefs about what is distinctive, central, and enduring about the organization as an employer (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Previous research has successfully applied the instrumental-symbolic framework for studying organizational image in various populations, supporting the notion that organizational images consist of both instrumental attributes and symbolic trait inferences (Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens, Van Hoye, & Anseel, 2007; Lievens, Van Hoye, & Schreurs, 2005; Van Hoye, 2008).

However, while instrumental and symbolic employer image dimensions have been shown to affect the organizational attractiveness perceptions of students, actual applicants, and employees (Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2005, 2007), their impact on the attraction of *potential* applicants targeted by organizations' early recruitment activities (e.g., recruitment website, job fair) has not yet been investigated. This corresponds to what Barber (1998) refers to as the first phase of recruitment, in which organizations try to identify potential applicants and to persuade them to apply through the use of a wide array of recruitment practices. It is crucial to understand which factors influence job seekers' initial attraction to organizations, because if they are not attracted at this first stage, they disappear from the recruitment process and cannot be reached by later recruitment or selection activities (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Murphy, 1986; Slaughter, Stanton, Mohr, & Schoel, 2005).

In addition, previous research has typically treated job seekers as individual decision-makers in social isolation (Ryan, Sacco, McFarland, & Kriska, 2000). In their review of the recruitment literature, Highhouse and Hoffman (2001) concluded that "although it has been over 30 years since Soelberg (1967, p. 23) referred to social influence as the 'single most promising direction' for job-choice research, very little attention has been given to this topic" (p.47). While much research has investigated the factors driving organizational attractiveness for job seekers (Chapman et al., 2005), we do not yet know what determines attractiveness for those people (e.g., friends, family) influencing them (Van Hove & Lievens, 2007).

The present study addresses these gaps in the recruitment literature by examining perceptions of organizational image and attractiveness among potential applicants at a job fair as well as among the persons accompanying them (hereafter referred to as "companions"). The instrumental-symbolic framework is applied to conceptualize key dimensions of an organization's image as an employer. On a theoretical level, this study aims to contribute to an increased knowledge of the factors influencing early organizational attraction. In terms of

practical contributions, insight into the determinants of initial organizational attractiveness provides organizations with valuable information on how to attract the most talented job seekers.

Recruitment and Organizational Attraction

Recruitment consists of “those practices and activities carried on by the organization with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees” (Barber, 1998, p. 5). Three phases can be delineated within the recruitment process as potential applicants turn into actual applicants and finally become individuals who have been selected to join the organization (selectees) (Barber, 1998). In the first phase, recruitment aims to identify and attract potential applicants. Both organizations and potential applicants look for limited information about numerous possibilities and there is little interpersonal contact. In the second phase, recruitment tries to persuade actual applicants to remain interested until the organization makes its final choice. Both organizations and applicants search for in-depth information about the remaining possibilities and there is more interpersonal contact. Finally, in the third phase, recruitment aims to persuade selectees to accept job offers and become new employees.

It is of key importance to understand why potential applicants are attracted to organizations in the first phase of recruitment, because if they decide not to apply, they never enter subsequent recruitment or selection phases (Murphy, 1986). Perceived organizational attractiveness represents an attitudinal construct that can already be measured in this early recruitment stage and that has been found to relate to actual application and job choice decisions in later stages (Chapman et al., 2005; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003; Judge & Cable, 1997; Powell & Goulet, 1996; Turban, Campion, & Eyring, 1995). It refers to an individual’s attitude toward an organization as an employer, as expressed

by a typical item such as “This organization is attractive to me as a place for employment” (Highhouse et al., 2003).

Previous research has investigated a host of factors that might determine job seekers’ organizational attractiveness perceptions (for excellent reviews, see Barber, 1998; Breugh & Starke, 2000; Cable & Turban, 2001; Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001; Ployhart, 2006; Rynes & Cable, 2003; Saks, 2005; Taylor & Collins, 2000). A recent meta-analysis identified job attributes (e.g., type of work), organizational characteristics (e.g., work environment), recruiter behaviors (e.g., personableness), procedural justice perceptions, person-environment fit perceptions, and hiring expectancies as key determinants of organizational attractiveness (Chapman et al., 2005). One of the most influential organizational characteristics turned out to be an organization’s perceived image as an employer, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Organizational Image as an Employer

Tom (1971) defined organizational image as “the way the organization is perceived by individuals. It is a loose structure of knowledge, belief, and feelings about an organization” (p. 576). Organizational image refers to people’s perceptions of what is distinctive, central, and enduring about the organization (Dutton et al., 1994). Various organizational images exist, as different stakeholders (e.g., job seekers, employees, shareholders) are likely to have a different view on what constitutes the organization (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002). In a recruitment context, the focus has been on the organization’s perceived image *as an employer*, which consists of individuals’ impressions of an organization as a place to work (Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, & Slaughter, 1999).

Previous research has identified perceived employer image as a major determinant of early organizational attraction (Chapman et al., 2005). Specifically, job seekers seem to be more attracted to organizations with a more favorable image (Belt & Paolillo, 1982;

Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993; Highhouse et al., 1999; Turban & Greening, 1997) and to employers whose image corresponds to their own self-image (Tom, 1971). However, there exists great variation in the way these studies have conceptualized and measured organizational image, suggesting the need for a common theoretical framework to delineate the main components of an organization's image as an employer (Barber, 1998; Cable & Turban, 2001). Along these lines, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) argued that future research on employer image can benefit from existing conceptualizations of consumers' perceived brand images and introduced the instrumental-symbolic framework from social and consumer psychology (Katz, 1960; Keller, 1993) as an integrative conceptual framework for studying organizational image in various populations.

Instrumental-Symbolic Framework

According to the instrumental-symbolic framework, images are composed of both instrumental and symbolic dimensions (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). The notion that people associate both instrumental functions and symbolic meanings with objects is in line with a long tradition in social psychology (Katz, 1960; Shavitt, 1990). Applied to an organization's image as an employer, instrumental image dimensions describe the organization in terms of objective, concrete, and factual attributes that an organization either has or does not have (Lievens et al., 2007). People's attraction to these instrumental attributes relates to their utilitarian need to maximize benefits and minimize costs (Katz, 1960). Examples are pay, advancement opportunities, and job security.

Organizational images are also determined by the symbolic meanings that people associate with the organization (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Symbolic image dimensions describe the organization in terms of subjective, abstract, and intangible traits. In other words, symbolic meanings accrue from how people perceive the organization and make inferences about it rather than what they think an organization actually involves (Lievens et al., 2005).

People are attracted to these symbolic traits because they enable them to maintain their self-identity, to enhance their self-image, or to express themselves (Dutton et al., 1994; Shavitt, 1990). Sincerity, competence, and prestige are examples of symbolic image dimensions.

Previous research has successfully applied the instrumental-symbolic framework for identifying key components of an organization's image as an employer in different stakeholder groups (i.e., students, applicants, and employees) (Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2005, 2007; Van Hove, 2008). The findings of these studies can be summarized as follows. First, instrumental and symbolic image dimensions are associated with perceived organizational attractiveness in student, applicant, and employee samples (Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2005, 2007) as well as with organizational identification and recommendation intentions among employees (Lievens et al., 2007; Van Hove, 2008). Although not all specific employer image dimensions are significant predictors in these studies, as a set they explain a substantial amount of variance in organizational attraction. Moreover, while most image dimensions are positively related to attraction, some are negative predictors (e.g., ruggedness, Lievens et al., 2007). Second, the critical image dimensions that determine organizational attraction are not the same across groups (Lievens, 2007; Lievens et al., 2007). For instance, Lievens (2007) observed that perceived educational opportunities significantly predicted perceptions of attractiveness for applicants, but not for students and employees. Third, symbolic meanings account for incremental variance over and above instrumental dimensions in predicting organizational attractiveness (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2007). In addition, organizations are better differentiated from each other on the basis of symbolic dimensions than on the basis of instrumental attributes (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

It should be noted that a few of these previous studies on the instrumental-symbolic framework and organizational attraction have referred to their sample as "potential

applicants” (Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2005). However, these samples actually consisted of students with no apparent relationship to the organization or its recruitment activities, which does not seem to correspond very well to Barber’s (1998) conceptualization of potential applicants as individuals targeted by the organization’s recruitment activities in the first phase of recruitment.

Therefore, the present study extends previous research by examining the relationship of perceived instrumental and symbolic employer image dimensions with organizational attractiveness in a sample of potential applicants specifically targeted by the organization’s early recruitment activities (i.e., job fair visitors). On the basis of the instrumental-symbolic framework, we expect both instrumental attributes and symbolic trait inferences to be associated with attractiveness. Moreover, symbolic image dimensions are expected to explain incremental variance in attraction beyond instrumental dimensions.

Hypothesis 1: Potential applicants’ perceptions of instrumental image dimensions will be associated with potential applicants’ perceived organizational attractiveness.

Hypothesis 2: Potential applicants’ perceptions of symbolic image dimensions will account for incremental variance in potential applicants’ perceived organizational attractiveness beyond instrumental image dimensions.

Social Influences and Organizational Attraction

Although it is generally recognized that potential applicants are influenced by what other people such as family or friends think about jobs and organizations, most recruitment studies have treated job seekers as individual decision-makers in social isolation (Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001). Nonetheless, several studies have found support for social influences in a recruitment context, indicating that job seekers’ attitude toward an organization as an employer (i.e., perceived organizational attractiveness) is at least partly determined by the attitudes of other people toward that organization (Ryan et al., 2000; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart,

1991; Turban, 2001; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009). In a groundbreaking study, Kilduff (1990) demonstrated that MBA students who perceived each other as personal friends tended to interview with the same employing organizations. Liden and Parsons (1986) observed that young applicants' perceptions of parental and peer attitudes toward working at the organization were significantly related to their job acceptance intentions. Recently, Gibson, Griepentrog, and Marsh (2007) found that parents' attitudes toward the US military as an employer were positively associated with their children's enlistment attitudes. These findings indicate that potential applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness are influenced by what other people think and feel about the organization.

The present study examines organizational attractiveness in a group of potential applicants and the person accompanying them to a job fair. Potential applicants often visit job fairs together with a parent or a friend, and it seems likely that the opinion of their companion matters to them. Therefore, on the basis of previous research, we expected that companions' attitude towards the organization as an employer (i.e., companions' perceived organizational attractiveness) would be positively related to potential applicants' attitude towards the organization (i.e., potential applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness).

Hypothesis 3: Companions' perceived organizational attractiveness will be positively associated with potential applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness.

Even though multiple studies have found support for the existence of social influences on organizational attraction, much less is known about the conditions under which social influences are likely to be greater or smaller. Along these lines, it should be noted that social influence can be exerted by a lot of different types of social actors, such as friends, family, acquaintances, teachers, neighbors, and so forth. Therefore, the characteristics of these actor types are likely to affect their impact on potential applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness. In support of this assumption, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007) found that

friends' evaluation of an organization had a stronger positive effect on potential applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness than acquaintances' evaluation.

Previous research has identified parents and peers (e.g., friends, classmates) as the two most common sources of social influence on young potential applicants' organizational attraction (Gibson et al., 2007; Kilduff, 1990; Liden & Parsons, 1986; Van Hove & Lievens, 2009). Similarly, in the present study, most potential applicants were accompanied by a parent or a peer at the job fair. On the basis of previous research (Van Hove & Lievens, 2007), we investigated whether the relationship between companions' and potential applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness would be moderated by companion type (i.e., parent versus peer, see Method section). On the one hand, potential applicants may be more likely to comply with parental expectations and norms and thus might be more susceptible to parental influence than to peer influence (Gibson et al., 2007). On the other hand, potential applicants might identify themselves more with their friends and classmates and might be more sensitive to peer pressure than to parental pressure (Kilduff, 1990). Therefore, given the lack of previous research, no direction was specified for this moderation effect.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between companions' perceived organizational attractiveness and potential applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness will be moderated by companion type.

Furthermore, given that job seekers' perceived organizational attractiveness is affected by other people's perceived organizational attractiveness (Ryan et al., 2000; Rynes et al., 1991; Turban, 2001; Van Hove & Lievens, 2009), in order to understand job seekers' attraction to organizations, we also need to know what determines organizational attractiveness for their social environment. However, although the determinants of organizational attractiveness have frequently been investigated for job seekers (Chapman et

al., 2005), it is not yet known what factors affect attractiveness perceptions for those people potentially influencing them (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007).

Given that previous research has identified an organization's image as an employer as a key determinant of attractiveness for job seekers (Chapman et al., 2005), the present study investigates whether the attractiveness for people possibly influencing job seekers is also determined by their perceptions of organizational image. To this end, we examine the relationship of companions' perceptions of instrumental and symbolic employer image dimensions with their perceptions of organizational attractiveness. On the basis of the instrumental-symbolic framework, the following hypotheses are tested:

Hypothesis 5: Companions' perceptions of instrumental image dimensions will be associated with companions' perceived organizational attractiveness.

Hypothesis 6: Companions' perceptions of symbolic image dimensions will account for incremental variance in companions' perceived organizational attractiveness beyond instrumental image dimensions.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, previous research on the instrumental-symbolic framework and organizational image has found that different groups such as applicants and employees differ in their mean ratings and the importance of image dimensions (Lievens, 2007; Lievens et al., 2007). Therefore, in the present study we explore whether such differences exist between potential applicants and their companions on the one hand and between different types of companions on the other hand.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present study is situated in the first phase of recruitment, in which organizations try to attract *potential* applicants through early recruitment activities (Barber, 1998). Potential applicants are people who have some interest in the job and might consider applying (Ryan,

Horvath, & Kriska, 2005). However, unlike actual applicants, they have not yet taken the decision to apply and they might decide not to. Therefore, it is an important group that organizations typically compete for (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Unlike the more general population of job seekers, they express some interest, usually by actively looking for (additional) information about the organization and possible jobs, for instance on the organization's website or at a job fair (Ryan et al., 2005).

This study focused on potential applicants targeted by the Belgian Defense. This military context is relevant for studying recruitment issues because similar to non-military organizations, many armed forces are increasingly facing difficulties in attracting and enlisting the required numbers of new recruits (Knowles et al., 2002; Lievens, 2007). The Belgian Defense is one of the largest employers on the Belgian labor market, with over 40,000 employees. Therefore, it has a strong and distinctive image as an employer (Lievens, 2007). In comparison with other countries, the Belgian Defense is relatively small and focuses mainly on humanitarian and peacekeeping operations (Lievens et al., 2005). Recent recruitment campaigns have emphasized this peacekeeping mission, as exemplified by slogans such as "Priority to Peace".

Our sample consisted of potential applicants as well as the person accompanying them at three different job fairs, where multiple organizations presented themselves as employers at individual booths. Job seekers at these fairs typically prepare a short list of organizations they want to visit in advance. In the present study, we only included people expressing a clear interest in collecting information about working at the organization (i.e., potential applicants) by visiting the booth of the Belgian Defense. Participants were approached by a research assistant before viewing the booth or interacting with recruiters, to avoid confound effects of the recruitment information just received. Of the 215 pairs asked to complete a survey, 200 agreed to participate, yielding a response rate of 93%. It was stressed that participation was

voluntary and anonymous, that answers would be used for research purposes only, and that participants should answer honestly on the basis of their own opinion or experiences, as there were no right or wrong answers.

The majority of the 200 participating potential applicants were men (65%), which is typical for the military (Lievens et al., 2005). Their average age was 18.5 years ($SD = 2.16$). With respect to education, 19% obtained a lower secondary school degree, 60% an upper secondary school degree, and 21% a college or university degree. Most potential applicants indicated that they would prefer a job with the Belgian Defense's Ground Force (30%) or Air Force (27%); others were most interested in the Medical Component (13%), the Navy (8%), or had no preference (22%). Overall, these sample characteristics converge to the sample properties in previous recruitment research on the Belgian Defense (Schreurs et al., 2005).

Of the 200 corresponding companions, 53% were men and the average age was 30 years ($SD = 13.38$). In terms of education, 14% obtained a lower secondary school degree, 50% an upper secondary school degree, and 36% a college or university degree. Most potential applicants were accompanied by family (44%) or friends (32%). Less frequent companions were classmates (14%) and partners (8%). On the basis of companions' descriptions of their relationship with potential applicants, a dummy variable was created distinguishing between two major types of companions: parents ($n = 70$; $M_{age} = 46.13$ years, $SD = 3.70$) and peers (i.e., friends and classmates, $n = 89$; $M_{age} = 19.35$ years, $SD = 2.50$).

Measures

Organizational image. To measure the Belgian Defense's perceived image as an employer, we adapted a scale from previous research (Lievens et al., 2005, 2007). In line with the instrumental-symbolic framework, this scale consists of seven instrumental and five symbolic image dimensions. Table 1 provides an overview of the various image dimensions and the items used to measure them. Both the potential applicants and their companions rated

these items on a 5-point rating scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The internal consistencies of the scales (see Table 1) were all above .60 and comparable to those obtained in previous research (Lievens et al., 2005, 2007). In addition, confirmatory factor analysis showed a satisfactory fit for the twelve-factor model for the potential applicants, $\chi^2(563) = 749.54, p < .01$, comparative fit index (*CFI*) = .92, root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA*) = .04; as well as for the companions, $\chi^2(563) = 718.76, p < .01, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .04$ (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Organizational attractiveness. Three items from Highhouse et al. (2003) were used to measure the perceived attractiveness of the Belgian Defense as an employer. Items were rated on a 5-point rating scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Whereas the potential applicants rated their own attraction (e.g., “For me, the Belgian Defense would be a good place to work”; $\alpha = .95$), the companions were asked to indicate how attractive they felt the Belgian Defense would be as an employer for the potential applicant (e.g., “For this person, the Belgian Defense would be a good place to work”; $\alpha = .88$).

Control variables. Gender, age, and education were used as control variables. Two dummy variables were created for education, with the largest category (i.e., upper secondary school) as the reference group.

Results

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the study variables. Consistent with the instrumental-symbolic framework (Highhouse & Lievens, 2003), all employer image dimensions except structure were significantly related to perceived organizational attractiveness for both potential applicants and their companions. Moreover, companions’ and potential applicants’ perceptions of each image dimension as well as of organizational attractiveness were significantly correlated, in line with previous attraction

research on social influences (Gibson et al., 2007; Kilduff, 1990; Turban, 2001). Finally, male ($r = -.22, p < .01$) and lower educated ($r = .17, p < .05$) potential applicants were more attracted to the Belgian Defense as an employer whereas higher educated companions showed lower attractiveness ratings ($r = -.21, p < .01$).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

To test the study hypotheses, we first conducted two hierarchical regression analyses with potential applicants' and companions' perceptions of organizational attractiveness as the dependent variables (see Table 3). In the first step, gender, age, and the two education dummy variables were entered as controls. The seven instrumental image dimensions were entered in the second step, followed by the five symbolic image dimensions in the third step. It is conceptually relevant to enter the symbolic trait inferences after the instrumental dimensions, because they typically accrue from these more concrete attributes (see also Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). For potential applicants only, companions' perceived organizational attractiveness was added in the fourth step.

For potential applicants, the control variables explained a significant amount of variance in organizational attractiveness ($R^2 = .08, p < .01$). Male ($\beta = -.17, p < .05$) and lower educated ($\beta = .16, p < .05$) potential applicants were more attracted to the organization. In the second step, the instrumental image dimensions accounted for significant incremental variance ($\Delta R^2 = .22, p < .01$), in support of Hypothesis 1. Social activities ($\beta = .20, p < .01$) and advancement ($\beta = .14, p < .05$) were positively related and structure ($\beta = -.14, p < .05$) was negatively related to potential applicants' perceived attractiveness. In the third step, the symbolic image dimensions explained a significant amount of additional variance ($\Delta R^2 = .08, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Sincerity ($\beta = .15, p < .05$), excitement ($\beta = .15, p < .05$), and prestige ($\beta = .15, p < .05$) were positively related and ruggedness ($\beta = -.15, p < .05$) was negatively related to potential applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness. Finally,

companions' perceived attractiveness explained significant incremental variance in the fourth step ($\Delta R^2 = .08, p < .01$), in support of Hypothesis 3. As predicted, companions' perceptions of organizational attractiveness were positively related to potential applicants' attractiveness perceptions ($\beta = .31, p < .01$).

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

With respect to companions, the control variables explained significant variance in attractiveness ($R^2 = .06, p < .05$) with higher educated individuals rating the organization as less attractive ($\beta = -.18, p < .05$). The instrumental image dimensions explained a significant amount of additional variance in the second step ($\Delta R^2 = .10, p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 5. Educational opportunities ($\beta = .20, p < .05$) were positively related to companions' perceived attractiveness. In support of Hypothesis 6, the symbolic image dimensions accounted for significant incremental variance in the third step ($\Delta R^2 = .07, p < .05$). Sincerity ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) and ruggedness ($\beta = .15, p < .05$) were positive predictors of companions' attractiveness.

To test if companion type moderated the relationship between companions' and potential applicants' attractiveness, a moderated hierarchical regression analysis was conducted with potential applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness as the dependent variable (see Table 4). The control variables were entered in the first step, companions' perceived attractiveness was added in the second step, companion type (i.e., parent versus peer) was added in the third step, and the interaction between companions' attractiveness and companion type was entered in the final step. In line with recommendations for dealing with multicollinearity problems associated with the use of cross-product terms, the continuous variables in this analysis were standardized and the dichotomous variables were dummy coded (Aiken & West, 1991). As shown in Table 4, the interaction of companions' perceived attractiveness and companion type was not significant, failing to support Hypothesis 4.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

We conducted additional analyses to explore group differences in the mean ratings and importance of image dimensions. First, we conducted a series of paired samples *t*-tests to compare potential applicants' and companions' ratings of image dimensions. The results indicated that potential applicants' perceptions of the organization were slightly more positive, as they perceived it as offering more travel opportunities, $t(199) = 2.08, p < .05$, and as being more sincere, $t(199) = 2.47, p < .05$, and exciting, $t(199) = 3.49, p < .01$ (see Table 2 for means). Second, we tested if the regression weights of the image dimensions predicting organizational attractiveness were significantly different for potential applicants and their companions. The results showed that the regression weights of excitement, $z = 1.99, p < .05$, and ruggedness, $z = -3.02, p < .01$, were significantly different for potential applicants and companions (see Table 3 for regression weights). Third, with respect to the different types of companions, we conducted a series of independent samples *t*-tests to compare parents' and peers' ratings of image dimensions. We observed that parents rated the organization as offering more structure ($M = 4.37, SD = .60$), $t(157) = -3.37, p < .01$, more advancement opportunities ($M = 3.95, SD = .65$), $t(157) = -3.41, p < .01$, less pay ($M = 3.05, SD = .78$), $t(157) = 2.27, p < .05$, and more educational opportunities ($M = 3.99, SD = .57$), $t(157) = -2.93, p < .01$, and as being less rugged ($M = 3.36, SD = .90$), $t(157) = 2.65, p < .01$, than peers (respectively $M = 4.03, SD = .66$; $M = 3.54, SD = .84$; $M = 3.35, SD = .84$; $M = 3.69, SD = .71$; and $M = 3.73, SD = .86$). Finally, we conducted the regression analysis of companions' attractiveness on instrumental and symbolic image dimensions for parents and peers separately. However, no significant differences were observed with respect to the regression weights of the image dimensions.

Discussion

The present study contributes to and extends the literature on recruitment and organizational image by using the instrumental-symbolic framework to predict perceptions of organizational attractiveness among potential applicants as well as the people accompanying them to a job fair. This study yields several important findings that enhance our knowledge of organizational image and attraction.

First, consistent with the instrumental-symbolic framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003), we found that potential applicants' perceptions of instrumental image dimensions predicted their perceived organizational attractiveness. Specifically, potential applicants at a job fair were more attracted to the Belgian Defense if they perceived the organization as providing more social activities, more advancement opportunities, and less structure. In addition, symbolic image dimensions explained incremental variance in attractiveness beyond these instrumental attributes. Potential applicants were more attracted if they perceived the Belgian Defense as more sincere, more exciting, more prestigious, and less rugged. These results are in line with previous research on organizational image (Chapman et al., 2005) and the instrumental-symbolic framework in student, applicant, and employee samples (Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2005, 2007). However, this study was the first to extend these findings on the importance of instrumental and symbolic image dimensions to potential applicants specifically targeted by the organization's recruitment activities (i.e., job fair visitors) in the first phase of recruitment (Barber, 1998), enhancing our knowledge of the factors influencing early organizational attraction.

Second, we found that the attractiveness perceptions of people who accompanied potential applicants to a job fair were positively related to potential applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness over and above the variance explained by instrumental and symbolic image dimensions. This corroborates previous research reporting social influences

on organizational attraction (Gibson et al., 2007; Kilduff, 1990; Liden & Parsons, 1986; Ryan et al., 2000; Rynes et al., 1991; Turban, 2001; Van Hove & Lievens, 2009). Although Van Hove and Lievens (2007) found that friends had a stronger effect on organizational attractiveness than acquaintances, we did not find a moderating effect for companion type. Rather, we found that the relationship between companions' and potential applicants' organizational attractiveness was equally strong for parents and peers. This might be because both parents and peers represent strong ties which are thought to exert more social influence than weak ties such as acquaintances (Brown & Reingen, 1987).

Third, the present study extends previous research by investigating how instrumental and symbolic image dimensions relate to organizational attractiveness in a sample of people accompanying potential applicants to a job fair, such as family and friends. In line with previous studies on the instrumental-symbolic framework in other populations (Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens et al., 2005, 2007), we found that companions' perceived instrumental image attributes predicted their attractiveness perceptions. In particular, they rated the Belgian Defense as more attractive if they perceived it as offering more educational opportunities. Moreover, symbolic image traits accounted for additional variance in attractiveness perceptions beyond instrumental attributes. Companions reported higher attractiveness if they perceived the Belgian Defense as more sincere and more rugged. These results suggest that the instrumental-symbolic framework of organizational images can be applied to better understand the determinants of organizational attractiveness for people possibly influencing potential applicants.

Fourth, although we observed similar results for potential applicants and the people accompanying them to a job fair with respect to the main assumptions of the instrumental-symbolic framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003), there were also some noteworthy differences, in line with previous research reporting differences in the perception and

importance of instrumental and symbolic image dimensions across different groups of stakeholders (Lievens, 2007). Overall, instrumental and symbolic image appeared to be stronger predictors of organizational attractiveness for potential applicants than for their companions. This is not only reflected in the higher portions of explained variance for potential applicants, but also in the greater number of significant image predictors. Given that we measured the Belgian Defense's image *as an employer* (Lievens et al., 2005), these image dimensions are likely to capture more variance in the attraction of potential applicants who expressed an interest in working for the organization than of companions. The results might be different for other types of image, such as the organization's image as a corporate social performer or as a provider of goods and services (Dukerich et al., 2002).

Furthermore, in line with the interest they showed in working for the Belgian Defense (Lievens, 2007), potential applicants had a somewhat more positive view of the organization than their companions, especially with regards to travel opportunities, sincerity, and excitement. In addition, potential applicants and companions differed significantly in the importance of two specific image dimensions, namely excitement and ruggedness. Both of these dimensions represent symbolic trait inferences which are more subjective and relate more to people's own identity than instrumental image dimensions (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Therefore, the attractiveness of these symbolic image dimensions might depend on the individual's own characteristics, in line with a person-organization fit perspective (Lievens, Decaestecker, Coetsier, & Geirnaert, 2001). For instance, an exciting organization might be attractive for adventurous people, but not for people who prefer stability and routines. Hence, underlying differences in the personality, values, or other personal attributes of potential applicants and companions might explain the different importance they attach to these image dimensions.

With respect to the different types of companions, parents and peers did not differ significantly in the importance of the various image dimensions. There were, however, some differences in their perceptions of the organization's image, specifically concerning structure, advancement opportunities, pay, educational opportunities, and ruggedness. Parents and peers are likely to have different experiences with the Belgian Defense that may have shaped their image perceptions (Collins & Stevens, 2002). For instance, given that parents were much older than peers, they might have a more "historical" view of the organization whereas peers might be more influenced by recent media campaigns.

Study Limitations

Although the results of this study are consistent with previous studies on actual applicants and employees, it is important to keep in mind that the potential applicants in the present study were for the Belgian Defense. Because of differences between military and non-military organizations as well as the types of individuals attracted to them, some caution is required in generalizing the results to non-military organizations. This is especially likely to be the case with respect to the specific attributes that were related to perceptions of organizational attractiveness. However, the military context is highly relevant for studying recruitment issues given the increasing difficulties in attracting new recruits (Knowles et al., 2002; Lievens, 2007). In addition, the Belgian Defense has a strong and distinctive image as an employer making it an appropriate organization for research on organizational image and attractiveness. Nonetheless, some caution is required in generalizing the results to other countries and organizations, especially organizations that do not have such a strong image.

Furthermore, given that we did not measure the processes through which companions might have influenced potential applicants, we cannot be sure that the association between companions' and potential applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness in our study is a result of social influence. Other factors such as shared exposure to advertisement campaigns

might also be influencing their perceptions. However, our findings are in line with previous research demonstrating that the attitudes of family and friends toward an organization influence the attitudes of potential applicants (Gibson et al., 2007; Kilduff, 1990; Liden & Parsons, 1986; Ryan et al., 2000; Rynes et al., 1991; Turban, 2001; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007, 2009).

Moreover, the social actors included in the present study were all people who accompanied potential applicants to a job fair such as parents and friends, possibly demonstrating a supportive attitude towards potential applicants' occupational choices. Future studies might try to replicate our findings with other types of social actors who might be less supportive.

Finally, it is possible that the relationships reported in this study are due in part to common method variance given that image and attractiveness perceptions were measured at the same time in a single survey. In addition, we cannot rule out the possibility of reverse causality in that participants who rated the organization as more attractive might have rated all of the image attributes higher as well (Lievens, 2007). However, our approach is consistent with previous research that has examined image perceptions as a precursor of organizational attraction and not vice versa (Chapman et al., 2005).

Implications for Research and Practice

The results of this study have a number of implications for future research and practice. With respect to research, our results suggest that the instrumental-symbolic framework can be used to predict potential applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness. However, it is not clear how perceptions change as potential applicants move through the recruitment-selection process and obtain new information (Barber, 1998). This is an important issue because there is some evidence that actual applicants attach more importance to instrumental attributes than other groups (Lievens, 2007). Thus, future

longitudinal research is needed that follows potential applicants throughout the recruitment-selection process as they become applicants and then selectees. Future research might examine the extent to which instrumental and symbolic image dimensions predict attractiveness at each stage and whether the dimensions change in importance as potential applicants become applicants and then selectees. In addition, it would also be worthwhile to examine the extent to which social actors' perceptions of attractiveness predict attractiveness perceptions of applicants and selectees.

A second area of research is to investigate the influence of various recruitment activities on potential applicants' perceptions of organizational image and attractiveness. For example, Collins and Stevens (2002) found that early recruitment activities (publicity, sponsorships, word-of-mouth endorsements, advertising) were indirectly related to the application intentions and decisions of engineering students through organizational image and attractiveness. Future research might investigate the extent to which various recruitment activities influence instrumental and symbolic image perceptions of potential applicants.

Third, given the importance of social influences on organizational attraction, future research should investigate the factors that predict attractiveness for the people who might be influencing potential applicants. Although in the present study we found that instrumental and symbolic image dimensions were related to attractiveness for companions, the results were not as strong as for potential applicants, suggesting that other factors might also determine other people's attitudes toward the organization. For instance, future studies might investigate the relationship between person-environment fit perceptions and social actors' attractiveness (Chapman et al., 2005; Lievens et al., 2001).

In terms of practice, similar to the assessment made in this study, organizations should conduct their own image audit to assess the instrumental and symbolic image beliefs of relevant stakeholder groups that might determine their attractiveness. Previous research has

demonstrated that such an audit should not only be performed among job seekers but also among current employees (Lievens et al., 2007). The present study suggests that the image beliefs of people potentially influencing job seekers, such as family and friends, should also be taken into account.

Furthermore, to increase organizational attractiveness, recruitment activities should be based on the results of the image audit. In that respect, it would be most efficient to focus on those image dimensions that relate to attractiveness across different stakeholder groups (e.g., sincerity in the current study). In addition, specific recruitment activities targeted at specific groups might emphasize those image dimensions that are most important for them.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study is the first to extend the instrumental-symbolic framework to a dual sample of potential applicants at a job fair and the people accompanying them. Our results suggest that both potential applicants' and companions' perceptions of instrumental and symbolic image dimensions are related to their perceptions of organizational attractiveness. In addition, companions' perceptions of organizational attractiveness predicted potential applicants' attractiveness perceptions over and above their image perceptions. These results suggest that organizations not only need to be concerned about how they are perceived by potential applicants, but also how they are perceived by people possibly influencing potential applicants such as family and friends.

References

- Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Barber, A. E. (1998). *Recruiting employees: Individual and organizational perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Belt, J. A., & Paolillo, J. G. (1982). The influence of corporate image and specificity of candidate qualifications on response to recruitment advertisement. *Journal of Management*, 8, 105-112.
- Breaugh, J. A., & Starke, M. (2000). Research on employee recruitment: So many studies, so many remaining questions. *Journal of Management*, 26, 405-434.
- Brown, J. J., & Reingen, P. H. (1987). Social ties and word-of-mouth referral behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14, 350-362.
- Cable, D. M., & Turban, D. B. (2001). Establishing the dimensions, sources and value of job seekers' employer knowledge during recruitment. In G. R. Ferris (Ed.), *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management, Volume 20* (pp. 115-163). New York: Elsevier Science.
- Chapman, D. S., Uggerslev, K. L., Carroll, S. A., Piasentin, K. A., & Jones, D. A. (2005). Applicant attraction to organizations and job choice: A meta-analytic review of the correlates of recruiting outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90, 928-944.
- Collins, C. J., & Stevens, C. K. (2002). The relationship between early recruitment-related activities and the application decisions of new labor-market entrants: A brand equity approach to recruitment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87, 1121-1133.
- Dukerich, J. M., Golden, B. R., & Shortell, S. M. (2002). Beauty is in the eye of the beholder: The impact of organizational identification, identity, and image on the cooperative behaviors of physicians. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 47, 507-533.

- Dutton, J. E., Dukerich, J. M., & Harquail, C. V. (1994). Organizational images and member identification. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *39*, 239-263.
- Gatewood, R. D., Gowan, M. A., & Lautenschlager, G. J. (1993). Corporate image, recruitment image, and initial job choice decisions. *Academy of Management Journal*, *36*, 414-427.
- Gibson, J. L., Griepentrog, B. K., & Marsh, S. M. (2007). Parental influence on youth propensity to join the military. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *70*, 525-541.
- Highhouse, S., & Hoffman, J. R. (2001). Organizational attraction and job choice. In C. L. Cooper & I. T. Robertson (Eds.), *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Volume 16* (pp. 37-64). Chichester, England: Wiley.
- Highhouse, S., Lievens F., & Sinar, E. F. (2003). Measuring attraction to organizations. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *63*, 986-101.
- Highhouse, S., Zickar, M.J., Thorsteinson, T.J., Stierwalt, S.L., & Slaughter, J.E. (1999). Assessing company employment image: An example in the fast food industry. *Personnel Psychology*, *52*, 151-172.
- Hu, L. T., & Bentler, P. M. (1998). Fit indices in covariance structure modeling: Sensitivity to underparameterized model misspecification. *Psychological Methods*, *3*, 424-453.
- Judge, T. A., & Cable, D. M. (1997). Applicant personality, organizational culture and organization attraction. *Personnel Psychology*, *50*, 359-394.
- Katz, D. (1960). The functional approach to the study of attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *24*, 163-204.
- Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Marketing*, *57*, 1-22.

- Kilduff, M. (1990). The interpersonal structure of decision making: A social comparison approach to organizational choice. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 47, 270-288.
- Knowles, J. A., Parlier, G. H., Hoscheit, G. C., Ayer, R., Lyman, K., & Fancher, R. (2002). Reinventing Army recruiting. *Interfaces*, 32(1), 78-92.
- Liden, R. C., & Parsons, C. K. (1986). A field study of job applicant interview perceptions, alternative opportunities, and demographic characteristics. *Personnel Psychology*, 39, 109-122.
- Lievens, F. (2007). Employer branding in the Belgian Army: The importance of instrumental and symbolic beliefs for potential applicants, actual applicants, and military employees. *Human Resource Management*, 46, 51-69.
- Lievens, F., Decaestecker, C., Coetsier, P., & Geirnaert, J. (2001). Organizational attractiveness for prospective applicants: A person-organization fit perspective. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 50, 30-51.
- Lievens, F., & Highhouse, S. (2003). The relation of instrumental and symbolic attributes to a company's attractiveness as an employer. *Personnel Psychology*, 56, 75-102.
- Lievens, F., Van Hoye, G., & Anseel, F. (2007). Organizational identity and employer image: Towards a unifying framework. *British Journal of Management*, 18, S45-S59.
- Lievens, F., Van Hoye, G., & Schreurs, B. (2005). Examining the relationship between employer knowledge dimensions and organizational attractiveness: An application in a military context. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 78, 553-572.
- Murphy, K. R. (1986). When your top choice turns you down: Effect of rejected offers on the utility of selection tests. *Psychological Bulletin*, 99, 133-138.

- Ployhart, R. E. (2006). Staffing in the 21st century: New challenges and strategic opportunities. *Journal of Management*, *32*, 868-897.
- Powell, G. N., & Goulet, L. R. (1996). Recruiters' and applicants' reactions to campus interviews and employment decisions. *Academy of Management Journal*, *39*, 1619-1640.
- Ryan, A. M., Horvath, M., & Kriska, S. D. (2005). The role of recruiting source informativeness and organizational perceptions in decisions to apply. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, *13*, 235-249.
- Ryan, A. M., Sacco, J. M., McFarland, L. A., & Kriska, S. D. (2000). Applicant self-selection: Correlates of withdrawal from a multiple hurdle process. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *85*, 163-179.
- Rynes, S. L., Bretz, R. D., Jr., & Gerhart, B. (1991). The importance of recruitment in job choice: A different way of looking. *Personnel Psychology*, *44*, 487-521.
- Rynes, S. L., & Cable, D. M. (2003). Recruitment research in the twenty-first century. In W. C. Borman, D. R. Ilgen, & R. J. Klimoski (Eds.), *Handbook of Psychology: Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Volume 12* (pp. 55-76). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Saks, A. M. (2005). The impracticality of recruitment research. In A. Evers, N. Anderson, & O. Voskuijl (Eds.), *Handbook of Personnel Selection* (pp. 419-439). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Schreurs, B., Deros, E., De Witte, K., Proost, K., Andriessen, M., & Glabeke, K. (2005). Attracting potential applicants to the military: The effects of initial face-to-face contacts. *Human Performance*, *18*, 105-122.
- Shavitt, S. (1990). The role of attitude objects in attitude functions. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *26*, 124-148.

- Slaughter, J. E., Stanton, J. M., Mohr, D. C., & Schoel, W. A., III (2005). The interaction of attraction and selection: Implications for college recruitment and Schneider's ASA model. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *54*, 419-441.
- Taylor, M. S., & Collins, C. J. (2000). Organizational recruitment: Enhancing the intersection of research and practice. In C. L. Cooper & E. A. Locke (Eds.), *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Linking Theory with Practice* (pp. 304-334). Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Tom, V. R. (1971). The role of personality and organizational images in the recruiting process. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *6*, 573-592.
- Turban, D. B. (2001). Organizational attractiveness as an employer on college campuses: An examination of the applicant population. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *58*, 293-312.
- Turban, D. B., Campion, J. E., & Eyring, A. R. (1995). Factors related to job acceptance decisions of college recruits. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *47*, 193-213.
- Turban, D. B., & Greening, D. W. (1997). Corporate social performance and organizational attractiveness to prospective employees. *Academy of Management Journal*, *40*, 658-672.
- Van Hove, G. (2008). Nursing recruitment: Relationship between perceived employer image and nursing employees' recommendations. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *63*, 366-375.
- Van Hove, G., & Lievens, F. (2007). Social influences on organizational attractiveness: Investigating if and when word-of-mouth matters. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *37*, 2024-2047.
- Van Hove, G., & Lievens, F. (2009). Tapping the grapevine: A closer look at word-of-mouth as a recruitment source. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*, 341-352.

Table 1

Overview of Organizational Image Dimensions

Image dimension	Number of items	Sample item	α potential applicant	α companion
<i>Instrumental image</i>				
Social activities	3	The Belgian Defense offers the possibility to work together with different people.	.73	.69
Structure	3	The Belgian Defense offers the possibility to gain some discipline.	.71	.75
Advancement	3	The Belgian Defense offers diverse opportunities for advancement.	.78	.84
Travel	3	The Belgian Defense offers the possibility to travel a lot.	.86	.85
Pay	3	If one works for the Belgian Defense, one is paid well.	.87	.89
Job security	3	The Belgian Defense offers job security.	.77	.77
Education	3	The Belgian Defense offers the possibility to get an education.	.74	.76
<i>Symbolic image</i>				
<i>If I were to consider the Belgian Defense as a person, I would describe it as ...</i>				
Sincerity	3	Honest	.78	.69
Excitement	3	Exciting	.73	.85
Competence	4	Successful	.68	.62
Prestige	3	Well-respected	.81	.76
Ruggedness	3	Tough	.82	.81

Table 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<i>Companion</i>															
1. Social activities	4.19	.58	-												
2. Structure	4.19	.64	.24**	-											
3. Advancement	3.71	.79	.33**	.30**	-										
4. Travel	3.60	.81	.22**	.16*	.36**	-									
5. Pay	3.22	.81	.16*	.07	.37**	.32**	-								
6. Job security	3.79	.71	.24**	.26**	.30**	.30**	.14	-							
7. Education	3.79	.66	.25**	.26**	.51**	.30**	.29**	.28**	-						
8. Sincerity	3.31	.73	.20**	.10	.26**	.07	.28**	.25**	.23**	-					
9. Excitement	3.86	.77	.36**	.06	.19**	.25**	.37**	.15*	.27**	.25**	-				
10. Competence	3.65	.52	.35**	.15*	.41**	.20**	.35**	.24**	.29**	.47**	.38**	-			
11. Prestige	3.18	.75	.25**	.16*	.30**	.27**	.44**	.05	.32**	.41**	.39**	.42**	-		
12. Ruggedness	3.60	.92	.07	.28**	-.12	.03	-.01	-.06	.01	.08	.10	.06	.11	-	
13. Attractiveness	3.21	1.02	.25**	.11	.17*	.15*	.23**	.15*	.28**	.30**	.19**	.22**	.28**	.14*	-
<i>Potential applicant</i>															
14. Social activities	4.24	.58	.23**	.07	.22**	.19**	.15*	.17*	.20**	.17*	.18**	.17*	.12	.02	.21**
15. Structure	4.10	.66	.18**	.16*	.17*	.15*	.11	.05	.22**	-.11	.10	.14	.15*	.00	-.01
16. Advancement	3.76	.76	.12	.12	.24**	.10	.04	.05	.14*	.01	.00	.05	-.01	.02	.08
17. Travel	3.75	.83	.16*	.08	.14*	.23**	.06	-.05	.18*	-.05	.09	.06	.06	-.06	.08
18. Pay	3.32	.80	.22**	.13	.19**	.14*	.18*	.08	.18*	.06	.09	.12	.09	.00	.09
19. Job security	3.70	.81	.25**	.11	.06	.11	.08	.16*	.07	.06	.11	.08	.14*	.01	.14
20. Education	3.84	.70	.15*	.14	.23**	.17*	.07	.10	.14*	.00	.02	.09	.04	-.13	.10
21. Sincerity	3.47	.83	.15*	-.01	.08	.13	.23**	.13	.09	.31**	.10	.15*	.29**	-.04	.25**
22. Excitement	4.09	.71	.28**	.10	.19**	.19**	.07	.01	.18**	-.02	.23**	.14	.13	.04	.17*
23. Competence	3.65	.63	.29**	.12	.20**	.18*	.19**	.15*	.19**	.19**	.18*	.29**	.20**	.03	.23**
24. Prestige	3.24	.88	.19**	.10	.12	.14*	.10	.13	.17*	.00	.06	.12	.24**	-.01	.09
25. Ruggedness	3.61	.93	.08	.04	-.12	.02	.02	.02	.04	-.02	.02	.05	.00	.14*	-.09
26. Attractiveness	3.09	1.14	.20**	.08	.16*	.11	.16*	-.01	.16*	.21**	.13	.14	.18*	.05	.44**

Note. *N* = 200 for all variables except Variable 13, *N* = 199.

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

Table 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Study Variables (Continued)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
<i>Companion</i>														
1. Social activities	4.19	.58												
2. Structure	4.19	.64												
3. Advancement	3.71	.79												
4. Travel	3.60	.81												
5. Pay	3.22	.81												
6. Job security	3.79	.71												
7. Education	3.79	.66												
8. Sincerity	3.31	.73												
9. Excitement	3.86	.77												
10. Competence	3.65	.52												
11. Prestige	3.18	.75												
12. Ruggedness	3.60	.92												
13. Attractiveness	3.21	1.02												
<i>Potential applicant</i>														
14. Social activities	4.24	.58	-											
15. Structure	4.10	.66	.31**	-										
16. Advancement	3.76	.76	.22**	.10	-									
17. Travel	3.75	.83	.07	.06	.23**	-								
18. Pay	3.32	.80	.16*	.07	.29**	.27**	-							
19. Job security	3.70	.81	.27**	.07	.28**	.11	.22**	-						
20. Education	3.84	.70	.31**	.14*	.42**	.16*	.28**	.39**	-					
21. Sincerity	3.47	.83	.27**	.09	.08	.09	.22**	.11	.24**	-				
22. Excitement	4.09	.71	.34**	.19**	.09	.20**	.21**	.12	.20**	.24**	-			
23. Competence	3.65	.63	.32**	.21**	.28**	.18**	.33**	.21**	.36**	.45**	.41**	-		
24. Prestige	3.24	.88	.20**	.25**	.34**	.14*	.34**	.15*	.33**	.27**	.25**	.37**	-	
25. Ruggedness	3.61	.93	-.08	.17*	-.07	.16*	.10	-.01	-.11	.03	.15*	.05	.15*	-
26. Attractiveness	3.09	1.14	.34**	-.01	.30**	.15*	.28**	.30**	.34**	.34**	.30**	.34**	.30**	-.15*

Note. *N* = 200 for all variables except Variable 13, *N* = 199.

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

Table 3

Hierarchical Regression of Potential Applicant and Companion Attractiveness on Instrumental and Symbolic Image Dimensions

Predictor	Potential applicant attractiveness				Companion attractiveness		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<i>Control variables</i>							
Gender ^a	-.17*	-.14*	-.15*	-.13*	-.11	-.11	-.10
Age	.13	.13	.10	.10	.04	-.01	.07
Education: Lower secondary school ^b	.16*	.10	.06	.04	.07	.01	.00
Education: College ^b	-.14	-.13	-.06	-.02	-.18*	-.11	-.10
<i>Instrumental image</i>							
Social activities		.20**	.11	.08		.15 [†]	.13
Structure		-.14*	-.14*	-.10		.01	-.05
Advancement		.14*	.11	.11 [†]		-.03	-.05
Travel		.07	.06	.05		.01	.04
Pay		.13 [†]	.08	.09		.12	.09
Job security		.10	.11	.09		.02	.00
Education		.14 [†]	.06	.08		.20*	.15 [†]
<i>Symbolic image</i>							
Sincerity			.15*	.10			.21*
Excitement			.15*	.13*			-.06
Competence			.03	.00			.03
Prestige			.15*	.15*			.06
Ruggedness			-.15*	-.12 [†]			.15*
<i>Companion attractiveness</i>							
				.31**			
R^2	.077**	.296**	.374**	.457**	.056*	.154**	.220**
Adjusted R^2	.058**	.254**	.318**	.406**	.036*	.101**	.148**
ΔR^2	.077**	.218**	.079**	.083**	.056*	.098**	.066*

Note. Due to missing values, $N = 196$ for potential applicants and $N = 190$ for companions. The values in the table are standardized beta weights (β).

^a0 = male, 1 = female. ^bOmitted dummy category for education is upper secondary school.

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4

Moderated Hierarchical Regression of Potential Applicant Attractiveness on Companion Attractiveness and Companion Type

Predictor	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
<i>Control variables</i>				
Gender ^a	-.15 [†]	-.09	-.10	-.10
Age	.19	.11	.12	.12
Education: Lower secondary school ^b	.17*	.11	.11	.11
Education: College ^b	-.23 [†]	-.09	-.09	-.09
<i>Companion attractiveness</i>		.40**	.40**	.40**
<i>Companion type^c</i>			.02	.02
<i>Companion attractiveness × Companion type</i>				.00
R^2	.080*	.221**	.222**	.222**
Adjusted R^2	.056*	.196**	.191**	.185**
ΔR^2	.080*	.141**	.000	.000

Note. Due to missing values, $N = 158$. The values in the table are standardized beta weights (β).

^a 0 = male, 1 = female. ^b Omitted dummy category for education is upper secondary school. ^c 0 = peer, 1 = parent.

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.