Questioning the Questioner: The Effect of Applicant Questions on Interview Outcomes

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Abstract

There is a great deal of advice available from authors of interviewing guidebooks regarding the types of questions applicants should ask during the job interview, if any. Yet, there has been limited research investigating the impact of applicant questions to the interviewer on interview outcomes to support the varied opinions disseminated. This paper focuses on how whether applicants ask questions during employment interviews affects the attributions and hiring ratings interviewers make of applicants. The variables examined (applicant résumé qualifications, applicant interview performance before questions are asked, whether the questions can or cannot be answered on the company website, and whether interviewers believe in general that applicants should or should not ask questions) are rooted within a larger process model of applicant interviewing behaviors, also presented in this paper. Employed business and psychology students (N=353) assumed the role of interviewer and evaluated a single candidate for a management trainee position based on a résumé and videotaped interview performance. Results from two studies support the idea that whether or not the applicant asks questions, and in fewer cases whether the questions could have been answered in advance, can affect the attributions interviewers make about applicants. However, more than the questions applicants ask, the interview performance of the applicant has an even greater impact on both attributions made about the applicant and hiring ratings. This line of research has important real world implications, given that it can help guide job applicants to successful questioning behaviors during the interview.

Keywords: job interviews, applicant questions, interviewer expectations

Questioning the Questioner:

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Although job interviews can vary greatly in their content and degree of structure, one aspect is almost certain: applicants expect to be asked questions to assess their qualifications and/or fit with the organization. Applicants may also expect that they will be able to ask their own questions during the interview to help them determine whether the job and organization meet their expectations. While the former (i.e., what will the interviewer ask?) is often the cause of worry and consternation among job applicants, the latter (i.e., what should I ask the interviewer?) may be largely overlooked during pre-interview preparations. Before the interview, many job applicants may attempt to ready themselves by researching the organization, trying to figure out what the interviewer will ask them, and reviewing past experiences to determine which are most appropriate to share. Although it makes sense that applicants will want to anticipate the questions they might be asked, perhaps similar emphasis should be placed preparing for the another aspect of the interview that they have greater control over: determining what questions, if any, they would like to ask the interviewer.

Despite the limited empirical research for applicants to turn to in order to determine the best types of questions to ask, there is no shortage of advice in interviewing coaching materials. Yet, the perspectives of authors sharing their opinions can be dissenting, making it all the more difficult to know what to believe. Applicants may struggle to determine whether it is in their best interest to ask anything, and if so, to understand what makes some questions superior to others. It is imperative that researchers investigate the effects of applicant questioning behaviors, both to enhance our

shared knowledge in this under-researched area, and to be able to give more meaningful advice to the multitude of job applicants who are unsure of how to make the best impression during their interview. The current research aims to progress what is known about applicant questioning through the completion of two main objectives.

The first objective is to propose a process model of applicant questioning behaviors, with the hope that this model may serve as a guide to direct future research in this area. At this point in time, research on the antecedents and effects of applicant questions lacks clear organization, with many of the variables appearing in research seeming haphazardly chosen. Furthermore, conclusions are offered with little discussion of the countless other variables that have the potential to affect the relationships examined. The model is a way of visualizing the wide expanse of variables likely to play a role in why questions are asked, how they are perceived, and how they affect interview outcomes such as hiring ratings. Such a model can help researchers identify what is currently missing from the research, and help guide decisions about what to address next. The model is organized into three parts: (1) Pre-questioning, describing the applicant characteristics, motives, and situational variables that likely influence decisions about asking questions, (2) questioning, including extent of inquiry and a number of moderating variables that may affect the relationship between extent of inquiry and outcomes, and (3) post-questioning, including interviewer attributions and ratings of the applicant, as well as a feedback loop that contributes to further decisions regarding extent of inquiry.

Following the presentation of the model, the second objective of this study is to investigate the effects of certain elements of the proposed model on attributions and ratings of the applicant. The effects that will be examined include: (1) whether the

applicant asks any questions and if so, whether these questions are answered on the organization's website, (2) whether the "interviewer" (participant) believes that applicants should ask questions during job interviews, and (3) whether the effect of applicant questions (i.e., asking no questions, asking questions that cannot be answered on the website, or asking questions that can be answered on the website) on ultimate hiring ratings depends on applicant qualifications or interview performance. Investigating these elements will help illuminate the situations and question characteristics with the potential to alter perceptions and evaluations of applicants.

The testing of the third element listed (i.e., determining whether the effects of applicant questions differ as a function of qualifications) will be split between two studies: the first study addressing pre-interview qualifications and the second study addressing applicant interview performance. The purpose of including applicant qualifications as a variable is to determine in what situations questions have the greatest or smallest impact. After all, applicant questions do not happen in isolation; after the résumé and the interview, interviewers have formulated impressions of the applicant. Applicants who are well qualified may not benefit as much from asking good questions as marginally qualified applicants because their ratings would likely already be high. On the other hand qualified applicants might be perceived less negatively for not asking questions that a marginal applicant already on the fence. While "bad" questions could potentially take a marginal applicant out of the running for the position, an otherwise qualified applicant might still get by on their strong qualifications. Despite these possibilities, it is unknown whether the effect of asking negatively perceived questions, asking no questions, or asking positively perceived questions on hiring ratings is different

for marginally qualified versus well-qualified applicants (Study 1) or those who perform well in the interview versus those who perform more poorly (Study 2).

The two objectives, when taken as a whole, essentially get to the root of the matter of whether applicant questions make a difference. That is, do applicant questions have any real impact on interview ratings beyond the applicants' answers to interview questions? Coaching materials would have applicants believe that yes, they do. The following section will review theoretical and empirical evidence regarding the impact of applicant questions gathered from academic research and coaching materials

The Other Side of the Desk: Why Does the Applicant Matter?

It is widely understood by applicants and interviewers alike that the interview is a method for assessing applicant qualifications and fit with the job/organization. Yet, viewing the interview as a one-sided interrogation used solely as a means for the interviewer to collect information ignores an essential part of the interview – applicant information gathering (Dipboye, Macan, & Shahani-Denning, 2012). The interview is an interaction, and both the interviewer *and* the applicant use the interview to "collect information, make judgments, [and] manage impressions" (Macan & Merritt, 2011, p. 239). Furthermore, Dipboye and colleagues argue that both the applicant and interviewer perspectives are vital aspects of the interaction; in order to fully understand the interview, one must consider how the two perspectives *together* influence the process and outcomes. As such, understanding the interview involves recognizing that interviewers and applicants often have competing objectives. On the one hand, interviewers hope to gauge whether the applicant will be successful in the position; on the other, applicants expect to use the interview to discern whether they feel the organization is a good fit for their

values and skill sets (Dipboye et al., 2012). Both objectives play a role in determining the course of the interview and interview outcomes. Thus, it is not only important to understand how interviewer questions to applicants affect outcomes, but also to understand the effect of applicant questions on outcomes.

Existing research on signaling theory and impression management may help explain why applicant questions have the potential to influence interview outcomes. Signaling theory (Spence, 1973), states that when information is incomplete, decision makers use the information at their disposal to make inferences about things they cannot directly know for sure. Applied to the job interview, interviewers may be looking for cues of applicant quality from applicant answers to interview questions, applicant behaviors, or even applicant-generated questions to the interviewer. Given that applicants have discretion over exactly what they ask, applicant questions may be perceived as a signal of what the applicant considers most important, thus providing the interviewer with additional information about whether the applicant is a good match for the organization. Applicant questions might also convey applicant quality to the extent that questions seem well researched and insightful. These signals may then affect the attributions made about the applicant, and consequent ratings.

In addition to signaling quality, applicant questioning behaviors also have the potential to serve as a form of impression management. Previous research has established that impression management behaviors affect interview ratings (e.g., Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke, 2002) for both structured and unstructured interviews (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). For instance, research supports both self-focused impression management (i.e., behaviors that portray the individual as competent through tactics such as self-

promotion) and other-focused impression management (i.e., behaviors directed at others to elicit feelings of similarity, liking, or fit) positively relating to interview evaluations (Kacmar, Delery, & Ferris, 1992; Wayne & Kacmar, 1991). While self-focused questions (e.g., What can *I do* to exceed expectations in my first month working here?) may function similarly to self-focused impression management, asking questions about the interviewer (e.g., What do *you* like best about working here?) may behave similarly to other-focused impression management, especially other-enhancement (i.e., flattery; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007) by insinuating that the applicant values the interviewer's opinions and is interested in what the interviewer has to say.

Even authors of interviewing coaching materials recognize the impression management potential of applicant questions. Kador (2010), author of *301 Best Questions to Ask on Your Interview*, goes so far as to say that the primary goal of the applicant asking questions during the interview is not to elicit information from the interviewer, but rather to manage one's impression by presenting an appealing image. From this perspective, applicant questions are actually statements about oneself masquerading as questions. For example, applicants who ask the interviewer how they can best contribute to the organization in the first sixty days on the job portray a message that they are willing to take the job seriously and are eager to leverage their talents to further organizational success.

Both signaling theory and impression management research provide theoretical support for the notion that applicant questions could influence applicant evaluations during employment interviews. However, empirical research is needed that directly assesses the impact of applicant questioning behaviors during the interview. Existing

academic research directly exploring the effects of applicant questions is limited. Only a handful of articles address the topic, the majority of which have been published in communication journals (e.g., see Babbitt & Jablin, 1985; Einhorn, 1981; Goldberg & Cohen, 2004; Jablin & Miller, 1990; Taylor, Coolsen, & Reese, 2010; Taylor, Friedman, & Coolsen, 2013; Tullar, 1989). Of these articles, applicant questions were the focal interest for three papers (Babbitt & Jablin, 1985; Taylor, Coolsen, & Reese, 2010; Taylor, Friedman, & Coolsen, 2013). Applicant questions shared the spotlight with interviewer questions in another (Jablin & Miller, 1990), and for the remaining research applicant questions played a limited role overshadowed by other primary research prerogatives. These research objectives included investigating the overall communication strategies of effective versus ineffective interviewees (Einhorn, 1981), examining whether gender affects the success of nonverbal and verbal interviewing behaviors (Goldberg & Cohen, 2004), and exploring how employment interviews function as cognitive scripts (Tullar, 1989).

Although research regarding applicant questions is limited and applicant questions are rarely the focal point, advice offered by authors of interviewing coaching materials and self-help articles is plentiful. Many of these authors suggest that applicants failing to ask questions during the interview will ultimately be less successful than those who ask questions (e.g., Adler, 2008; Deluca & Deluca, 2004; Fry, 2009; Green, 2012; Kador, 2010; Moreira, 2002; Peterson, n.d.; 2012; Williams, 2008). "'Most people think all they are supposed to do is *answer* questions during an interview,' said Linda Burtch, managing director at Smith Hanley Associates LLC, a national recruiting firm. 'I tell all my candidates that their job is to *ask* questions'" (Adler, 2000, p. 64). Others echo this

sentiment, writing that applicants should never say they have no questions during an interview (Morriera, 2002). These authors believe that failing to ask questions may be the weakest response individuals can provide when prompted for questions (Deluca, 2004), because it can give the false impression that they are not interested in the position (Williams, 2008) and that they have not done enough background research on the organization to even know what to ask (Levit, 2009).

Instead of shying away from questions when the opportunity arises, some authors urge applicants to use them to their advantage. Kador (2010) writes that in a monotonous sea of rehearsed answers to interview questions, asking the interviewer questions is the only real chance applicants have to distinguish themselves from the pack. In fact, in some cases, the questions asked by applicants may be even more revealing than their answers to the interview questions. Applicants hope that these questions will set them apart in a good way, but questions could also backfire if they are generic, poorly thought-out, or not well received by the interviewer (Peterson, n.d.).

The possibility of questions negatively influencing interview outcomes leads others to caution applicants against asking them altogether, although this advice is more unusual. Shapiro (2008) suggests that applicants abstain from asking questions until a formal offer has been made. She believes that too often applicants fall into the trap of trying to impress the interviewer with what they know about the company, but rarely do they have enough insider information to actually impress the interviewer. Asking questions just for the sake of it has the potential to come off as insincere and decrease liking for the applicant (Fiegerman, 2011).

Most mainstream interviewing books and articles go one step further than advising the applicant on whether or not to ask questions by directing readers on exactly what *types* of questions to ask. While there is certainly some overlap among authors regarding appropriate questions, there appears to be greater consensus on what types of questions to avoid (e.g., questions about pay, benefits, scheduling, time off). Although there is some initial empirical evidence examining how question content affects interview outcomes (Taylor, Coolsen, & Reese, 2010; Taylor, Friedman, & Coolsen, 2013) and a scattering of advice regarding other areas such as question structure (Babbitt & Jablin, 1985; Einhorn, 1983) there remains much to be learned about what makes applicant questions "good" (i.e., positively perceived) or "bad" (i.e., negatively perceived).

In an early work on applicant communication strategies, Einhorn (1983) identified 93 behaviors she believed were related to effective interview communication, one of which was applicant questioning. Specifically, by examining the transcripts and video footage of seven successful interviews and seven unsuccessful interviewees, she concluded that successful applicants tended to ask specific, covered a variety of topics, and were phrased in the first person. It is unclear whether she defined variety of topics as variety within-person (meaning each successful applicant asked many questions covering multiple topics) or variety between applicants (as in, collectively the group of successful applicants covered a variety of topics). All the examples of questions she provided to demonstrate the variety of topics dealt with either the job or organization, so it may be the case that variety refers to an assortment of more specific topics within the same general categorization, rather than variety spanning larger categories (e.g., the selection process, pay, the job, the organization, etc.).

There were certain limitations to Einhorn's study as well. For one, her sample size was very small. Thus, while her conclusions indicate initial trends, a larger sample size is needed to provide more evidence of the trends she identified. Furthermore, she defined successful and unsuccessful applicants as those who statistically significantly improved or worsened their post interview ratings (based on education, work experience, personality, motivation, and hiring rating) from their pre-interview ratings, which were based on only their résumé. She threw out nine individuals whose scores did not statistically significantly change, but in doing so may have removed some applicants who could not "statistically significantly improve" their rating because they started out with high pre-interview ratings (although these applicants are undoubtedly successful). Adding to the confusion is that Einhorn never defined what she meant by a "significant change" in ratings. Finally, Einhorn did not conduct any analyses to determine if unsuccessful and successful applicants statistically differed in terms of their question asking, so the suggested characteristics of successful questions remained in need of verification.

Babbitt and Jablin (1985), however, did analyze the differences in the success rates of a number of question characteristics. Despite Einhorn's (1983) observation that successful applicants typically asked questions in the first person, Babbitt and Jablin found no difference in the number of first-person questions asked by successful versus unsuccessful applicants. They did find, however, that applicants securing second interview offers typically asked more questions looking for new information than questions seeking clarification or opinions from the interviewer. They also asked fewer questions seeking information not relevant to the job, and tended to ask fewer questions about the process than unsuccessful applicants. In general, applicants asked more closed

than open-ended questions, and questions that were on average nine words long, although neither openness nor length were related to applicant success.

More recently, Taylor, Coolsen, and Reese (2010) distributed a survey of applicant questions to members of a human resources professional organization. Participants were asked to indicate whether each question would influence their rating of an applicant positively, negatively, or not at all. Only questions regarding "the company's history, revenue, and/or products and services" were rated as likely negatively influencing evaluations of the applicant. Even then, the magnitude of the effect was rather small. The authors concluded that only questions that could have been answered in advance, via the organization's website, for instance, are not well received. Perhaps more surprisingly, participants did not perceive questions about salary and benefits as negative. In fact, these questions were rated as having more positive impacts on ratings than questions about the hiring process. Yet, questions about the job and organization were rated most favorably. Finally, participants reported that failing to ask any questions would have, in their opinions, an extremely negative effect on evaluations of an applicant.

Taylor, Friedman, and Coolsen continued to investigate the impact of question content in a follow-up study (2013). In this study, members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) were presented with a brief interview transcript differing in the type of questions asked (questions about salary and benefits, the hiring process, the organization, the job, or no questions). Although participants believed that questions about the job, organization, and hiring process would positively affect interview evaluations, when it came down to reading the vignettes and making ratings, the only

differences in ratings were between questions about the job and asking no questions, and questions about the job and questions about salary and benefits, with applicants asking questions about the job receiving higher ratings each time. In an attempt to explain the reason for these differences, the authors also examined perceptions of the applicant's personality in terms of extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. They found that applicants asking about the organization, job, or hiring process were assessed to be more extraverted and open to experience than those asking no questions. While no statistical differences were found for conscientiousness, the means were in the predicted direction, with those asking about the organization, job, and hiring process being higher than those asking about salary and benefits or no questions.

A Proposed Model of Applicant Questioning Behaviors

Although the research above provides some insight into how applicant questions may impact interview outcomes, there are a number of additional variables (i.e., question, applicant, interviewer, and interview characteristics) with the potential to moderate these relationships. These moderators are captured in the process model of applicant questioning behaviors (Figure 1). The model has three parts that are meant to be somewhat fluid. That is, one part of the model does not necessarily "end" as another "begins," and there is no defining event that marks the beginning or end of each section; rather applicants may move between them, both progressing and digressing as the interview evolves. The fluidity is further captured in the model by a feedback loop, to show that the reactions interviewers have to applicant questions do not mark the end of the process, but may play a role in determining whether applicants ask additional questions. Furthermore, the various aspects of the model are not limited to one part of the

interview. For instance, pre-questioning does not necessarily begin only after the interviewer has asked all of his or her questions, because the applicant may decide to ask questions at any given point at the beginning, middle, or end of the interview. Thus, the process model is meant to overlap with various parts of the interview on a situational basis.

Of the three sections of the model, first is pre-questioning, in which the motives and characteristics of the applicant, along with various situational factors, influence whether the applicant decides to ask any questions of the interviewer. The influences important to pre-questioning affect the questioning section of the model, in which the applicant acts on the intentions to ask or not ask questions developed during the previous section. This is captured by the "extent of inquiry" variable in the model. This variable not only captures whether or not the applicant decides to ask questions, but also the number of questions the applicant asks at any given instance during the interview. As the applicant asks questions, a number of moderating variables may influence the relationship between extent of inquiry and later outcomes. These moderating variables can be classified under one of four categories: question characteristics, applicant characteristics, interviewer characteristics, or interview characteristics. Following the questioning section is post-questioning. This part of the model includes the important outcomes resulting from the combined effects of moderating variables and the extent of inquiry, including the attributions made about the applicant by the interviewer and ratings of the applicant. Also included in this section is a feedback loop consisting of the verbal or nonverbal feedback from the interviewer that may affect whether the applicant continues to ask questions.

While the model is conceptualized in terms of a more typical interviewing interaction between one interview and one interviewee, it is possible to apply the model to other types of interviews (e.g., panel, telephone, video, etc.) with certain modifications. For instance, in a panel interview, a greater number of interviewers has the potential to complicate some of the variables in the model such as perceived interviewer receptivity to questions, given that the applicant has to take into account multiple interviewers with potentially conflicting perceived receptivity to questions. Furthermore, different interviewers on a panel may exhibit different reactions to questions if they are asked, which could complicate the applicant's decision to ask more questions. The model should also hold for the most part in video or phone interviews. Again, however, some tweaks may be needed in order to retain complete relevancy. For instance, in telephone interviews, interviewer non-verbal behavior will not be as strong of a determinant of whether the applicant asks questions, and applicant nonverbal behavior will not interact as strongly with extent of inquiry to affect interview outcomes, nor will interviewer non-verbal behavior play as large a role in the feedback loop. Furthermore, the norms of the interview may change somewhat in non-face-to-face interviews. These are areas that future research is encouraged to explore, but will not be the main focus of this research. Each section of the process model of applicant questioning will now be discussed in more detail.

Pre-questioning. As the interview takes place, applicants must weigh any motivations they have for asking questions against situational characteristics in order to determine whether they wish to ask the interviewer any questions. This rapid analysis of the situation and motives to arrive at a decision to ask or not ask questions may operate

outside of conscious awareness, especially given that the applicant is likely preoccupied with answering questions and managing impressions. Furthermore, applicant characteristics such as personality or anxiety may also influence the extent of applicant inquiry. All variables fueling the intention to ask or not ask questions are captured on the left side of Figure 1 in the first section of the process model, pre-questioning.

Applicant motives and characteristics. Two applicant-centered influences on applicant extent of inquiry are applicant motives and applicant characteristics.

Applicant motives. There are a variety of reasons applicants may wish to ask questions during the interview. While applicants may experience only one motive, the likelier case is that they simultaneously experience a number of motives for asking questions. A genuine interest in learning about the job or organization in hope of developing realistic expectations may fuel applicant inquiries (Coelimeyer & Berchtold, 1982). Other motives include determining person-job or person-organization fit, balancing the uneven power distribution inherent to the interview (Babbitt & Jablin, 1985), and showing preparedness (Peterson, n.d.). The latter motive, the desire to show interview preparation, blends seamlessly with impression management motives. Even if applicants are not aware they are doing so, for most, impression management is a strong motivator during the interview. The desire to convey the image of a proactive, interested, or knowledgeable applicant (Johnson, 2012; Peterson, n.d.), should lead applicants to ask questions that they feel convey the desired impression (Kador, 2010). Although the motives listed above are not exhaustive, they represent a sampling of the many reasons applicants may have for asking or not asking questions during the interview.

Applicant characteristics. Certain applicant characteristics such as personality and trait anxiety may also contribute to decisions to ask or not ask questions. Of the Big Five personality traits, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience may be particularly related to applicant extent of inquiry. Extraverted individuals, characterized by their outgoingness and love of social interaction, are routinely found to be more confident in social situations as well as better able to handle social interactions than those who are more introverted (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Extraverted individuals, then, should feel more comfortable initiating interactions, such as asking questions, with the interviewer. Conscientious individuals are responsible, organized, detail orientated, driven (Barrick & Mount, 1991), planful, and thorough information gatherers (Costa & McCrae, 1988). As job applicants, conscientious individuals were more likely than less conscientious individuals to prepare for interviews and gather information in advance through social means; that is, by asking questions and talking to other individuals about the job and organization (Caldwell & Burger, 1998). Their strong tendency towards information gathering may prompt continued information gathering during the interview by asking the interviewer questions. Finally, individuals high in openness to experience, characterized by curiosity, are also more inclined to gather information than individuals who score lower on this personality dimension (McCrae & Costa, 1985). As a consequence, individuals high in openness may be more inclined to ask questions during the interview.

Trait anxiety is another applicant characteristic likely to contribute to applicant extent of inquiry. Specifically, communication apprehension, or the anxiety an individual experiences before or during communications with others (McCroskey, 1977) may

influence an applicant's level of comfort with asking questions. Individuals with inflated communication anxiety tend to avoid communication (McCrosky, Daly, & Sorenson, 1976; Beatty, 1987). If complete avoidance is not possible, they minimize communications by curtailing social interactions as soon as possible (Lazarus & Averill, 1972), and reducing their verbal output to the bare necessity (McCroskey, 1984). Students with communication apprehension have been found to ask fewer questions in classroom settings (Aitken & Neer, 1993). Thus, individuals with heightened communication anxiety may conceivably wish to reduce prolonged interaction with interviewers by refraining from any sort of communication that might lengthen the interview, including applicant questioning.

Situational determinants. In addition to the individual motivations and characteristics described above, there are a number of situational determinants with the potential to affect questioning behavior, included in a separate box in Figure 1. Many of the situational determinants deal with applicant perceptions, including perceptions of expected interviewing behaviors, personal interview performance, and interviewer receptiveness to questions as indicated by verbal and nonverbal behaviors. Other situational determinants pertain to situation specific applicant characteristics (i.e., self-efficacy, comfort), situation specific applicant behaviors (i.e., preparation), as well as interview-specific characteristics (i.e., interview purpose and stage).

Applicant perceptions of the situation. First, the interview is a rule-bound interaction. In other words, a specific set of social rules, or beliefs about which behaviors are appropriate and expected, apply to the interview (Argyle, Furnham, & Graham, 1981). Social rules have been found to influence the behaviors of individuals (Herriot,

1989). Consequently, applicants' preconceived notions about whether or not they are *supposed to* ask questions may influence whether they actually engage in this behavior.

Applicant perceptions of previous or current interview performance may also influence whether they ask questions by affecting task persistence. To understand their current interview performance, applicants are apt to look for clues (i.e. seek feedback) from the interviewer's nonverbal behavior. Feedback seeking was found to be more frequent in uncertain situations (Ashford, 1986), when contingency uncertainty is high; (i.e., when it is ambiguous which behaviors lead to good performance ratings), and when organizational tenure is low (Ashford & Cummings, 1985), characteristics typical of the interview. By remaining vigilant to indications of performance while interviewing, the applicant can get a better idea of which behaviors are positively or negatively received, and decide with greater confidence whether applicant inquiry should be pursued. For instance, if the applicant has a very assertive style, and the interviewer responds with positive feedback, the applicant may feel more comfortable with taking some control of the interview and asking unsolicited questions. If feedback about performance is extremely negative, however, it has been suggested that individuals are less likely to persist with the task (DeShon & Alexander, 1996). Thus, applicants who feel they are not performing well may disengage from the interview altogether, and decide there is no point in asking questions.

Applicant perceptions of interviewer receptivity to questions may also influence extent of applicant inquiry. The time during the interview at which the applicant is considering asking the question, whether the interviewer asks for questions, applicant self-monitoring, and interviewer nonverbal behaviors are possible contributors to these

perceptions. Some applicants may believe they should hold all questions to the end of the interview, while others feel comfortable asking questions as they naturally arise throughout. The interviewer can make clear the appropriate time for applicants to ask questions by telling applicants when questions are welcome (e.g., throughout the interview, at the beginning, at the end, never). Explicitly asking for questions seems to be common practice among interviewers; in one study, all but 10 of 49 interviewers (roughly 80%) did so (Babbitt, 1985). Directly asking applicants for questions allows applicants the opportunity to comfortably express their queries free from concern of doing so at the wrong time. On the other hand, when interviewers do not ask for questions, the perceptive applicant may feel pressured to keep questions to a minimum. Of course, to some degree, the ability to pick up on and interpret interviewer social cues may depend upon applicant self-monitoring (Snyder, 1974). High self-monitors tend to read the social situation around them, and behave in ways that others will view favorably given the situation. In other words, they use information from their environment to better understand how they might project a favorable self-image. An applicant who is a high self-monitor might be more likely to use situational cues to determine whether it is appropriate to ask questions or not, and then act accordingly.

Applicant perceptions of interviewer nonverbal behavior may also clarify interviewer receptivity to questions, thereby influencing the extent of applicant inquiry. In Dipboye and Macan's (1988) interview process model, the authors proposed that applicants use interviewers' nonverbal behaviors as cues to their performance. Positive applicant perceptions of performance prompted by affirmative or encouraging interviewer nonverbal behavior may lead to decreased performance anxiety, and

consequently increased applicant-initiated inquiries (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004), while closed or disinterested nonverbal behavior may do just the opposite.

Situation specific applicant characteristics. In addition to the aforementioned applicant perceptions of various situational attributes, applicant characteristics tied to the interviewing situation (i.e., self-efficacy, comfort with the interviewer, and interview preparation) may also influence the extent of inquiry. Applicant self-efficacy has been found to be related to extraversion and conscientiousness, (Tay, Ang, & Van Dyne, 2006). These individuals are assertive and do not shy away from the spotlight, often assuming leadership roles (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). Self-efficacy should therefore translate to more assertive interview behaviors, such as asking questions (especially doing so without the interviewer asking for them).

Applicant comfort with the interviewer is also expected to relate to applicant extent of inquiry. Again, the nonverbal behavior of the interviewer may play a role in how comfortable the applicant feels with the interviewer and with asking questions. Nonverbal behaviors have been shown to communicate verticality, a construct relating to "power, dominance, status, hierarchy, and related constructs" (Hall, Coats, and Smith-LeBeau, 2005). Individuals associated higher verticality with a vast array of nonverbal behaviors, including facial cues (i.e., less smiling, lowered brows, expressive faces, increased gaze), gestures (i.e., more nodding, touching of others, and hand gestures; and less self-touching), bodily positioning (more body openness and shifting; and less bodily relaxation and interpersonal distance), and vocal cues (i.e., more vocal variability, interruptions, laughter; less pausing; and fewer speech errors, lower voice, faster speech, and more relaxed voice) (Hall, Coats, & Smith-LeBeau, 2005). Thus, when applicants

perceive a number of these nonverbal behaviors from the interviewer, the emphasized power differential puts the interviewer in a position of perceived authority. Applicants uncomfortable in this type of situation may take a submissive role, and wait until asked for questions before offering them.

A final situational characteristic that may influence applicant extent of inquiry is applicant preparation for the interview. In the education literature, preparation for class has frequently been linked to increased participation by increasing students' confidence (Fassinger, 1995; Neer, 1987; Neer & Kircher; 1989; Wade, 1994). Many proposed interventions to increase participation, as a consequence, are based in some way around increasing preparation (Cohen, 1991; Crone, 1997). Thus, in the employment interview, a prepared applicant may feel more comfortable communicating and even asking the interviewer some of their own questions, especially if the applicant explicitly prepared the questions ahead of time.

Interview characteristics. Finally, also included in the category of situational determinants are characteristics of the interview. One interview characteristics likely related to applicant extent of inquiry is the purpose of the interview. First, while some interviews focus on either recruitment or selection (Barber, Hollenbeck, Tower, & Phillips, 1994), most contain a dual purpose of both (Rynes, 1989). During recruitment interviews, the interviewer's main objectives are to share organizational information and increase applicant attraction, while the applicant's main objectives are to acquire and retain as much of the information disseminated by the interviewer as possible (Barber et al.,1994). Applicant attention is not divided between giving and receiving information, and as a result more cognitive resources can be devoted to information gathering

strategies, such as applicant questioning. For both dual purpose and selection interviews, the demands placed upon applicants are more intense because applicants must concurrently answer the interviewer's questions and gather information about the organization to determine organizational attraction. High attentional demands such as these were related to poor task performance in novel settings (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). Furthermore, the information acquisition abilities of applicants were stunted in dual-purpose interviews, likely because most of the applicant's resources were spent answering the interviewer's questions (Barber et al., 1994). Information acquisition was even lower when additional resources were depleted due to self-monitoring, trait anxiety, and low cognitive ability (Barber et al., 1994). Consequently, in recruitment interviews, applicants' undivided focus on information gathering may enable them to ask more questions, while in dual-purpose or selection interviews, sufficiently answering the interviewer's questions may take precedence over applicants asking their own questions.

Another interview characteristic likely to affect applicant extent of inquiry is the degree of interview structure. Campion, Palmer, and Campion (1997), proposed 15 elements descriptive of structured interviews, one of which was not allowing applicant questions until after the interview is finished to prevent content contamination. Interviews may vary in their degree of structure, not necessarily heeding all 15 of the elements discussed to be considered "structured." In the event that interviews are structured in regard to not allowing applicant questions, though, applicants may feel less at ease asking questions during the interview than those engaged in a less structured, more conversational interview.

Applicant questioning. Directly following the applicant and situational antecedents to asking questions in pre-questioning is the applicant's actual extent of inquiry in the applicant questioning part of the model, which in turn may impact the interviewer's perceptions of the applicant in the post-questioning section. However, the questioning portion also contains a number of moderating variables with the potential to influence the relationship between extent of inquiry and interviewer attributions about the applicant. These moderators fall under the broad categories of question characteristics, applicant characteristics, interviewer characteristics, and interview characteristics.

Question characteristics. Provided mainstream interviewing books are correct, not all applicant questions are created equal. In other words, it is not merely the asking of questions alone driving interview outcomes, but rather the interplay between the number of questions asked and question characteristics. There are many question characteristics with the potential to influence the relationship between extent of inquiry and interviewer's attributions of the applicant, including question content, structure, length (i.e., number of words in a question), clarity, verbal style, the combination of questions asked, when during the interview the question is asked, and even whether or not the question was solicited. Past research has sparingly examined the effects of question content, length, and certain elements of question structure (Babbitt & Jablin, 1985; Taylor et al., 2010; Taylor, Friedman, & Coolsen, 2013). As previously discussed, applicants benefit most from asking for job related information that cannot be learned from other sources. That is, questions seeking new information about the job and organization were found to lead to the most favorable evaluations, while questions about the process, information that could be found on the company website, and those questions

irrelevant to the job lead to more negative evaluations of the applicant (Babbitt & Jablin, 1985; Taylor et al., 2010). More recently, when comparing various types of question content, applicant questions about the job were found to elicit statistically significantly better ratings than questions about pay or asking no questions at all (Taylor, Friedman, & Coolsen, 2013). Other studies have also shown questions about the job to be important; when judges in an interview training workshop were asked to rate the importance of twelve applicant behaviors, they rated applicants' questions about the job and work conditions as the third most important factor in influencing the decisions made by recruiters (Barbee & Keil, 1973). Although the average number of words in a question did not change between those who got second interview offers and those who did not (Babbitt & Jablin, 1985), more research should be done to determine if there is any point at which question length begins to affect the ratings made about applicants. In terms of question structure, only phrasing (e.g., first person, second person, third person) and open versus closed questions have been previously examined (Babbitt & Jablin, 1985). However, it is possible that other elements of structure, such as tense (e.g., past, present, future) and whether the question is double barreled, could also impact the favorability with which the question is received.

There are also a number of question characteristics that have not yet been examined, such as question clarity, the verbal style with which the questions are presented, and the combination of questions asked. In terms of question clarity, applicants who present the interviewer with clear, easily understood questions may be perceived as better communicators and as a result receive more favorable ratings. Communication skills have been rated as extremely important by interviewers in past

research; around 98% of personnel interviewers in one study claimed that oral and nonverbal communication skills statistically significantly impact hiring decisions (Peterson, 1997). These interviewers also identified response clarity as one of the five most prevalent communication deficiencies among interviewees.

Similarly, paralinguistic characteristics (listed as verbal communication style in Figure 1), including speech rate, tone, pitch, articulation, fluency, and pauses may serve as verbal cues that impact interviewer reactions to applicant questions. Certain applicant verbal cues were related to interview ratings (Barrick, Shaffer, & DeGrassi, 2009) by way of trust, liking, and attributed credibility of the applicant (DeGroot & Motowildo, 1999). In another study, applicant fluency of speech (i.e., speaking spontaneously, using words well, and articulating thoughts clearly) was rated as the second most important factor (after appropriateness of content) in contributing to employment decisions (Hollandsworth, Kazelskis, Stevens, & Dressel, 1979). Thus, those questions meeting high paralinguistic standards should be perceived the most favorably by interviewers, and result in favorable attributions as well.

The combination of questions asked may also impact interviewer evaluations of the applicant. Although some applicants ask only one question, in many cases applicants ask multiple questions during the course of the interview. It is important to recognize that questions do not necessarily occur in isolation, making it necessary to examine the combined effects of multiple questions on the attributions interviewers make and resulting hiring ratings. It is not unheard of for combined effects to differ in direction or magnitude than those of isolated behaviors. In the impression management literature, for instance, it has been found that the combination of ingratiation and self-focused

impression management tactics yielded higher interview ratings and action recommendations than either of the two tactics in isolation (Proost et al., 2010). Perhaps with applicant questions, a favorably perceived question, when paired with a negatively perceived question, could ameliorate some of the negative consequences of the negatively perceived question. Or, two questions that have positive effects in isolation may have additive effects when combined, resulting in even more positive attributions/ratings. The nature of the combined effect largely depends on the characteristics of the questions, including question content.

Another moderator to consider is the point of the interview at which the question is asked; questions asked early in the interview may have different impacts than questions asked later. For example, initial impressions formed of the applicant during rapport building (i.e., small talk at the beginning of the interview often used to build trust and relax the applicant) have been found to relate to interview ratings and employment decisions (Barrick, Swider, & Stewart, 2010). If simply engaging the applicant in small talk about non-job-related information contributes to initial impressions of the applicant, it is likely, perhaps even more than likely, that initial impressions would also form if the applicant asked presumably job-related questions at the beginning of the interview. However, the larger issue is whether questions asked during the middle or at the end of the interview have the same impact on impression formations that early impressions do.

A final potential question-based moderator is whether or not the questions were solicited. As mentioned previously, some CEO's like Penelope Trunk recommend that applicants ask questions throughout the interview as they arise, because asking questions before prompting from the interviewer shows initiative (Fiegerman, 2011). She is not

alone in this opinion; in an analysis of the advice provided through interviewing handbooks, Babbitt (1985) found that 78% of books recommend that applicants ask questions as they come up in the interview instead of waiting for the interviewer to request questions from the applicant. Such a strategy, these books argue, is imperative in allowing the applicant to learn early on what characteristics or abilities the interviewer is looking for in an applicant. However, in Babbitt's (1985) own data, he found that only one-third of interviewees asked questions before the interviewer expressed interest in hearing them. Furthermore, applicants who were successful in their interview (i.e., received a second interview offer), typically asked proportionally fewer unsolicited questions than those who were not asked to come back for a second interview, suggesting that it may be in applicants' best interests to wait until the interviewer asks for questions contrary to the advice of some self-help books.

Applicant Characteristics. Applicant characteristics also have the potential to change the nature of the relationship between applicant extent of inquiry and interviewer attributions about the applicant, including the applicant's nonverbal behavior and perceived confidence of the applicant when asking the questions. Information about applicant confidence may even be interpreted from nonverbal behaviors. The previously discussed nonverbal paralinguistic characteristics, such as variations in speech fluency, communicate speaker confidence and other affective states (Scherer & Giles, 1979; Scherer, London, & Wolfe, 1973). Vocal loudness, decreased response latencies in responding, and increased voice modulation are also indicators of confidence (Kimble & Seidel, 1991; McGovern, 1978). Additionally, McGovern (1978) found that other nonverbal behaviors (i.e., increased eye contact and high energy levels) were related to

the perceived self-confidence interviewers attributed to applicants. Increased eye contact was also related to a medley of attributions about the applicant, including, alertness, assertiveness, dependability, responsibility, and initiative (Amalfitano & Kalt, 1977). Thus, it is possible that nonverbal behavior conveying confidence accompanying applicant questions could influence the relationship between extent of inquiry and various attributions.

Not only are nonverbal cues related to perceived confidence of the applicant, but they are also related to interviewer assessments of applicants and interview outcomes (Edinger & Patterson, 1983; Forbes & Jackson, 1980; Goldberg & Cohen, 2004; Hosada, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003; Washburn & Hakel, 1973; Young & Beier, 1977). Interviewers viewing an applicant with positive nonverbal behaviors were far more likely to recommend they be given a second interview than applicants with negative nonverbal behaviors (McGovern, 1978). Furthermore, composites of both vocal cues (pitch, pitch variability, speech rate, pauses, and amplitude variability) and visual cues (physical attractiveness, smiling, gaze, hand movement, and body orientation) were related to interviewers' ratings by way of increased liking, trust, and credibility (DeGroot & Motowildo, 1999). Another study to find that nonverbal behaviors influenced liking for the candidate also found both overall and gender-based effects (Levine & Feldman, 2002). Both male and female applicants were better liked when they smiled during the interview; the effects of eye contact and posture, on the other hand, depended on applicant gender. For female applicants, less eye contact and more erect postures yielded lower perceptions of liking, while women whose postures were more relaxed were better liked by interviewers. Male applicants, on the other hand, were liked less by interviewers

when they maintained high levels of eye contact (Levine & Feldman, 2002). As some of the above studies suggest, it is likely that the nonverbal behaviors of applicants affect interview performance through the attributions made about the applicants. As such, nonverbal behavior can either enhance or detract from the message of the applicant's questions to affect interviewer attributions.

Interviewer characteristics. While the applicant has some control over how well or poorly questions are received, on the other side of the desk interviewer characteristics are also likely to affect the relationship between applicant extent of inquiry and attributions about the applicant. The moderators fitting into this category include interviewer perceptions of question appropriateness and perceptions of similarity between the interviewer and applicant. Also included is interviewer experience conducting interviews, expectations for being asked questions (including difficult questions), position/role/department of the interviewer, and evaluation of the applicant at the time questions are asked.

Interviewer perceptions. The interviewer's perceptions of question appropriateness are expected to affect the relationship between extent of inquiry and evaluations of the applicant. Appropriateness pertains to both the presence of questions as well as question content. As previously noted, the appropriateness of the content in applicants' answers to interview questions was rated as the most important factor in contributing to employment decisions (Hollandsworth, et al., 1979). It seems plausible that the appropriateness of content should extend beyond the applicant's answering of questions to the applicant's asking of questions as well. One element contributing to perceptions of question appropriateness is whether the interviewer believes the question

could have, and perhaps should have, been researched and answered by the applicant prior to the interview. Whether or not the question could have been answered before the interview should have the greatest impacts upon the perceived motivation and preparation of the applicant, as well as their perceived knowledgeableness about the organization. For instance, if the applicant's question pertains to information readily available via the company website or other easily accessible sources, the applicant's lack of knowledge about the organization will be highlighted and the interviewer may furthermore perceive that the applicant has not adequately prepared. Those who are knowledgeable about the organization and the work they will be doing may be more desirable to organizations because these individuals likely have more realistic expectations about what working for the company would be like, and thus should be better fitting due to self-selection, more committed, and better equipped to deal with job demands (Breaugh, 2012).

Another interviewer perception that may affect the relationship between the extent of inquiry and interview outcomes is the perceived similarity between the applicant and interviewer, provided that the applicant's questions communicate these similarities and the interviewer is perceptive of them. Perceptions of similarity have been found to relate to interview ratings (Barrick, Swider, & Stewart, 2010). This effect may operate as a result of liking or interpersonal attraction to similar others. The similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) proposes that individuals are attracted to and like others that are similar to them, resulting in more favorable assessments of the other (Byrne, 1971). One explanation for this effect is that similarities serve to validate or reinforce individuals' personal opinions and characteristics, leading to positive affective reactions (Byrne, 1971). Byrne's similarity-attraction paradigm has been supported for demographic

similarities such as race (Goldberg, 2005; Lin, Dobbins, & Farr, 1992; O'Leary, Durham, Weathington, Cothran, Cunningham, 1995), and attitudinal similarities (Baskett, 1973; Griffitt & Jackson, 1970; Peters & Terborg, 1975). While this effect is affect-based, another relevant similarity model, Dalessio and Imada's (1984) ideal employee model, is competence-based. In their model, interviewers that feel they possess the competencies required of an ideal employee for the position compare the applicant to the interviewer's own personal characteristics. If the applicant seems to possess similar traits to the interviewer, then the interviewer perceives the applicant as qualified for the position based on their mutually shared competencies (Dalessio & Imada 1984). It is possible that perceived similarity may result in increases in both affect and the perceived competence of the applicant. For instance, one study found that similarity was highly related to affect *and* competence, and both affect and competence were related to perceptions of job suitability, although affect accounted for slightly more variance (Howard & Ferris, 1996). It may be that the type of similarity also determines whether perceived similarity results in liking, perceptions of competence, or both. For example, the relationship between interviewer-applicant similarity on conscientiousness and interview ratings was mediated by the interviewer's perceptions of competence, but not by an affective response to the applicant (Sears & Rowe, 2003). Quite a few interviewing handbooks recommend asking for the interviewer's personal opinion on some job related topic because allowing the interviewer to talk about himself or herself insinuates that the applicant values the interviewer's opinion and may believe they share the same values (Figler, 1980; Medley, 1978; Merman & McLaughlin, 1983).

Other interviewer characteristics. Interviewer experience (i.e., the amount of experience an individual has conducting interviews), expectations for being asked questions (and/or difficult questions), and the evaluation of the applicant at the time questions are asked, are expected to shape how comfortable an interviewer is with applicant questions. Any individual who has interviewed for a position or conducted an interview should have an idea of the various elements, or stages, of an interview. Tullar (1989) identified these four stages (i.e., scenes), as: (1) greetings/rapport building, (2) the interviewer asking the applicant questions, (3) the applicant asking the interviewer questions, and (4) finally disengagement. Tullar, however, did not describe the expectations interviewers might have within each of the scenes. For instance, do interviewers expect the applicant to ask questions freely, or keep questions to themselves until prompted? Do interviewers expect a few easily answered generic questions, or unique, insightful, or even difficult questions? Most importantly, how do individuals who violate interviewer expectations by asking or not asking questions fare?

Expectancy violations theory seems to suggest that having experience conducting interviews will affect interview outcomes by building an expectation that applicants will (or will not) ask questions. That is, if interviewers encounter more applicants who ask questions than those who do not (or vice versa), they may come to expect similar behavior from other applicants. This may change as a function of the type of applicant or applicant demographics as well. For instance, interviewers may perceive that applicants of a certain group, such as new college graduates, are less likely to ask questions and applicants with more job experience are more likely to ask questions, and thus expect different behaviors from these two groups. According to Burgoon, Stern, and Dillman

(1995), when a violation of expectations occurs, if the behavior is considered more positive than the expected behavior, this behavior is evaluated more positively. When the actual behavior, on the other hand, is considered to be more negative than the expected behavior, this discrepancy results in more negative evaluations. Thus, asking questions when they are not expected or not asking questions when they are expected should result in more negative evaluations provided the interviewer perceives the violating behavior to be more negatively valenced than the expectations. While such a violation may not be as stark to those who have less experience conducting interviews (because they may not have yet had the chance to develop firm expectancies regarding whether the applicant will have questions), it should be more salient to the interviewers with greater interviewing experience.

Other variables that may alter interviewer expectations for being asked questions (or being asked specific types of question) and consequent reactions are the interviewer's position and department within the organization. For instance, a recruiter from the HR department, depending on his or her familiarity with the position, might expect to be asked certain types of questions more geared toward the process or the organization in lieu of questions specific to the job, boss, or team that could be better answered by someone working in the department with the job vacancy. To the extent that recruiters engage in a greater frequency of job interviews than hiring managers throughout the organization, their expectations for the types and numbers of questions they will be asked may be more concrete than hiring managers who occasionally engage in a job interview.

Finally, the interviewer's evaluation of the applicant at the time questions are asked may also affect the relationship between applicant questioning behaviors and

attributions/evaluations of the applicant. According to confirmation bias, individuals favor information that falls in line with their previous opinions, beliefs, or expectations (Nickerson, 1998). This effect carries over into information gathering as well; that is, interviewers asked more negative questions during job interviews when their pre-interview impressions from the applicant's résumé created the impression of poor qualifications (Macan & Dipboye, 1988). Similarly then, any positive or negative evaluations the interviewer has of the applicant at the time at which the applicant asks a question may lead the interviewer to interpret the question in a way that confirms their current evaluation of the applicant.

Interview characteristics. The final category of moderators in the proposed process model of applicant questioning behaviors involves those aspects of the interview that may affect applicant questioning behavior. This category includes interview structure, the purpose of the interview, and the interview's temporal placement in the overall selection process.

The first interview characteristic with the potential to moderate the relationship between extent of inquiry and the attributions made about the applicant is the degree of interview structure. In the event that interviews are structured in regard to not allowing applicant questions, applicant questions may not be perceived very positively, especially if applicants were made aware at the beginning of the interview that questions should not be asked. However, during less structured interviews of more conversational nature, increases in extent of inquiry may be welcomed or even encouraged throughout the interview.

The final interview variables that might affect the relationship between applicant extent of inquiry and evaluations of the applicant are the type/purpose of the interview being conducted and the stage in the selection process during which the interview is conducted. As Taylor and colleagues (2010) warn in the limitations of their study, the type of interview should be taken into consideration when estimating the impact of certain types of questions on ratings of the applicant. The mere presence of questions may be received differently in a screening interview than in second or third interviews, after the organization has expressed their interest in the applicant. Similarly, question content is also subject to variable effects depending on the type of interview or stage in the selection process. Questions about salary and benefits may elicit more favorable reactions when they occur later in the selection process rather than early in the process during a screening interview (Taylor et al., 2010)

Post-questioning. The final part of the process model of applicant questioning behaviors in Figure 1 is post-questioning. This section is comprised of the various outcomes resulting from the effects of extent of inquiry and moderating variables. Potential outcomes include the attributions made about the applicant (e.g., inferences about the applicant's P-O fit, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, motivation, knowledge of the organization, interest in the job, preparation, and cognitive ability). However, the process model does not conclude with attributions – after they are made, interviewers may display verbal or nonverbal behaviors which act as feedback to the applicant, likely playing a role in whether the applicant decides to ask more questions. This feedback loop may continue until the applicant decides to stop asking questions. A

final outcome influenced by the attributions the interviewer makes about the applicant is the interview or hiring ratings given to the applicant.

The relationship between attributions and ratings. Research supports the notion that interviewer attributions about applicants are related to interview outcomes. Research has found that interviewers make perceptions of applicant fit with the job and organization during the interview, and that these perceptions also contribute to hiring recommendations (Kristof-Brown, 2006).

Not only are interviewers concerned with assessing the fit of the applicant, researchers have suggested that interviewers also use the interview to make assessments of the applicant's personality (Anderson, 1992; Fletcher, 1990). This is not really a stretch, considering that personality has been inferred from other selection methods, such as biodata (Bretz, Rynes, & Gerhart, 1993; Brown & Campion, 1994), and that recruiters have been found to take into account attributions about applicant personality (i.e., conscientiousness and extraversion) from biodata when forming opinions regarding applicant employability (Cole, Field, Giles, & Harris, 2004). Typically, individuals are fairly adept at making personality inferences in short periods of time (Funder & West, 1993), often doing so automatically (Newman & Uleman, 1989). However, certain personality traits, such as extraversion, more readily lend themselves to being reliably perceived because of the easily identified behaviors extraverts demonstrate in social situations. Interviewer ratings of applicant personality have been found to be statistically significantly related to applicant's self-ratings of personality (Barrick, Patton, & Haugland, 2000). While many studies have shown that the personality characteristics of individuals were related to interview outcomes such as job offers and second interview

offers (Anderson, Silvester, Cunningham-Snell, & Haddleton, 1999; Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Cook, Vance, & Spektor, 2000), not many studies have addressed whether *perceptions* of personality also influence ratings of the applicant. The study that comes closest to addressing the impact of perceptions of personality is a study by Dunn, Mount, Barrick, and Ones (1995) which showed that when interviewers were asked to use personality information from applicants to make hiring decisions for a variety of jobs, overall conscientiousness was most highly related to favorable hiring ratings across job types. However, the extent to which personality traits were related to hiring ratings differed somewhat depending on the job (Dunn et al., 1995). Provided that applicants are able to infer applicants' conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness from the content or mere presence of applicant-generated questions, it seems plausible that these perceptions of personality could contribute to some of the variance in hiring ratings.

Motivation may also relate to hiring ratings. Type A achievement strivings, characterized by competence, aggressiveness, and motivation to succeed, were found to be related to positive interview outcomes (Cook et al., 2000). In another study, perceptions of applicant motivation were highly correlated with the rated hirability of the applicant (Gifford, Ng, & Wilkinson, 1985).

Applicant knowledge of the job or organization is another likely contributor to favorable hiring ratings. The reverse has been supported by research; that is, interviewers who are more knowledgeable about the job received more favorable evaluations from applicants (Schmitt & Coyle, 1976). This relationship might be even stronger for the reverse, (i.e., if the applicant is knowledgeable about the job or organization) because applicants may not be expected to be as well informed about the organization or job as

the interviewer because in most cases they have probably not worked for the organization. Thus, if they are knowledgeable, it demonstrates to the interviewer that the applicant took the extra effort to learn more about the company and job before arriving at the interview.

Interest in the job might also be related to hiring ratings. Although the relationships between the perceived interest/curiosity of the applicant and interview outcomes have not been empirically examined, plenty of authors and job-search websites giving advice to applicants suggest that when all other qualifications are equal, showing interest in the job and organization, in other words, demonstrating that the applicant really wants the job, will likely give that applicant the advantage (Kador, 2010). Both trait and state curiosity, however, are related to job performance via increased learning through socialization (Reio Jr. & Wiswell, 2000). Thus, interviewers that identify interest among job applicants may give these applicants higher ratings due to beliefs about enhanced future job performance.

Perceptions of interviewee preparation additionally have the potential to enhance hiring ratings. Using social sources such as talking with others in preparation for employment interviews was related to both the number of follow-up interviews and job offers applicants received (Caldwell & Burger, 1998). Considering the supported relationship between actual preparation and interview outcomes, there is also a strong possibility that the perception of preparation will be related to hiring ratings as well.

Cognitive ability is yet another variable that has been linked to positive interview performance (Berry, Sackett, & Landers, 2007; Campion, Pursell, & Brown, 1988; Huffcutt, Roth, & McDaniel 1996), and research evidence supports that interview ratings

may be a reflection, at least partially, of cognitive ability (Berry et al., 2007; Huffcutt et al., 1996). Given the relationship between cognitive ability and job performance (Chen, Casper, & Cortina, 2001; Schmidt, 2011), it is not surprising that interviewers may factor perceptions of applicant cognitive ability into their ratings, even if they are no aware they are doing so. Consequently, it is possible that perceived cognitive ability of applicants may contribute to the hiring ratings made about applicants.

Model summary. The previously discussed model of the applicant questioning process presents antecedents and effects of applicant extent of inquiry, as well as moderating variables that may affect the relationship between applicant extent of inquiry and outcomes. The intent of this model is to highlight the major variables involved in the process; it is by no means exhaustive of every variable that may influence the decision to ask questions or the relationship between extent of inquiry and outcomes.

Study 1

The proposed process model provides a good basis for conceptually organizing the various variables involved in applicant questioning behaviors. The scope of the current study, however, is to test empirically a few elements of the model; that is, to test the effects of (1) whether the information to answer the question was available to the applicant prior to the interview, (2) interviewer beliefs about whether applicants should ask questions, and (3) the overall impact of applicant questions on hiring ratings depending on applicant qualifications (i.e., How much damage does asking no questions or negatively perceived questions do to a qualified applicant? How much benefit is there to be gained from asking positively perceived questions for marginally qualified applicants?).

For this study, all applicant questions centered on the job, given that prior research found that questions about the job often yielded statistically significantly higher ratings than other content *(*e.g., salary and benefits) or no questions at all (Taylor, Friedman, & Coolsen, 2013). Yet, researchers need to be careful not to overgeneralize, as questions about the job can vary widely in their degree of positivity or negativity. That is, questions can range considerably within each content area, some more positive in nature than others. Additionally, there are other determinants affecting the relative quality of a question apart from content alone. So, the real question then becomes, what else makes a question "good" or "bad"? This study focused on three key characteristics likely to shape how well applicant questions are received, the first being whether the answer to the applicant questions was available via a readily accessible medium such as the company website. There is some evidence suggesting that applicants asking about something they should already know will negatively impact ratings. For instance, after finding that questions about the company's history, revenue, and products were perceived as likely having a negative effect on interview ratings, Taylor, Coolsen, and Reese (2010) concluded that questions that could have been answered in advance were likely to be not well received in an interview. Yet, this conclusion had not been previously tested directly.

Given that applicant decisions about what to ask alone cannot determine how positively or negatively a question is perceived, another likely determinant of the reception to applicant questions is the interviewer. After all, the interviewer plays a crucial role in the interaction, considering that he or she is on the receiving end of the questions and ultimately the one evaluating the applicant. Thus, it is important to capture

characteristics of interviewers that may affect their reactions to questions. Whether or not the interviewer believes that applicants should ask questions will help capture both sides of the employment interview: the applicant *and* the interviewer. There are three ways interviewers can be described on this variable: (1) They believe that applicants should ask questions, (2) they believe that applicants should *not* ask questions, (3) or they do not feel that an applicant should or should not ask questions (i.e., they are open to questions, but do not have an opinion either way). In the latter option, the interviewer likely is open to hearing applicant questions, but is unlikely to think negatively of the applicant for not asking any.

The third characteristic likely to impact how favorably questions (or no questions) are perceived is the applicant's qualifications. Some research has shown that those more favorable applicants do not necessarily suffer negative consequences to the same degree as less favorable applicants do. After initial impressions were formed of job applicants, minor embellishments discovered on résumés did not affect the ratings of more desirable applicants, but had a negative effect on the final ratings of less desirable applicants (Kuhn, Johnson, & Miller, 2013). A similar effect may occur when it comes to applicant questions, such that the ratings of applicants not asking questions or asking questions that are answered on the organization's website may be lower compared to those who ask questions not answered on the website for marginally qualified, but not well qualified applicants. In other words, the consequences of asking about something the applicant should have researched ahead of time or not asking questions may be much greater for marginally qualified applicants than those who are well qualified.

Finally, to help explain why applicant questions may affect hiring ratings, this study will also examine the differences in the types of attributions interviewers make about the applicant depending on applicant questions interviewer beliefs about applicants questioning. Although Taylor, Friedman, & Coolsen (2013) found differences in perceptions of extraversion and openness based on whether applicants asked questions, this study will explore additional applicant perceptions beyond personality to include perceived P-O fit, motivation, interest in the job, and preparation.

As mentioned previously, the relationships examined in this study correspond to paths in the process model of applicant questioning behaviors, as indicated below. Although specific parts of the model are of interest, the process model as a whole will not be tested in its entirety. The main points of interest include:

1. The effect of applicant questions (i.e., whether the applicant asks no questions, asks questions that can be answered on the website, or asks questions that cannot be answered on the website) on attributions made about the applicant.
2. The difference in the effect of applicant questions on P-O fit depending on interviewer beliefs about whether the applicant should ask questions.
3. The relationship between attributions made about the applicant and hiring ratings.
4. The difference in the effect of applicant questions on hiring ratings depending on applicant qualifications (i.e., résumé qualifications and interview performance).

The first area of interest, when related to the model, involves a combination of the extent of inquiry variable with the question characteristic: “availability of the answer to the question prior to the interview” in the applicant questioning segment to affect the perceived attributions of applicants in the post-questioning section. Although in the model extent of inquiry involves the number of questions asked, including no questions, in this study that variable will be limited to *does not ask questions* or *asks questions*.

When combined with the "availability of the answer to the question" variable, the levels of *applicant questions* become: asks questions that can be answered on the website, asks questions that cannot be answered on the website, and asks no questions. The second area of interest involves the previously discussed variables, but also includes the interviewer characteristic: "expectation for questions." Again, this factor in the present study has three levels: expects questions, expects no questions, and does not expect one or the other (no opinion either way). The third area of interest involves the path between interviewer attributions about the applicant and hiring ratings. The fourth area of interest involves the path between applicant questions (in the model, "extent of inquiry" combined with "availability of the answer to the question prior to the interview") and perceived attributions, but also includes the interacting applicant characteristic "perceived qualifications of the applicant."

The following sections address the hypothesized interactions between the variables of interest on each individual attribution of the applicant, starting with perceptions of the applicant's P-O fit. Then, the relationships between the various attributions and hiring ratings are discussed.

Perceived person-organization fit. Perceptions of person-job fit are often contingent upon whether the perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities of applicants align with what is required by the job (Kristof-Brown, 2006). Person-organization fit, on the other hand, is more often judged by the perceived values and personality traits of applicants (Kristof-Brown, 2006). Interviewers have been found to make attributions of both applicant P-J and P-O fit based on employment interview performance (Kristof-Brown, 2006). While interviewers' questions to applicants are designed to get at the

KSAs pertinent to perceptions of P-J fit, the questions applicants choose to ask may help interviewers determine P-O fit by serving as a reflection of applicant values and personality. In other words, because applicants are able to ask about whatever they want, interviewers may interpret applicant questions about the job as an indication that the applicant values the job, and thus would be a good fit. After all, most organizations want employees that are interested in their work and committed to their job, rather than those who show up just for the paycheck.

The role of interviewer expectations. Interviewer expectations for questions should play a role in whether extent of inquiry is positively or negatively related to the perceived P-O fit of the applicant. This is because by asking (or neglecting to ask) questions, the applicant is essentially either doing or not doing what individuals at the organization are expected to do. Interviewer expectations, after all, are likely shaped by organizational norms and values. Thus, if an interviewer expects questions, when an applicant confirms those expectations by asking questions, then perceptions of P-O fit should be greater. If an interviewer expects the applicant to not ask any questions, then an applicant who does so should not be perceived as positively by essentially failing to "fit" with what is expected.

The role of whether questions were answered on the company website. When the interviewer does not feel strongly either way that an applicant should or should not ask questions, applicant fit will likely instead be determined by whether or not the answers to the applicant's questions are on the company website. For instance, most organizations are likely to value hard work and preparation, and want the employee they select for the position to want the job as much as the company wants the chosen person to accept their

offer. By asking questions that could have been answered in advance with a bit of preparation, it may signal that the applicant does not value the same hard work, preparation, and appreciation for the organization and job to the same extent as the organization. Thus, in these situations the applicant who asks questions that can be answered on the website should be perceived as having lower P-O fit than those asking questions not answered on the website.

Hypothesis 1: There will be an interaction between applicant questions and interviewer expectations about applicant questions: The relationship between applicant questions and perceptions of applicants' P-O fit will depend upon whether participants believe that applicants should ask questions, believe that they should not ask questions, or do not feel strongly either way, but are still open to hearing questions.

Hypothesis 1a: When participants believe that applicants should ask questions, applicants who ask questions (both those that can be answered on the website and those that cannot be answered on the website) will be perceived as having higher P-O fit than those who do not ask questions. No difference is expected between those who ask questions that can be answered on the website and those who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website.

Hypothesis 1b: When participants believe that applicants should not ask questions, applicants who ask questions (both those that can be answered on the website and those that cannot be answered on the website) will be perceived as having lower P-O fit than those who do not ask questions. No difference is expected between those who ask questions that can be answered on the website and those who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website.

Hypothesis 1c: When participants are open to questions but have no opinion on whether they should be asked, applicants who ask questions that can be answered on the website will be perceived as having lower P-O fit than applicants who do not ask any questions and applicants who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website. No difference is expected between those who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website and those who do not ask questions.

Personality. Whether the applicant decides to ask questions or not should relate to attributions about the Big Five personality traits extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, because these characteristics all relate to comfort with communication and/or information gathering in some form. Specifically, extraverted individuals tend to be more initiating of social interaction, conscientious individuals are typically well-prepared, thorough, and attentive to details, and those who are open to experience tend to gather more information than individuals low on these respective traits (Costa & McCrae, 1988). Considering that asking questions prolongs social interaction, and demonstrates an attempt to learn more about some aspect of the job or organization, the mere presence of any type of applicant questions may be considered emblematic of extraversion and/or openness, even if the questions were answered on the website. Past research supports this relationship, as applicants who asked questions were perceived as more extraverted and open to experience than those who asked no questions (Taylor, Friedman, & Coolsen, 2013).

The role of whether questions were answered on the company website. While any applicant questions regardless of whether they are answered on the company's website may demonstrate extraversion or openness, perceptions of conscientiousness are likely to depend on question quality. Thus, one would be more likely to find a relationship between asking questions and conscientiousness when differentiating questions of high quality from poorer quality. Following on this logic, some less well-researched questions seem liable to elicit lesser conscientiousness ratings than others. For instance, conscientious individuals, being detail-oriented (Costa & McCrae, 1988), are likely to do their research on the company before they interview. More careful, they should likely be

mindful not to say anything that could convey a lack of research. Thus, applicants asking novel questions not answered on the company website should be perceived as more conscientiousness than applicants who ask questions that are answered on the company website and applicants who don't ask any questions at all.

> *Hypothesis 2: Applicants who ask questions will be perceived as more extraverted than applicants who do not ask questions. No difference is expected between those who ask questions that can be answered on the website and those who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website.*
>
> *Hypothesis 3: Applicants who ask questions will be perceived as more open to experience than applicants who do not ask questions. No difference is expected between those who ask questions that can be answered on the website and those who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website.*
>
> *Hypothesis 4: Applicants who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website will be perceived as more conscientious than applicants who ask questions that can be answered on the website and applicants who do not ask any questions.*

***Motivation*.** Motivated individuals typically are more effortful in reaching their goals, and spend more time pursuing them (Diefendorff & Chandler, 2010). While the act of asking questions means the applicant is spending more time pursuing the job by prolonging the amount of time spent in the interview, there are other variables that are perhaps more indicative of motivation than asking or not asking questions alone.

The role of whether questions were answered on the company website. Whether the questions could have been answered prior to the interview may be a better indicator of motivation. Asking a question that could have been answered on the website should reveal to the interviewer that little effort was put into researching the company and the job, as well as planning for the interview and determining what questions to ask.

> *Hypothesis 5: Applicants who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website will be perceived as more motivated than applicants who ask questions*

that can be answered on the website and applicants who do not ask any questions. No difference is expected between those who ask questions that can be answered on the website and applicants who do not ask any questions.

Interest in the job. Curiosity and interest often have been treated interchangeably in the literature (Kashdan & Silva. 2009). However, Litman (2005) proposed that interest is actually a facet of curiosity, along with deprivation. That is, if curiosity is a desire to know information, then interest (seeking information out of interest) and deprivation (seeking information out of frustration at not knowing) are reasons for this desire. Still, the distinction between curiosity and interest is not agreed upon, and often the two constructs (if they are indeed distinct) are frequently related to the same outcomes. Interest has been found to relate to exploratory behaviors and prolonged task persistence in terms of the duration individuals listened to music (Crozier, 1974) and the duration for which they viewed a piece of artwork (Berlyne, 1974). Research has supported the positive relationship between student curiosity and student exploratory behaviors via questioning in classroom settings (Evans, 1971, Peters, 1978). Furthermore, curiosity is a key component of openness to experience, which is related to information gathering behaviors (McCrae & Costa, 1985). Thus, the link between interest/curiosity and exploratory, inquisitive behaviors lends credence to the hypothesis that interviewers may interpret applicant questions as signals of the applicant's interest in the job.

The role of whether questions were answered on the company website. Although those who ask questions may at face value seem more interested in the job, whether the answers to questions were available ahead of time is perhaps more indicative of interest. That is, those applicant questions that are answered on the website likely convey less interest in the job than those that are not answered on the website, because the latter

shows that although the applicant seems interested at the moment, he or she was not interested enough to do some research on the company/job before coming to the interview.

> *Hypothesis 6: Applicants who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website will be perceived as more interested in the job than applicants who ask questions that can be answered on the website, and these applicants will be perceived as more interested in the job than applicants who do not ask any questions.*

***Preparation*.** Preparation, like interest and curiosity, has a strong research base in the education literature. Students' preparation for class has been found to lead to increased participation by way of enhanced self-confidence (Fassinger, 1995; Neer, 1987; Neer & Kircher; 1989; Wade, 1994). Asking questions might be considered a form of increased participation, but again, this might not always be the case if answers to questions were easily accessible ahead of time.

The role of whether questions were answered on the company website. Interviewers may deduce that applicants who ask questions not answered on the website spent time prior to the interview thinking about which questions to ask and reading up on the company, and thus prepared more thoroughly for the interview than those who do not ask questions or that ask questions answered on the website. This time, however, those who ask questions answered on the website will likely be perceived as less prepared than those asking no questions, because it could also be assumed that those asking no questions prepared so well that they do not have any, whereas asking something that should have been found out in advance shows an explicit lack of preparation.

> *Hypothesis 7: Applicants who ask questions that cannot be answered on the website will be perceived as more prepared than applicants who don't ask any questions and those who ask questions that can be answered on the website, and*

applicants who don't ask any questions will be perceived as more prepared than applicants who ask questions that can be answered on the website.

The link between attributions and hiring ratings. As previously discussed during the explanation of the model, research supports the relationship between attributions about applicants and interview outcomes. Favorable hiring ratings have been linked to perceptions of applicant fit (Kristof-Brown, 2006), motivation to work, liking, and competence (Howard & Ferris, 1996; Sears & Rowe, 2003). Hiring ratings have also been shown to relate to personality traits (Anderson, Silvester, Cunningham-Snell, & Haddleton, 1999; Caldwell & Burger, 1998; Cook et al., 2000), and applicant preparation (Caldwell & Burger, 1998). Thus, provided interviewers perceive these traits, interviewers' perceptions of applicants could very well lead to enhanced hiring ratings. The impact of knowledge regarding the job has been studied in relation to the interviewer; such that interviewers perceived to be well informed of the job elicited favorable ratings from applicants (Schmitt & Coyle, 1976). So long as interviewers have some expectation that the applicant should know basic facts about the job and organization, such knowledge might lead to enhanced ratings of the applicant as well.

Hypothesis 8: Favorable interviewer attributions about the applicant (*perceptions of:*
P-O fit, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, motivation, interest in the job, and preparation) will relate positively to hiring ratings.

Applicant qualifications, answer availability, and hiring ratings. It is possible that the effects of applicant questions not only depend on whether answers are available on the company website, but also on how well qualified the applicant is. We know from past research the power of first impressions (Barrick, Swider, & Stewart, 2010), and as previously discussed, negative information revealed later on during selection may not

have as negative an impact on the ratings of favorable applicants as it does on the ratings of less favorable applicants (Kuhn, Johnson, & Miller, 2013). To the extent that not asking questions is more negatively perceived than asking job-related questions consistent with what Taylor, Friedman, and Coolsen (2013) found, then perhaps the magnitude of this difference varies as a function of applicant qualifications. Taylor and colleagues found small, yet significant differences between asking questions about the job and not asking questions using well-qualified applicants. However, it may be that these differences are amplified in marginally qualified applicants, with those not asking questions receiving much worse ratings than applicants who ask job related questions not answered on the website than they would have had they been well-qualified applicants. The same logic applies when comparing those who ask questions not answered on the website to those who ask questions answered on the website for marginally and well-qualified applicants, so long as asking questions answered on the website is perceived negatively.

Hypothesis 9: There will be an interaction between applicant qualifications and applicant questions.

Hypothesis 9a: For marginally qualified applicants, hiring ratings of those asking questions that cannot be answered on the website will be statistically significantly more positive than those asking questions that can be answered on the website and those asking no questions. No differences are expected between those asking questions that can be answered on the website and those asking no questions.

Hypothesis 9b: For applicants who ask no questions and those who ask questions that can be answered on the website, applicants who are well qualified will receive statistically significantly more favorable ratings than applicants who are marginally qualified, whereas this effect will be diminished for those asking questions not answered on the website.

Study 1 Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 289 psychology and business students from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Students were required to be employed at least part time to participate. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 46 years (M = 22.97, SD = 4.89), with 71% being female. The racial composition was 69% Caucasian, 17% African American, 3% Asian, 3% Hispanic, and 8% other ethnic backgrounds. Fifty-one participants were deleted due to failing the manipulation check that inquired whether the applicant asked the interviewer questions at any time during the interview, resulting in a total sample size of 238 participants. All conditions were represented among the deleted participants, and there did not appear to be any pattern for failing the manipulation check items (see Table 1). All participants received research credit for their participation in this study.

Design

Participants were randomly assigned to one condition in a 2 (Applicant questions: did not ask questions, asked questions) x 2 (Information availability: more information on the website, less information on the website) x 2 (Applicant résumé qualifications: well qualified, marginally qualified) fully crossed factorial design for a total of 8 conditions. See Table 2 for conditions and sample sizes. Another independent variable, interviewer beliefs about asking questions, was measured rather than manipulated.

Materials

The company website (i.e., "About Us" page). The company's "About Us" page gave a brief description of the benefits to working at the company to help create realism for the study. See the company "About Us" page in Appendix A.

Job description. Following the "About Us" page was the description of the management trainee program at the organization. The description included information regarding typical tasks performed and KSAs necessary to successfully perform the job in question. The description was divided into an overview of the program timeline, basic qualifications, and compensation information. The job description was also used to manipulate information availability, which in the case of applicants who asked questions, determined whether the questions were answered on the website. The questions asked by the applicant remained the same in all conditions, but the program description varied based on condition. To create the condition where the applicant asked questions answered on the website, the webpage to which participants were directed provided more information explicitly answering the questions that the applicant asked. In the condition where the applicant asked questions that could not have been answered on the website, the questions remained the same but the webpage to which participants were directed provided less information, omitting information relevant to the questions the applicant asked. While different outcomes were expected depending on amount of information available on the website when applicants asked questions, no differences were expected when applicants did not, which is why hypotheses combined these conditions into a "no questions" group. To explore all possibilities, however, differences were examined based on the amount of information on the website when applicants did not ask questions for all

dependent variables to ensure it was appropriate to collapse across "no questions" groups. The two versions of the program description are in Appendix A.

The two versions of the job description (i.e., more information and less information) were part of the manipulation. It was important that the participants paid attention to the program description deeply enough that they were able to remember the information included if the applicant asked questions about the job. To help with retention and aid in comprehension, participants were asked to fill out four open ended reflection questions about the company regarding (1) the importance of teamwork, (2) choosing focus areas, (3) promotions, and (4) the most appealing benefits to working for the organization (Appendix A). These are the areas about which applicants asked questions in the conditions where applicants asked questions. To further reinforce the manipulation, participants were then asked to take a quiz about what they read (Appendix B). Once participants finished the quiz, they were immediately shown their score and the correct answer was reiterated. Like the reflection questions, the quiz included questions directly related to what the applicants would be asking later in the interview, and was designed to distinguish between information that was included or not included in the program description. For instance, one question, "How many people are hired each year into the Management Trainee Program?" had answer choices (*a) 10-20* or *(b) This was not shared in the program description*. If, during the interview, the applicant asked questions about the number of people who will be hired, the answer choices were intended to make it more apparent that the answer could be found or not found in the program description had the applicant explored the website and read the program description. Immediately after the quiz results, a final recap page was shown with key

details from the program description, with the most important information bolded and highlighted (Appendix B).

Résumé. Participants were also directed to read each applicant's résumé following the program description and quiz. Although the name at the top of the résumé stayed the same between conditions, the résumés were altered to create a well-qualified version and a marginally qualified version. Pilot tests showed evidence that the qualified résumé ($M = 5.53$ on a 1-6 scale, $SD = .51$) was perceived as more qualified than the marginal résumé ($M = 3.88$, $SD = .50$), $t\ (9) = 5.38$, $p < .001$, $d = 3.25$. See the résumés in Appendix C.

Interview Recordings. Two video-recorded interviews were created for this research: one for the qualified conditions and one for the marginally qualified conditions. In Study 1, only the qualified version of the interview was used, while the marginal version was reserved for Study 2. Pilot testing was conducted in advance to examine the difference between the marginally qualified and well-qualified interview scripts. The qualified interview script ($M = 5.40$ on 1-6 scale, $SD = 1.06$) was perceived as more qualified than the marginally qualified interview script ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.26$), $t\ (10) = 2.62$, $p = .03$, $d = 1.51$ in pilot testing.

Both the qualified and marginally qualified versions of the interviews began with the interviewer (played by an actor) giving a brief introduction of the company and building rapport with the applicant. Then, the interviewer asked four job-related interview questions and the applicant answered them. The applicant's answers to the interview questions portrayed either qualified interview performance (in the qualified version) or marginally qualified interview performance (in the marginal version). After

the applicant answered all of the interviewer's questions, the interviewer brought the interview to an end by saying, "Well, those are all the questions I have for you today. It's been a pleasure talking to you. We will be conducting more interviews over the next two weeks, after which you can expect to hear from us regarding whether we will be offering you a position in the Management Trainee Program. Is there anything you'd like to go over before we bring this to an end?"

The applicant's response to the interviewer changed depending on the condition. In the conditions where the applicant asked questions, the applicant said "I actually have a few questions about the program if we have enough time to go over them." Then the applicant asked the interviewer his questions, after which the interview ended. In the conditions where the applicant did not ask any questions, the applicant responded to the interviewer, "No, I don't think so. Thank you for meeting with me! I look forward to hearing from you!" after which the interview ended. A total of four different versions of the interview were created: (1) marginal interview with no questions from the applicant, (2) marginal interview with questions from the applicant, (3) qualified interview with no questions from the applicant, and (4) qualified interview with questions from the applicant. See Appendix D for full interview scripts.

Measures

Participants completed measures after watching the interview, with ratings of the applicant made first and general expectations for applicant questions filled out last before demographics. The items from the scales listed below may be found in Appendix E. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of all measures included in the study may be found in Table 3.

Ratings completed after watching the interview. Participants completed scales regarding their attributions about the applicant first, followed by hiring ratings.

***Attributions*.** Attributions of applicant perceived P-O fit, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness to experience, preparation, motivation, interest in the job, and confidence were assessed via a number of scales.

Person-organization fit. Person-organization fit was assessed with a seven-item scale created by the researcher. A sample item is, "I believe the applicant would fit in well at this organization." Responses were on a Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .91$.

Personality traits. The Big Five personality traits of extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience were measured using the Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). The Big Five Inventory consists of 44 items: 8 items assessing extraversion, 9 items assessing conscientiousness, and 10 items assessing openness to experience (the remainder of which assess neuroticism and agreeableness). Responses were on a Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. In John et al.'s (1991) study, the internal consistency for the items measuring extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness were $\alpha = .86$, $\alpha = .82$, and $\alpha = .83$, respectively. Reliabilities for this study were $\alpha = .88$ for extraversion, $\alpha = .91$ for conscientiousness, and $\alpha = .79$ for openness to experience.

Preparation. The applicant's perceived preparation was assessed using six items created by the researcher. An example item is, "The applicant seems to have prepared for the interview." Responses were on a Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .85$.

Motivation. The applicant's perceived motivation was assessed via six items developed by the researcher. An example item is, "This applicant seemed motivated to impress the interviewer." Responses were on a Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .85$.

Interest in the job. The applicant's perceived interest in the job was assessed via three items developed by the researcher. An example item is, "The applicant seemed eager to learn about the job." Responses were on a Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .91$.

Confidence. The applicant's perceived confidence was assessed via three items developed by the researcher. An example item is, "The applicant appeared confident." Responses were on a Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .85$.

Hiring ratings. Hiring ratings were assessed with a five-item scale adapted from Cunningham and Macan (2007). An example item is, "I believe the candidate has the skills necessary to be successful in this job." Responses were on a Likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .92$. Participants also responded to a single item asking them to make a rating on a different scale. The item was, "Would you recommend this person to be hired?" The response choices were:

(1) No, I would definitely not hire this person,

(2) I don't think I would hire this person, although I might consider taking a look at some additional information about them,

(3) I'm not sure if I would hire this person,

(4) Yes, I would hire this person with few reservations,

(5) Yes, I would definitely hire this person. This person is an extremely good candidate.

Finally, the participants were asked to make a dichotomous hiring decision about the applicant. This item was included because the response scale for the hiring items has a completely neutral midpoint, while this dichotomous item forces the participant to make a hiring decision. Participants were also asked an open-ended question about whether there was anything the applicant could have done differently to have changed their decision to hire or not hire the applicant.

Expectation about the interview. The participant's expectation for the applicant asking questions (one of the independent variables that was measured rather than manipulated) was assessed with the following item: "Do you expect applicants to ask the interviewer questions during the job interview?" Responses included:

(a) Yes, applicants who are serious about working for the organization should ask questions during the interview,

(b) I am open to hearing any questions the applicant might have, but I do not go into an interview expecting the applicant to ask or not ask questions, and

(c) No, I do not believe that it is the applicant's place to ask questions during the job interview.

For this variable, 166 participants believed that applicants should ask questions, 70 participants were open to hearing applicant questions during the interview but did not necessarily expect them, and 2 participants indicated that applicants should not ask questions.

In addition to expectation for questions, a seven-item measure assessing what participants believe an applicant should do to prepare for an interview was included as well. A sample item is "Please indicate the extent to which you expect an applicant, in preparing for a job interview, to do the following prior to the interview: research the company." The response scale was 1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Sometimes, 4-Frequently, 5-Always. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .79$. To parallel this scale, there was a seven-item measure assessing what participants believed the applicant they watched actually did to prepare for the job interview. The items for this measure corresponded to the scale about expectations. For example, a sample item is: "Please indicate the extent to which you believe the applicant you watched, in preparing for this job interview, did the following: researched the company." The responses for this scale ranged from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .82$.

Evaluation of questions. When participants indicated being in a condition in which the applicant asked questions, participants' evaluations of the applicants' questions were assessed with six items. A sample item is "The questions asked by the applicant reflected positively on him or her." The response scale ranged from 1 – strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. Reliability for this scale was $\alpha = .93$.

Manipulation checks. Applicants were asked whether the applicant whose interview they watched asked any questions during the interview. Participants that incorrectly answered the manipulation check were removed from the dataset. As noted above, 51 participants were removed because they incorrectly indicated that applicants asked questions when they did not, or that they did not ask questions when they did.

Demographics. Finally, participants completed standard demographic questions including gender, age, ethnicity, U.S. citizenship, and if English was their first language. Participants also indicated their employment status and whether they worked part or full time to ensure that everyone filling out the survey was employed at least part time. Finally, there were multiple items about the degree of experience participants had with conducting employment interviews.

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to conditions. After giving their consent to proceed, the following introduction was read to participants:

> *"You have been chosen to serve as a hiring manager for a Management Trainee Program at a St. Louis based company. At the moment, you are seeking to hire a Management Trainee. The applicant you will be evaluating for this position has applied through the company's career site, submitted a résumé, and has gone through a videotaped interview for the position. Now, we need your help evaluating the applicant for the job. To assist you in evaluating the applicant, you will be provided with a description of the Management Trainee Program, as well as the applicant's résumé. After reviewing the résumé, you will be shown a video recording of the applicant's interview. Finally, after you have finished watching the interview, you will give your opinion of the applicant and whether we should hire him using our evaluation form.*

On the next page you will review website content from the organization's "About Us" page, and the Management Trainee Program description from the career section of the website where the applicant applied. It is very important that you consider the requirements and responsibilities of the role as detailed in the program description to help you determine whether the applicant is right for the position. To ensure that you understand the role, please read the program description thoroughly. After carefully reviewing the description, you will be asked to reflect on what you have read and answer some open-ended questions. Before you can proceed to the rest of the study, you will also have to accurately complete a brief quiz about the program description.

You will learn more about the Management Trainee Program on the next page, but first let's highlight some of the information from the description. The Management Trainee Program is an annual program, and anywhere between 10 and 20 people get accepted each year. The purpose of the program is to train associates to become eventual Managers in one of 6 areas important to the company. Trainees will proceed through the program as a group, and will work closely together in even smaller groups as they gain exposure to each of the six different areas during their rotations. At the end of rotations, trainees will collaborate with leaders in the company to choose one of the six

> *areas that aligns with their interests, while also taking into account the organization's talent needs and the trainee's performance during rotations. After work areas are selected, the management trainee program lasts another year. While the goal is to train individuals for management positions upon completion of the program, being immediately promoted at the end of the program is not guaranteed, but likely within 2 years of finishing."*

After this introduction was read, participants were directed to the "About Us" page and program description. After reviewing those documents, they answered the open-ended questions about the program description and then completed the quiz about what they learned about the company and Management Trainee Program. Following the quiz, participants were directed to the applicant's résumé. Following the résumé, participants were read another set of instructions:

> *Now that you have a better idea of what the Management Trainee Program entails, and you have reviewed the applicant's résumé, you will watch the video recording of the applicant's job interview. As a respected hiring manager in our company, we are counting on you for your evaluation of the applicant. You should use everything you have learned about the job and the applicant to make an informed decision about whether this individual is a good candidate for the Management Trainee Program.*

After watching the interview, participants filled out a survey asking for their evaluations of the applicant and the manipulation check. Once participants finished

making all ratings about the applicant, the participants were asked to respond to all additional measures including their expectation for applicant questions in general and concluding with demographics.

Study 1 Results

Before analyzing the data, assumptions for normality and homogeneity of variance were tested. Assumptions of normality were met, and in the cases when homogeneity of variances was violated, the t-test adjusting for this violation (e.g., equal variances not assumed) is reported. Fifty-one participants were removed from the data set for failing the manipulation check. After data cleaning, 238 participants remained and were used for analysis.

Tests of Hypotheses

For hypotheses 1-8, analyses were conducted to examine differences among three *Applicant Questions* groups: (1) Asked questions that could have been answered on the website (n =74), (2) asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (n =78), and (3) did not ask questions (n =86). Again, for the two conditions in which questions were asked, the amount of information available on the website was used to determine whether questions could have been answered (more information on website) or could not have been answered (less information on website), since the questions applicants asked remained the same between conditions. This meant that participants rating applicants who did *not* ask questions were also exposed to a program description with either more information or less information depending on the condition to which they were randomly assigned. It was anticipated that there would be no differences between the two conditions in which questions were not asked, but differences were

tested between them to ensure it was appropriate to collapse across the two groups. For all hypotheses in Study 1, there were no differences found between the "did not ask questions" groups based on the amount of information on the website, and it was appropriate to combine these two groups when testing each of the below hypotheses.

Applicant P-O fit. Hypothesis 1a-c anticipated that the relationship between applicant questions and perceived P-O fit of the applicant would vary depending on interviewer expectations for applicant questions. Hypothesis 1a focused on when participants believed applicants should ask questions, 1b focused on when participants believed applicants should *not* ask questions, and 1c focused on when participants were open to questions, but did not believe applicants must ask them. Hypothesis 1b could not be meaningfully tested given that only two participants indicated that applicants should not ask questions. The relationships in Hypothesis 1a and 1c were able to be examined.

A 3 (applicant questions: asked questions that could not be answered on the website, asked questions that could be answered on the website, did not ask questions) x 2 (interviewer expectations for questions: believes applicants should ask questions, open to questions but does not necessarily expect them) between groups ANOVA was conducted. The interaction effect between applicant questions and interviewer expectations for questions on perceived P-O fit of the applicant was statistically significant F (2, 230) = 3.56, p = .03, η^2 = .03. When participants expected questions, applicants who asked questions that could not be answered on the website (M = 6.28, SD = .71) were perceived as having statistically significantly greater P-O Fit than applicants who did not ask questions *(*M = 5.87, SD = 1.09), t (163) = 2.46, p = .02, d = .45. Furthermore, the difference between applicants who asked questions that could be

answered on the website (*M* = 6.20, *SD* = .71) and applicants who did not ask questions *(M* = 5.87, *SD* = 1.09), was approaching significance, *t* (163) = 1.95, *p* = .05, *d* = .36. There was no significant difference between applicants who asked questions that could not be answered on the website (*M* = 6.28, *SD* = .71) and applicants who asked questions that could be answered on the website (*M* = 6.20, *SD* = .71), *t* (163) = .52, *p* = .60, *d* = .11. Hypothesis 1a was supported.

When participants did not expect questions but were open to hearing them, applicants who asked questions that could not be answered on the website *(M* = 5.99, *SD* = 1.01) were not perceived as having statistically significantly higher P-O fit than applicants who did not ask questions *(M* = 6.33, *SD* = .80), *t* (67) = -1.39, *p* = .17, *d* = .37. Additionally, applicants who asked questions that could not be answered on the website *(M* = 5.99, *SD* = 1.01) were not perceived as having statistically significantly higher P-O fit than applicants who asked questions that could be answered on the website *(M* = 6.10, *SD* = .71), *t* (67) = -.89, *p* = .38, *d* = .13. Thus, hypothesis 1c was not supported. See Figure 2.

Applicant personality. Hypotheses 2 and 3 predicted increased perceptions of extraversion (hypothesis 2) and openness to experience (hypothesis 3) when applicants asked questions as opposed to when applicants did not ask questions. Tests of planned comparisons showed that applicants who asked questions that could not be answered on the website *(M* = 5.05, *SD* = 1.03) were perceived as statistically significantly more extraverted than applicants who asked no questions *(M* = 4.63, *SD* = 1.33), *t* (235) = 2.36, *p* = .02, *d* = .35. However, applicants who asked questions that could be answered on the website *(M* = 4.76, *SD* = 1.07) were not perceived as statistically significantly

more extraverted than those who asked no questions *(M* = 4.63, *SD* = 1.33), *t* (235) = .75, *p* = .46, *d* = .10. Hypotheses 2 was partially supported. See Figure 3.

Similarly to perceived extraversion, applicants who asked questions that could not answered on the website *(M* = 5.13, *SD* = .77) were perceived as statistically significantly more open to experience than applicants who did not ask questions *(M* = 4.80, *SD* = .88), *t* (235) = 2.63, *p* < .01, *d* = .40. Again, though, applicants who asked questions that could be answered on the website *(M* = 4.83, *SD* = .72) were not perceived as statistically significantly more open to experience than those who did not ask questions *(M* = 4.80, *SD* = .88), *t* (235) = .22, *p* = .83, *d* = .04. There was also an additional difference found for openness to experience not found for extraversion; applicants who asked questions that could not be answered on the website *(M* = 5.13, *SD* = .77) were perceived as statistically significantly more open to experience than applicants who asked questions that could be answered on the website *(M* = 4.83, *SD* = .72), *t* (235) = 2.32, *p* < .02, *d* = .40. Hypothesis 2 was partially supported. See Figure 4.

Planned comparisons were used to test Hypothesis 4 regarding the difference in the perceived conscientiousness of applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website compared to applicants who did not ask questions and applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website. Applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (*M* = 6.02, *SD* = .78) were not perceived as statistically significantly more conscientious than applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (*M* = 5.84, *SD* = .98), *t* (235) = 1.17, *p* = .24, *d* = .20. Applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (*M* = 6.02, *SD* = .78) were also not perceived as statistically

significantly more conscientious than applicants who did not ask any questions (M = 5.80, SD = 1.05), t (235) = 1.50, p = .14, d = .23. Hypothesis 4 was not supported. See Figure 5.

Applicant motivation. The same planned comparisons made for conscientiousness in Hypothesis 4 were made for motivation in Hypothesis 5. Applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 5.85, SD = .89) were not perceived as statistically significantly more motivated than applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.74, SD = 1.03), t (235) = .64, p = .52, d = .11. Applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 5.85, SD = .89) were also not perceived as statistically significantly more motivated than applicants who did not ask questions (M = 5.61, SD = 1.19), t (235) = 1.45, p = .15. d = .23 Hypothesis 5 was not supported. See Figure 6.

Applicant interest in the job. To test hypothesis 6 regarding the suspected difference in perceived interest in the job between applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website, applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website, and applicants who did not ask any questions, planned comparisons were used. Applicants who did not ask questions (M = 4.98, SD = 1.53) were perceived as statistically significantly less interested in the job than applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.91, SD = 1.00), t (147.97) = 4.61, p < .001, d = .76, and were also perceived as statistically significantly less interested in the job than applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 6.13, SD = .93), t (142.12) = 5.87, p < .001, d = .98. Hypothesis 6 was only partially supported, however, because there was no significant

difference found between applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 6.13, SD = .93) and applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.91, SD = 1.00), t (147.56) = 1.38, p = .17, d = .23. See Figure 7.

Applicant preparation for the interview. To test hypothesis 7 regarding the suspected difference in perceived applicant preparation between applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website, applicants who did not ask any questions, and applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website, planned comparisons were conducted. There were no significant differences in perceived preparation for any of the following comparisons: (1) applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 5.78, SD = .97) and applicants who did not ask questions (M = 5.57, SD = 1.23), t (235) = 1.21, p = .23, d = .16, (2) applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.52, SD = 1.05) and applicants who did not ask questions (M = 5.57, SD = 1.23), t (235) = .26, p = .78, d = .03, and (3) applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 5.78, SD = .97) and applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.52, SD = 1.05), t (235) = 1.42, p = .16, d = .19. Hypothesis 7 was not supported. See Figure 8.

Hiring ratings. To test hypothesis 8 that positive interviewer attributions of the applicant (Openness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Preparation, Interest, Motivation, and P-O fit) relate positively to hiring ratings, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The overall model predicted hiring ratings, F (7, 230) = 27.94, $p < .001$, R^2 = .44. Three attributions, perceived P-O fit (B = .35, SE_B = .12, $p < .01$), perceived

conscientiousness (B = .27, SE_B = .11, p = .01), and perceived motivation (B = .23, SE_B = .10, p = .02), added statistically significantly to the prediction of hiring ratings in the expected direction. Regression coefficients and standard errors for all variables included can be found in Table 3.

To test hypotheses 9a-b about the interaction between applicant questions and applicant résumé qualifications, a 2 (applicant résumé qualifications: well qualified, marginally qualified) X 3 (applicant questions: asked questions that could not have been answered on the website, asked questions that could have been answered on the website, did not ask questions) between groups ANOVA was conducted. The interaction effect between applicant questions and applicant résumé qualifications on the hiring rating of the applicant was not significant, F (2, 232) = 1.06, p = .35, η^2 = .01. There was also no significant main effect of applicant questions, F (2, 232) = 2.59, p = .08, η^2 = .02, nor was there a significant main effect of applicant résumé qualifications, F (1, 232) < .001, p = .98, η^2 < .001. Hypotheses 9a and 9b were not supported. See Figure 9.

Study 1 Discussion

Study 1 sought to determine how the questions applicants ask or do not ask the interviewer can affect interviewer's perceptions of these applicants, including whether or not they believe the applicant should be extended a job offer. When interview performance was otherwise high, whether or not applicants asked questions during the interview did not impact interviewers' perceptions of applicant conscientiousness, motivation, preparation for the interview, or hiring ratings. Applicants who asked questions, however, were perceived as more interested in the job than applicants who did not ask questions. Interviewer expectations also played a role; when interviewers

expected questions, applicants who asked them were rated as being a better fit with the organization than applicants who did not ask questions. The type of questions asked also matters in some cases. Only applicants who asked questions that they could not have answered via information available to them before the interview were perceived as more extraverted than applicants who did not ask questions. Additionally, these applicants were perceived as more open to experience than applicants who did not ask questions *and* applicants who asked questions that could have, and perhaps should have, been answered before the interview. Finally, interviewers perceptions of various applicant characteristics affect hiring ratings, some more than others. P-O fit, conscientiousness, and motivation were most strongly related to hiring ratings. Whether applicants seemed to be better or worse qualified via their résumés, on the other hand, did not statistically significantly affect hiring ratings.

Taking a deeper dive into the hypotheses that were supported or partially supported, when interviewers believed that applicants should ask questions, applicants whose behavior aligned with those expectations were perceived as being a better fit for the organization than those who did not ask questions. On the other hand, whether applicants asked questions or not did not alter interviewers' perceptions of how well applicants would fit with the organization when interviewers were open to questions, but did not believe strongly either way that they should or should not be asked. Perhaps in the absence of a strong conviction that applicants either *should* or *should not* ask questions, whether or not an applicant asks questions does not affect perceived P-O fit one way or the other simply because there is no strong interviewer belief to which the applicant could align. Overall it appears preferences of the interviewer can affect how applicants who ask

or do not ask questions are evaluated when the interviewer's expectations are not neutral and they definitively expect the applicant to either ask questions or not ask questions.

Another key finding is that applicants who asked questions were perceived as more interested in the job than applicants who did not ask questions. Unexpectedly, though, it was not just those who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website that were perceived as more interested, but also those who asked questions that could have been answered on the website. In retrospect, this makes sense, especially if interviewers believe that the act of prolonging the interview by asking additional questions shows interest. Other than P-O fit, interest was the only attribution for which the availability of the question's answer on the website did not come into play. For the other applicant characteristics in which the applicant's decision to ask or not ask questions mattered (i.e., extraversion and openness to experience), whether or not the question could have been answered prior to the interview made a difference.

The role that the answer availability of the question played in affecting perceived extraversion and openness to experience was unexpected. In these cases, it was believed that applicants who asked any type of question would be perceived as more extraverted and open to experience than those who did not ask questions. Strangely though, only applicants who asked questions that could *not* have been answered on the website were perceived as more extraverted and open to experience than those who did not ask questions. Additionally, these applicants were also perceived as more open to experience than applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website. These findings to an extent support the research of Taylor, Friedman, and Coolsen (2013), which provided evidence that applicants who ask questions about the job, organization, or

hiring process during the interview are perceived as more extraverted and open to experience. Yet, the results of this study also suggest that not all questions about the job lead interviewers to perceive applicants asking them as more extraverted and open to experience. Questions that address something new and different than the information already available may be more influential on how extraverted or open to experience an applicant is perceived. The unexpected impact of asking questions that could not have been answered prior to the interview on openness to experience potentially makes sense when considering the content of certain items included in this scale, such as "is inventive", and "prefers routine work" (reverse coded). Asking questions that could have been answered on the website shows a lack of inventiveness and an inclination toward the routine and usual (i.e., the information that had already been provided). More research is needed to fully understand why those asking questions, regardless of question type, were not perceived as more extraverted as expected. The items included on that scale including talkativeness, energy, enthusiasm, assertiveness, sociability should not have been affected by the content of the questions.

Despite the findings above indicating that asking questions has the potential to impact how interviewers perceive applicants in terms of their fit with the organization, their interest in the job, how extraverted they are, and how open to experience, for the other half of the examined attributions the expected differences were not supported. Applicants who asked questions were perceived as no more conscientious, motivated, or prepared for the interview than those who did not ask questions, nor were those who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website perceived any more favorably in terms of these attributions than those who asked questions that could have

been answered on the website. One explanation for the lack of statistically significant results could have been a lack of statistical power. Interviewers' perceptions of the quality of the applicants' questions was examined to attempt to explain why the availability of question answers did not affect perceptions of applicant in the ways expected.

The quality of questions was assessed through a six item scale consisting of items such as "The questions the applicant asked the interviewer were good ones" and "I had a positive reaction to the questions the applicant asked the interviewer." When applicants asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (presumed to be better questions than those that were answered on the website), the questions were rated more favorably (M = 5.61, SD = 1.32) than when applicants asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.02, SD = 1.42), t (150) = 2.66, p = .01, d = .43. However, going back to hypothesized effects, we found none of the expected differences in the ratings of applicants who asked higher quality questions (questions that could not be answered on the website) and applicants who asked lower quality questions (questions that could be answered in advance) for conscientiousness, motivation, preparation, and interest in the job. That is, even though the questions that could not have been answered on the website were perceived as better quality than questions that could have been answered on the website, there were no significant differences in the characteristics attributed to applicants based upon whether the questions asked were better or worse in most cases.

Digging deeper into some of the items included in the "question quality" scale may provide some insight. One of these items in particular focused on whether the

applicant should have known the answers to the questions he asked (i.e., "The applicant asked questions to which he or she should have known the answers already"). Unlike the other items in this scale, there was no significant difference in the ratings of applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website or those who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website for this item. This may indicate that, overall, even though interviewers rated asking questions whose answers could not be found ahead of time as higher quality than those whose answers were readily available, they did not necessarily expect all applicants to already know those answers just because the information was available. Perhaps these interviewers gave applicants the benefit of the doubt, or they were not consciously attuned to the fact that applicants were asking questions they could have answered in advance (i.e., the manipulation was not strong enough). Considering the number of participants that had to be deleted because the could not correctly answer if the applicant asked questions, it is not inconceivable that whether or not the questions could have been answered in advance was lost on many participants as well. In retrospect, a question asking participants if the applicant asked questions that could have been answered on the website could have provided greater clarity here.

Another potential explanation for the lack of fully supported hypotheses in Study 1 is that the good interview performance of the applicant (without considering the questions the applicant did or did not ask) undermined any difference in qualifications between the two résumés. During pilot testing, the marginally qualified résumé was perceived as less qualified than the well qualified résumé, but the résumés were tested in isolation from the interviews. When combined with the interview in the actual study,

participants could be considering the qualifications of the applicant overall, and it may be that the marginal résumé did not present the candidate as poorly qualified *enough* to have much of an impact on the overall perceived qualifications of the applicant when coupled with the strong interview performance. Considering this possibility, Study 2 examines the same relationships hypothesized in Study 1, but this time holds qualifications via the résumé constant (i.e., well qualified) while manipulating interview performance (i.e., marginal performance or good performance). Some of the relationships that did not emerge in Study 1 may be more likely to be supported with greater variation in perceived interview performance.

Study 2

Study 1 was primarily focused on whether applicant questions differentially affected interview outcomes depending on information availability on the website and applicant pre-interview qualifications (résumé qualifications). Another interesting and similar question is whether applicant questions differentially affect interview outcomes depending on information availability on the website and applicant *interview* performance, holding applicant pre-interview qualifications (i.e., résumé qualifications) constant.

While the résumé and interview should both be indicators of applicant quality, it may have been that when taken together, the interview was more salient when evaluating the applicant, especially considering that in this study both the marginal and qualified résumés were deemed "qualified enough" to warrant an interview of the applicant. Although many hypotheses were not supported in Study 1, it was expected that achieving a greater degree of variance in the perceived qualifications of the applicant in Study 2, by

manipulating interview performance rather than résumé qualifications, could be more salient to interviewers and result in differences in outcomes. Thus, hypotheses 1-8 in Study 1 were also tested in Study 2 as hypotheses 10-18.

It was also expected that when an applicant's interview performance was marginal, those not asking any questions and those asking questions that could have been answered on the website should receive less favorable ratings than applicants who asked job related questions that could not have been answered on the website. Applicant questions will have a greater effect on ratings for marginal interview qualifications because an applicant with marginal interview performance who asks good questions has a lower baseline to begin with than a qualified applicant, leaving more room to make a positive difference. Plus, interviewers may perceive that well qualified applicants have already proven their qualifications when answering the interview questions, so asking no questions or even "bad" questions are less likely to have an effect on their ratings than it would for those who are marginally qualified and have more to prove.

Hypothesis 19: There will be an interaction between applicant qualifications and applicant questions.

Hypothesis 19a: For applicants with marginal interview performance, hiring ratings for those asking questions that cannot be answered on the website will be statistically significantly more positive than for those asking questions that can be answered on the website and those asking no questions. No differences are expected between those who ask questions that can be answered on the website and those asking no questions.

Hypothesis 19b: For applicants who ask no questions and applicants who ask questions that can be answered on the website, applicants with strong interview performance will receive better ratings than applicants with marginal interview performance, whereas this effect will be diminished for those asking questions that cannot be answered on the website.

Study 2 Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 287 psychology and business students from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. Students were required to be employed at least part time to participate. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 56 years (M = 23.97, SD = 6.36), with 73% being female. The racial composition was 70% Caucasian, 18% African American, 3% Asian, 3% Hispanic, and 6% other ethnic backgrounds. Fifty-three participants were deleted due to failing the manipulation check inquiring whether the applicant asked the interviewer questions at any time during the interview, resulting in a total sample size of 234 participants (See Table 5). All participants received research credit for their participation in this study.

Design

The procedure used in Study 2 was identical to the one used in Study 1 with one exception: rather than manipulating applicant qualifications on the résumé and holding interview performance constant, applicant interview performance was manipulated while qualifications on the résumé were held constant. That is, the applicant appeared well-qualified in terms of his résumé, but the content of his responses to interview questions was modified to suggest either stronger or poorer interview performance up to the point where the applicant asked or did not ask questions. Participants were randomly assigned to one condition in a 2 (Applicant questions: did not ask questions, asked questions) x 2 (Information availability: more information on the website, less information on the website) x 2 (Applicant interview qualifications: well qualified, marginally qualified)

fully crossed factorial design for a total of 8 conditions. Another independent variable, interviewer beliefs about asking questions, was measured rather than manipulated. See Table 6 for conditions and sample sizes.

Materials

The same materials and measures used in Study 1 were used in Study 2. Reliabilities for Study 2's scales can be found in Table 7. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all measures used in Study 2 can be found in Table 8.

Study 2 Results

Before analyzing the data, assumptions for normality and homogeneity of variance were tested. Assumptions of normality were met, and in the cases when homogeneity of variances was violated, the t-test adjusting for this violation (e.g., equal variances not assumed) is reported. Fifty-three participants were removed from the data set for failing the manipulation check. After data cleaning, 234 participants remained and were used for analysis.

Tests of Hypotheses

For hypotheses 10-18, analyses were conducted to examine differences among three *Applicant Questions* groups: Asked questions that could have been answered on the website (n =61), asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (n =59), and did not ask questions (n =91). Specifically, we wanted to determine if it was appropriate to collapse across the two groups in which questions were not asked: did not ask questions with more information available on the website, and did not ask questions with less information available on the website. If there were differences found between the "did not ask questions" groups based on amount of information on the website, and it

was not appropriate to treat them the same, it is noted in each of the following sections below.

Applicant P-O fit. Hypothesis 10 anticipated different relationships between applicant questions and perceived P-O fit of the applicant depending on differences in the interviewer's expectation for questions. As in Study 1, the comparison in hypothesis 10b could not be meaningfully tested given that only two participants indicated that applicants should not ask questions. A 3 (applicant questions: asked questions that could not have been answered on website, asked questions that could have been answered on website, did not ask questions) x 2 (interviewer expectations for questions: believes applicants should ask questions, open to questions but does not necessarily expect them) between groups ANOVA was conducted. The interaction effect between applicant questions and interviewer expectations for questions on perceived P-O fit of the applicant was not statistically significant, F (2, 225) = 1.07, p = .34, η^2 = .01. However, the individual effects of asking questions on P-O fit were still examined for each type of interviewer expectation (e.g., applicants should ask questions and interviewers are open to hearing questions but don't expect them). When participants expected questions, applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 5.72, SD = 1.37) were perceived as having statistically significantly greater P-O Fit than applicants who did not ask questions *(*M = 4.77, SD = 1.61), t (158) = 3.44, p = .001, d = .64. Furthermore, the difference between applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.50, SD = 1.28) and applicants who did not ask questions *(*M = 4.77, SD = 1.61), was significant, t (158) = 2.66, p < .01, d = .50. There was no significant difference between applicants who asked questions that could not have been

answered on the website (M = 5.72, SD = 1.37) and applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.50, SD = 1.28), t (158) = .72, p = .47, d = .17. Hypothesis 10a was supported.

When participants did not expect questions but were open to hearing them, applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 5.81, SD = 1.23) were not perceived as having statistically significantly higher P-O fit than applicants who did not ask questions (M = 5.48, SD = 1.44), t (67) = .45, p = .17, d = .25. Additionally, applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 5.57, SD = 1.26) were not perceived as having higher P-O fit than applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.48, SD = 1.44), t (67) = .86, p = .38, d = .07. Thus, hypothesis 10c was not supported. See Figure 10.

Applicant personality. To test hypothesis 11 and 12 about the differences in perceived extraversion and openness to experience between applicants who asked questions and applicants who did not ask questions, planned comparisons were used. Applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 4.45, SD = 1.06) were perceived as statistically significantly more extraverted than applicants who did not ask questions (M = 4.07, SD = 1.27), t (137.24) = 2.12, p = .04, d = .32). Additionally, applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 4.79, SD = .94) were perceived as more extraverted than applicants who did not ask questions (M = 4.07, SD = 1.27), t (155.30) = 4.27, p < .001, d = .64). There was no significant difference in the perceived extraversion of applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 4.45, SD = 1.06) and

applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 4.79, SD = .95), t (115.39) = 1.84, p = .07, d = .34). Hypothesis 11 was supported. See Figure 11.

Applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 4.56, SD = .78) were perceived as statistically significantly more open to experience than applicants who did not ask questions (M = 4.17, SD = .98), t (231) = 2.78, p <.01, d = .44). Applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 4.82, SD = .82) were perceived as statistically significantly more open to experience than applicants who did not ask questions (M = 4.17, SD = .98), t (231) = 4.63, p <.001, d = .72). As with extraversion, there was no significant difference in the perceived openness to experience of applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 4.56, SD = .78) and applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 4.82, SD = .82), t (231) = 1.58, p = .12, d = .32. Hypothesis 12 was also supported. See Figure 12.

Prior to testing hypothesis 13 regarding conscientiousness, it was determined that the "no questions, more information on website" condition and the "no questions, less information on website" condition could not be collapsed into a single "did not ask questions" group as anticipated due to differences depending upon how much information was available on the website. The results of a 2 (amount of information on website: less, more) x 2 (questions: questions not asked, questions asked) fully-crossed ANOVA showed a significant interaction between amount of information on website and applicant questions on perceived conscientiousness F (1, 230) = 6.68, p = .01, η^2 = .03. That is, the effect of asking questions or not asking questions on perceived

conscientiousness depended on how much information was available on the website. When applicants did not ask questions, participants exposed to more information on the website perceived the applicants as statistically significantly more conscientious (M = 5.02, SD = 1.39) than those exposed to less information on the website (M = 4.42, SD = 1.58), F (1,112) = 4.65, p = .03, η^2 = .04. When less information was available on the website, applicants who asked questions (i.e., asked questions that could not have been answered on the website) (M = 5.44, SD =1.29) were perceived as statistically significantly more conscientious than those who did not ask questions (M = 4.42, SD = 1.58), F (1,116) = 14.91, p <.001, η^2 = .11. Hypothesis 13 was not supported. See Figure 13.

Applicant motivation. To test hypothesis 14 regarding the proposed differences in perceived motivation among applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website, applicants who did not ask questions, and applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website, planned comparisons were conducted. As expected, applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 5.56, SD = 1.05) were perceived as statistically significantly more motivated than applicants who did not ask questions (M = 4.76, SD = 1.49), t (159.94) = 4.14, p <.001, d = .65). Applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 5.44, SD = 1.15) were also perceived as statistically significantly more motivated than those who did not ask questions (M = 4.76, SD = 1.49), t (145.24) = 3.26, p = .001, d = .54). Unexpectedly, there was no significant difference between those who asked questions that could not have been answered (M = 5.56, SD = 1.05) and those who asked questions that could have been answered (M =

5.44, *SD* = 1.15), *t* (231) = 1.76, *p* = .08, *d* = .23) Hypothesis 14 was partially supported. See Figure 14.

Applicant interest in the job. To test hypothesis 15 regarding the suspected difference in perceived interest in the job between applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website, applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website, and applicants who did not ask any questions, planned comparisons were used. There were significant differences in perceived interest in the job for all of the following comparisons: (1) applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (*M* = 5.94, *SD* = .91) and applicants who did not ask questions (*M* = 4.09, *SD* = 1.63), *t* (172.71) = 9.65, *p* <.001, d = 1.40, (2) applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (*M* = 5.44, *SD* = 1.31) and applicants who did not ask questions (*M* = 4.09, *SD* = 1.63), *t* (141.40) = 5.89, *p* < .001, *d* = .91, and (3) applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (*M* = 5.94, *SD* = .91) and applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (*M* = 5.44, *SD* = 1.31), *t* (102.76) = 2.93, *p* < .001, *d* = .44. Hypothesis 15 was supported. See Figure 15.

Applicant preparation for the interview. Prior to testing hypothesis 16 regarding perceived applicant preparation, it was determined that the "no questions, more information on website" condition and the "no questions, less information on website" condition could not be collapsed into a single "did not ask questions" group as anticipated due to differences depending upon how much information was available on the website. The results of a 2 (information on website: less, more) x 2 (questions: questions not asked, questions asked) fully-crossed ANOVA showed a significant main effect of asking

questions: those who asked questions (M = 5.13, SD = 1.34) were perceived as more prepared than those who did not ask questions (M =4.52, SD = 1.67), F (1,230) = 9.99, $p < .01$, η^2 = .04. However, this main effect was qualified by a significant interaction of amount of information on the website with asks questions on perceived applicant preparation, F (1,230) = 10.79, p = .001, η^2 = .05. That is, the effect of asking questions or not asking questions on perceived preparation depended on how much information was available on the website. When no questions were asked, participants who viewed the website with more information rated the applicant as more prepared (M = 4.87, SD = 1.41) than the participants who viewed the website with less information (M = 4.16, SD = 1.85), F (1,112) = 5.42, p = .02, η^2 = .05. When the applicant asked questions, the opposite trend emerged. Those who asked questions that could not have been answered on the website (less information) (M = 5.41 SD = 1.22), were rated as more prepared than those who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (more information) (M = 4.85, SD = 1.40), F (1,118) = 5.41, p = .02, η^2 = .05. When less information was available on the website, those who asked questions (that could not have been answered on the website) (M = 5.41, SD = 1.22) were perceived as more prepared than those who did not ask questions (M = 4.16, SD = 1.85), F (1,116) = 19.08, p < .001, η^2 = .14). When there was more information available on the website, there was no difference between those who asked questions that could have been answered on the website (M = 4.85, SD = 1.40) and those who did not ask questions (M = 4.87, SD = 1.41). Hypothesis 16 was partially supported. See Figure 16.

Hiring ratings. To test hypothesis 17 that positive interviewer attributions of the applicant (Openness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Preparation, Interest, Motivation,

and P-O fit) relate positively to hiring ratings, a multiple regression analysis was conducted. The overall model statistically significantly predicted hiring ratings, F (7, 202) = 48.10, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .79$. Three attributions, perceived P-O fit ($B = .41$, $SE_B = .10$, $p < .001$), perceived motivation ($B = .34$, $SE_B = .11$, $p < .01$), and perceived conscientiousness ($B = .22$, $SE_B = .10$, $p = .02$), added statistically significantly to the prediction of hiring ratings in the expected direction. Regression coefficients and standard errors for all variables included can be found in Table 9.

To test hypotheses 18a-b about the interaction between applicant questions and applicant qualifications, a 2 (applicant interview qualifications: well qualified, marginally qualified) X 3 (applicant questions: asked questions that could not have been answered on the website, asked questions that could have been answered on the website, did not ask questions) between groups ANOVA was conducted. The interaction effect between applicant questions and applicant résumé qualifications on the hiring rating of the applicant was not significant at the $p < .05$ level, F (2, 225) = .21, $p = .81$, $\eta^2 < .01$. There was also not a significant main effect of applicant questions, F (2, 225) = .38, $p = .69$, $\eta^2 < .01$. Consequently, hypotheses 18 was not supported. However, there was a significant main effect of interview qualifications, such that applicants who had well qualified interview performance ($M = 5.68$, $SD = 1.29$) received higher hiring ratings than applicants who had marginally qualified interview performance ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.55$), F (2, 204) = 37.25, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$. See Figure 17.

Study 2 Discussion

The objective of Study 2 was to investigate whether applicant questions are related to interview outcomes and if so, the role that the attributions interviewers make

about applicants play when the candidate has good résumé qualifications but their interview performances show them to be either well qualified or marginally qualified for the job. Although theoretically there was reason to expect that asking or not asking questions should impact the attributions interviewers make about applicants, there was no evidence to support this in Study 1 except for P-O fit, extraversion, openness to experience, and interest in the job. However, the interview performance, which portrayed a highly qualified applicant, may have limited any differences between means. Including an applicant with interview performance suggesting a more marginally qualified applicant, as Study 2 did, may allow for the differences that were not supported in Study 1 to emerge in Study 2.

In contrast to Study 1, in Study 2 applicant questions impacted every attribution interviewers made about the applicant, even if not exactly as hypothesized. Once again, P-O fit, conscientiousness, and motivation were the strongest predictors of the hiring ratings interviewers made. While whether an applicant asked questions or not did not impact ultimate hiring ratings, their interview performance did.

As in Study 1, interviewer expectations for questions once again played a role in how well applicants were perceived to fit at the organization. When interviewers believed that applicants should ask questions, applicants who asked questions were perceived as having better P-O fit than those who did not ask questions. Again, applicant questions had no effect on perceived P-O fit when participants were open to questions, but did not believe strongly either way that they should or should not be asked. This once more provides support for the notion that when interviewer expectations are clearly defined, an applicant whose behavior matches those expectations will be perceived as a better fitting

candidate. These results are in alignment with what was found in Study 1 and provide additional support that preferences of the interviewer can affect how applicants are perceived when applicant behavior aligns or does not aligns with interviewer expectations. However, when there are no strict expectations about asking questions with which to align, as was the case when interviewers are open to questions but do not necessarily expect them, applicants who asked questions were not perceived as having any greater fit with the organization than those who did not.

Applicants who asked questions were also perceived as more extraverted, open to experience, and motivated than applicants who did not ask questions, as was hypothesized. This makes sense considering that asking questions both extends the social interaction and time spent with the interviewer, which fits with the extravert's tendency towards being socially active and outgoing. Furthermore, asking questions is an opportunity to learn something new, satisfy one's curiosity, and stimulate the mind, activities that those high in openness to experience enjoy. While the differences in perceptions between applicants who did and did not ask questions was expected for conscientiousness and openness to experience, it was expected that whether the question could be answered on the website or not would also affect perceived motivation ratings, for which we found no support. It appears that just extending the interview by asking questions may be seen as sufficient indication of an applicant's motivation to impress the interviewer, perform well, and secure a job offer.

Findings were a bit more complex for perceived applicant conscientiousness because there were differences between applicants who did not ask questions when there was more information available on the website versus when there was less information

available on the website. Applicants who did not ask questions when there was little information available were perceived as less conscientious than those who neglected to ask questions when there was more information available. Although these differences based on amount of information on the website were unexpected when applicants did not ask questions, they do make sense. Conscientious individuals are achievement driven, organized, and plan their pursuits. When there is little information available, conscientious individuals might be expected to ask questions to (1) help them determine whether they want the job and (2) better plan for the future. However, if the interviewer knows there is a lot of information already available to the applicant about the job, the interviewer could infer that the applicant has already done their due diligence and answered any questions on their own prior to the interview. In other words, perhaps not asking questions when there is information already available is not an automatic strike against one's perceived conscientiousness. Another unexpected finding was that there was no difference in perceived conscientiousness between those who asked questions not answered on the website and those who asked questions answered on the website. This suggests that asking any sort of job-related question is enough to show that an applicant is achievement driven and conscientious.

The relationships that emerged for perceived preparation of the applicant for the interview were similar to those that emerged for conscientiousness of the applicant. Again, applicants who did not ask questions when more information was available on the website could not be combined with applicants who did not ask questions when there was less information available on the website due to differences in perceived preparation for the interview between these groups. Those who failed to ask questions when there was

less information on the website were perceived as less prepared for the interview than those who did not ask questions when there was more information on the website. The explanations for the conscientiousness results apply to this situation as well. When more information was available on the website, applicants who did not ask questions may be perceived as more prepared if the interviewers infer that the applicant reviewed the website and the information found there did a sufficient job of answering any questions they may have had. On the other hand, in the absence of detailed information, a more prepared applicant would have seen that there was a lot of information left to be learned, and prepared by formulating some questions to ascertain that information. The similarities between conscientiousness and preparation for the interview are interesting considering that increased preparation for the interview might be considered a characteristic expected of someone who is more conscientious. In this way, it makes sense that there would be similarities in the results regarding preparation and conscientiousness.

Unlike all other results, for interest in the job, it not only mattered whether or not applicants asked questions, but when questions were asked, it also mattered whether that question could have been answered on the website or not. The same relationships found for applicant's interest in the job was also hypothesized but not supported for applicant motivation. An investigation of the items included on these scales provides some insight. While the items contained on the motivation scale were more about impressing the interviewer and securing a job offer, the interest in the job items were more learning oriented (e.g., "the applicant seemed eager to learn about the job" and "the applicant seemed curious about the job"). It makes sense then, that someone who asked novel

questions that could not have been answered elsewhere would be perceived as more genuinely interested and curious about the job than someone asking questions that, had they been truly interested, they could have found out prior to the interview.

Apart from the attributions interviewers make about applicants, the hiring ratings given to applicants were also examined. While asking questions or not asking questions did not seem to impact the hiring ratings made by the interviewer, applicants who had portrayed high qualifications via their interview performance were given more favorable hiring ratings than those who portrayed marginal qualifications through their interview performance. What this suggests is that despite feeling differently about the applicants in terms of their characteristics such as P-O fit, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness to experience, motivation, preparation, and interest in the job based on questions asked, asking or not asking questions did not impact interviewers' ultimate hiring ratings of the applicant. From a character standpoint, an applicant has something to gain by asking quality questions of the interviewer, but our findings suggest that applicants should not expect those questions to sway the ultimate hiring decision more than interview performance already does.

This does not mean that the interviewer's perceptions of applicant characteristics do not relate to hiring ratings at all, though. In both Studies 1 and 2, P-O fit, conscientiousness, and motivation were the strongest predictors of hiring ratings of the attributions examined. Of the personality characteristics, it is no surprise that conscientiousness has the strongest relationship with hiring ratings. This aligns with prior research showing just that (Dunn et al., 1995). Motivation, too, has been highly correlated

with the rated hirability of applicants in the past as well (Gifford, Ng, & Wilkerson, 1985).

Finally, as in Study 1, questions that could not have been answered on the website (M = 5.16, SD = 1.49) were perceived as better questions than those that could have been answered on the website (M = 4.27, SD = 1.67), t (117) = 3.08, $p < .01$, d = .56. Yet, even though the questions asked were perceived more or less favorably depending on whether they could have been answered on the website in advance, there were no differences in the characteristics attributed to applicants with the exception of interest in the job. Again, it would seem that although an applicant might ask "better" or "worse" questions of the interviewer, the relative quality of the question in most cases had no bearing on interviewers' perceptions of the applicant. What really seems to matter in most cases is simply whether questions were asked at all.

Overall Discussion

When it comes to understanding how applicants questions, lack of questions, or quality of questions affect ratings of the applicant and interview outcomes, there are currently more questions than answers. The limited amount of scientifically supported research findings, however, has not stopped the authors of interviewing coaching materials and articles on career building websites from freely offering their opinions concerning what applicants should and should not ask. Given the prevalence of this subject matter in mainstream interviewing publications, there is clearly a demand for this type of information, and thus a need to build up our repertoire of knowledge in this area by conducting research on this increasingly ubiquitous part of the interview process.

The current research responded to this need for research by adding to existing knowledge in three major ways by: (1) presenting a process model to organize and drive future research, (2) creating a broader understanding of how applicant questions influence the attributions made about the applicants depending on the availability of answers prior to the interview as well as expectations for questions, and (3) determining whether the effect of applicant questions on hiring ratings differs depending on applicant qualifications and applicant interview performance.

First, a process model of the applicant questioning process was presented, beginning with factors likely impacting the decision to ask questions and concluding with the ultimate effects on applicant attributions and hiring ratings, while also including four categories of moderating variables likely to affect outcomes. This model can not only aid researchers in identifying the topics still in need of exploration, but can also help researchers identify and better organize the variables they decide are important to include in their own research. While the model is inclusive of the major themes and topic areas involved in applicant questioning, it is not exhaustive and leaves room for others to expand upon it as they see fit.

As applicants broach the job interview, they may wonder what exactly they should ask. Answering this question is not as simple as it seems. The present studies attempted to broaden our views of what makes a good or bad question beyond just content to include other variables likely to influence the positivity or negativity with which a question is received. These variables included whether the questions could have been answered prior to the interview, and whether interviewers believe that questions should or should not be asked, all while holding content constant. Based on this research,

while questions that could have been answered prior to the interview were perceived as lower quality questions than novel questions the applicant could not have answered in advance, this did not necessarily have much bearing on the attributions made about the applicant. Asking questions (whether the answer was available to the applicant pre-interview or not) was enough to be perceive applicants as have greater P-O fit, and being more extraverted, open to experiences, motivated, and interested in the job than those not asking questions. However, the amount of information available on the website (answer availability), also affected interest in the job, in addition to conscientiousness and preparation.

It is important to consider the effect sizes of these analyses and not just the statistical significance considering the increased risk of Type I Error due to the large number of analyses performed. While effect sizes for asking questions versus not asking questions tended to be medium to large, when there were differences between asking questions answered on the website and not answered on the website the effect sizes tended to be much smaller. This is in line with Taylor, Friedman, and Coolsen (2013), who found relatively small effects of applicant questions on interview ratings using well-qualified applicants.

Interestingly, Study 1 and Study 2's results did not align for all dependent variables, although we hypothesized that they would. In Study 1 no significant relationships existed for conscientiousness, motivation, or preparation for the interview, while there were significant relationships for all three of these variables in Study 2. Additionally, in Study 1 applicants who asked questions were perceived as more interested in the job than applicants who did not ask questions. This relationship was

present in Study 2, but there was also a difference between applicants who asked questions not answered on the website and applicants who asked questions answered on the website. For two of the personality characteristics, in Study 1 applicants who asked questions not answered on the website were perceived as more extraverted and open to experience than those who asked no questions, while in Study 2 applicants who asked any type of question were perceived as more extraverted and open to experience than those who asked no questions. Overall, more differences were found in Study 2 than Study 1. This is likely due, in part, to the fact that means tended to be higher and less varied between conditions in Study 1 (when interview performance portrayed a highly qualified applicant and résumé qualifications varied) than means in Study 2 (when résumé qualifications were high and interview performance varied). While the only hypotheses to specifically examine the effects of applicants qualifications together with whether or not they asked questions were those examining their effects on hiring ratings, additional analyses revealed that those applicants whose interview performance portrayed them as well qualified were perceived higher for every applicant attribution studied than those whose interview performance portrayed them as marginally qualified. On the contrary, there were no differences in ratings when examining qualified résumés versus marginal résumés, holding interview performance consistently well qualified. These findings suggest that how the applicant answers interview questions (i.e. interview performance) has a larger impact on interview outcomes than the questions applicants ask and résumé qualifications.

Limitations. One potential limitation of this study is the use of students as interviewers. Although students had to be employed to participate, their experience

actually conducting job interviews may be more limited than one would find by sampling individuals in an organization. In this sample, 75% indicated that they never conduct employment interviews, 16% rarely conduct them, 6% sometimes conduct them, and 3% indicated that they frequently or primarily conduct interviews as part of their job. There were no significant differences in the hiring ratings given to applicants based upon how frequently they conduct employment interview for Study 1 and Study 2. Thus, there was no evidence that applicants would have been rated any differently if more experienced interviewers rated them.

Another potential limitation could be the strength of the manipulations in our study. In the real world, interviewers, especially when the interviewer will be the boss of the candidate being interviewed, should be a lot more intimately familiar with the information on the job description as well as the information available on the company website. In this situation, our participants playing the role of the interviewer were given limited time to learn about the position, and may not have remembered everything that was described on the program description. Although we made every effort to ensure that participants were familiar enough with the website content that they would realize if the applicant's questions could have been answered before the interview or not, given that there were not as many differences as expected between those who asked questions that could have been answered on the website and those who asked questions that could not have been answered, it may be that this distinction was not as clear as it could have been. On the other hand, the lack of differences could be reflective of an actual trend that whether the questions asked about novel information is not as important as the distinction between asking questions and not asking questions when they are job-related. Again, this

would make sense as it would seem that participants did perceive a difference in question quality depending on whether questions could have been answered in advance or not, but yet did not expect either of the two groups to know the answers to the questions they asked more so than the other group.

A final limitation of this study deals with its design. In a between-subjects design, each participant evaluates only one job applicant instead of comparing multiple applicants to each other, as would be done in an actual employment setting. Thus, findings from this study may be conservative in that larger effects would be expected from within subject designs, in which the interviewer could compare an applicant who asked questions to an applicant who did not ask questions, while holding everything else constant. However, setting up the study in a within-subjects fashion would have also made the variables of interest (applicant questioning) more salient, making it easier for participants to guess the intent of the study.

Future Directions. The results of Studies 1 and 2 suggest that not only does applicant interview performance affect the attributions made about the applicant including perceived personality traits, but the questions applicants ask influence how interviewers perceive them as well. Future research should investigate whether the self reported interest in the job, preparation for the interview, motivation, and personality traits differ depending on whether applicants ask questions, and if so, whether those questions could have been answered prior to the interview.

Beyond the results of Studies 1 and 2, the proposed process model of applicant questions illustrates the enormity of possibilities for future directions. While the studies here focused on particular aspects of the second and third parts of the process model, it

would still be beneficial to understand the variables that affect why applicants decide to ask questions initially, and what drives them to ask the questions they do.

In addition, more research will also be needed on the variables affecting outcomes of applicant questioning. While these present studies begin to investigate factors outside of content that make a question more positively or less positively received, future research should continue to investigate such variables (e.g., various interview, applicant, question, and interviewer characteristics) that may contribute to ratings of the applicant based on applicant questions. Of particular importance due to the fact that it is often discussed in interview coaching materials is whether applicants should wait until the interviewer asks for questions, or show initiative by asking the questions before they are specifically solicited.

Conclusion

Whether or not applicants should ask questions is a hot topic buzzing with discussion in the media. Yet, relatively little of the advice is supported by empirical research. The lack of information known about this important part of the interview presents an exciting new avenue for research. This research described a process model of applicant questioning behaviors drawn from various disciplines that may be used to direct future research on applicant questions. The two studies focused on how a few of those variables, namely asking or not asking questions, whether the answers to these questions were available prior to the interview, and interviewer beliefs about whether applicants should ask questions affect attributions made about the applicant. It appears that the questions applicants ask can indeed affect the attributions we make about applicants, but do not appear to affect hiring ratings directly. Finally, this research also investigated the

impact applicant questions may have when considering more or less qualified applicants and those with strong or weaker interview performance. While interview qualifications alone affects hiring ratings, they do not interact with applicant questions to affect them. However, more so than the questions applicants ask, how applicants *answer* interview questions (i.e. interview performance) has a greater influence on interview outcomes and attributions made about the applicants. The information learned here and in other studies yet to come on applicant questioning behaviors has implications for both research and practice. Information in this area not only helps inform researchers' understandings of the complex array of variables involved in determining applicant evaluations and interview outcomes, but will also start to provide evidential backing to support (or fail to support) advice offered to applicants regarding successful interviewing behaviors. Here we see that persistent advice to ask questions to help an applicant get a job offer may not have a profound impact above and beyond interview performance. However, more research is needed investigating other aspects of applicant questioning behaviors to paint a more complete picture of their effects on getting hired.

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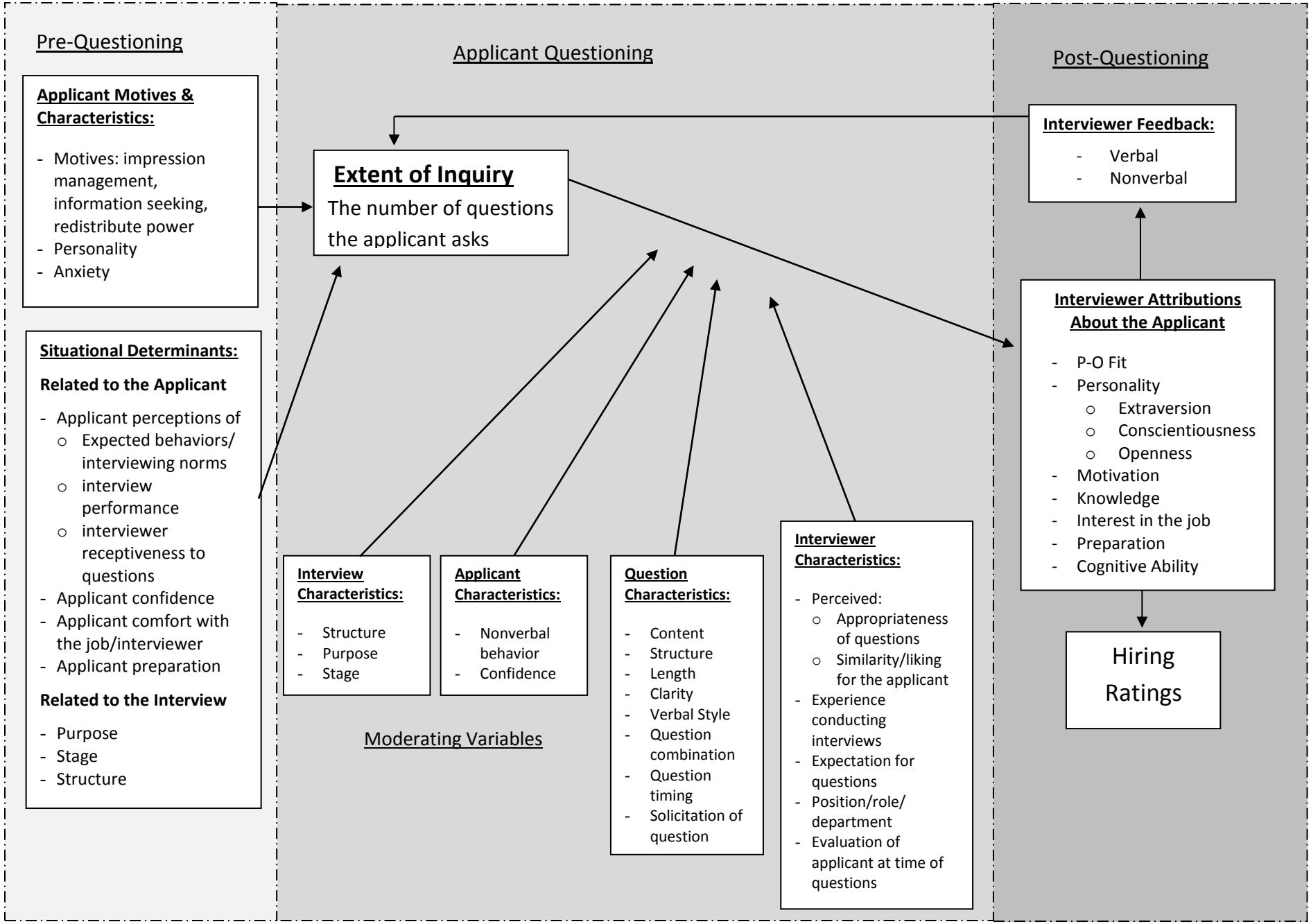

Figure 1. A process model of applicant questioning behavior

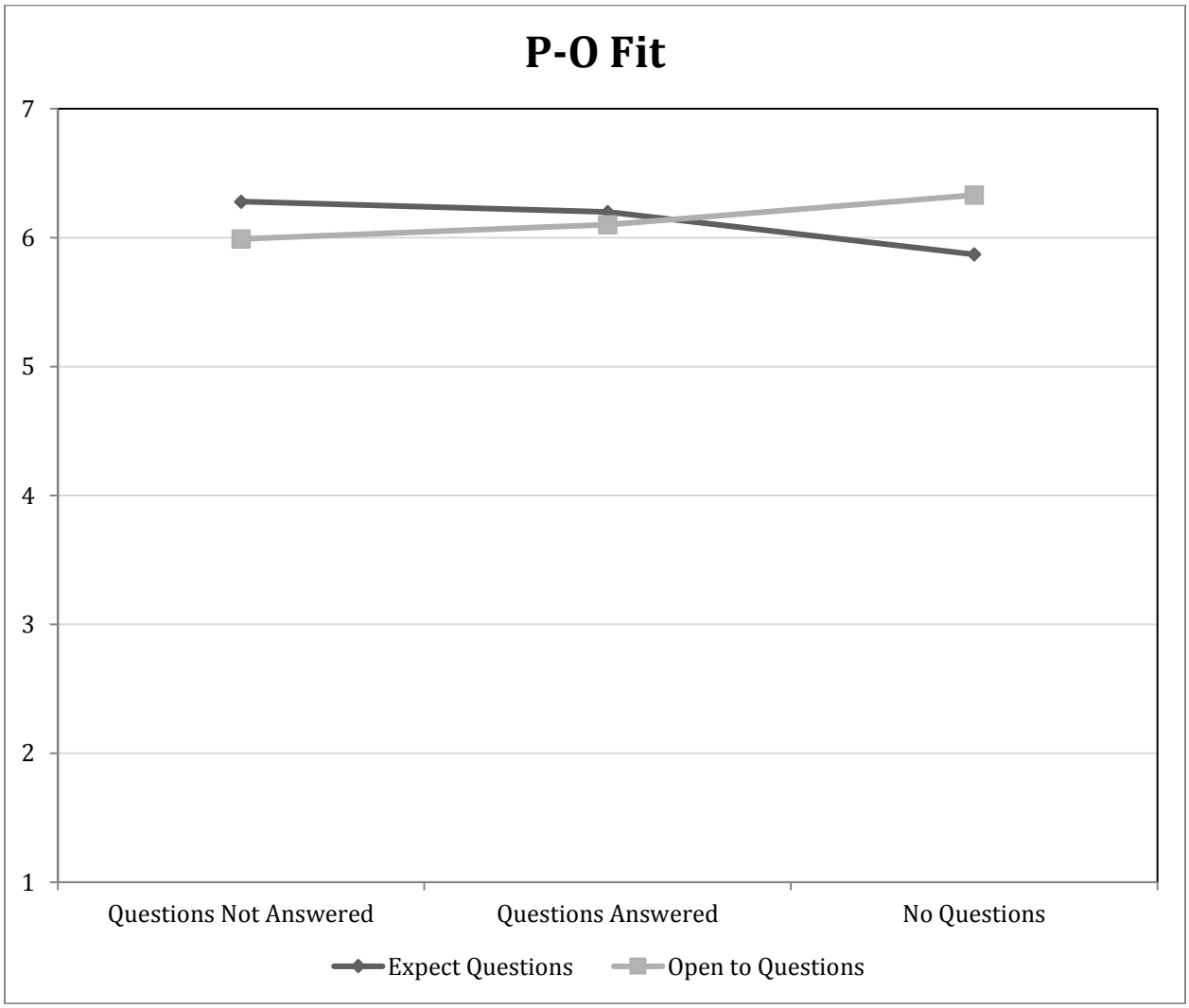

Figure 2. The effects of applicant questions and interviewers' expectations for questions on their perceptions of applicant P-O Fit. When interviewers expect questions, applicants who ask questions were perceived as having greater P-O Fit than applicants who did not ask questions. When interviewers are open to questions, there is no difference between the three applicant question groups.

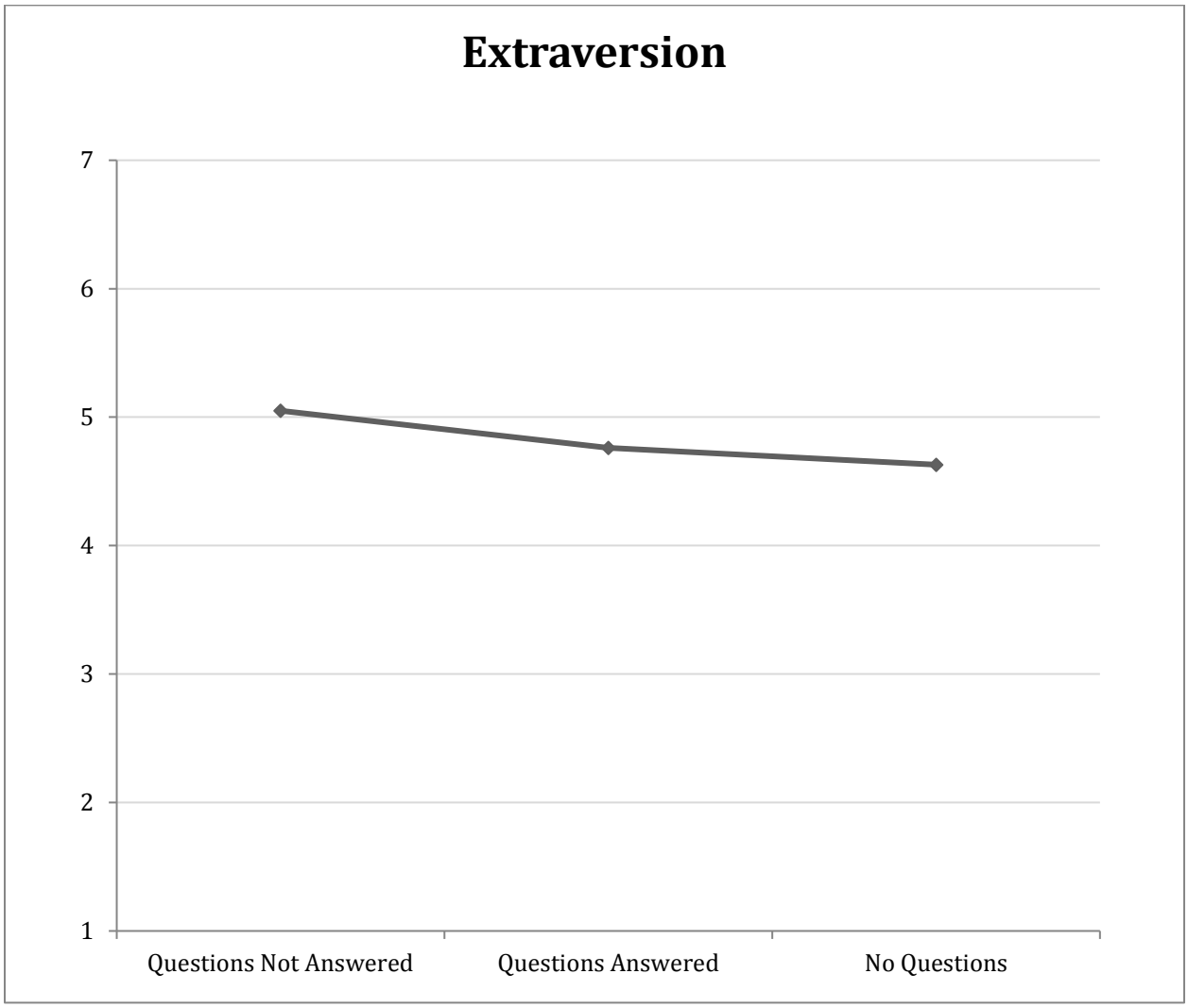

Figure 3. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant extraversion. Applicants who asked questions not answered on the website were perceived as statistically significantly more extraverted than applicants who did not ask questions.

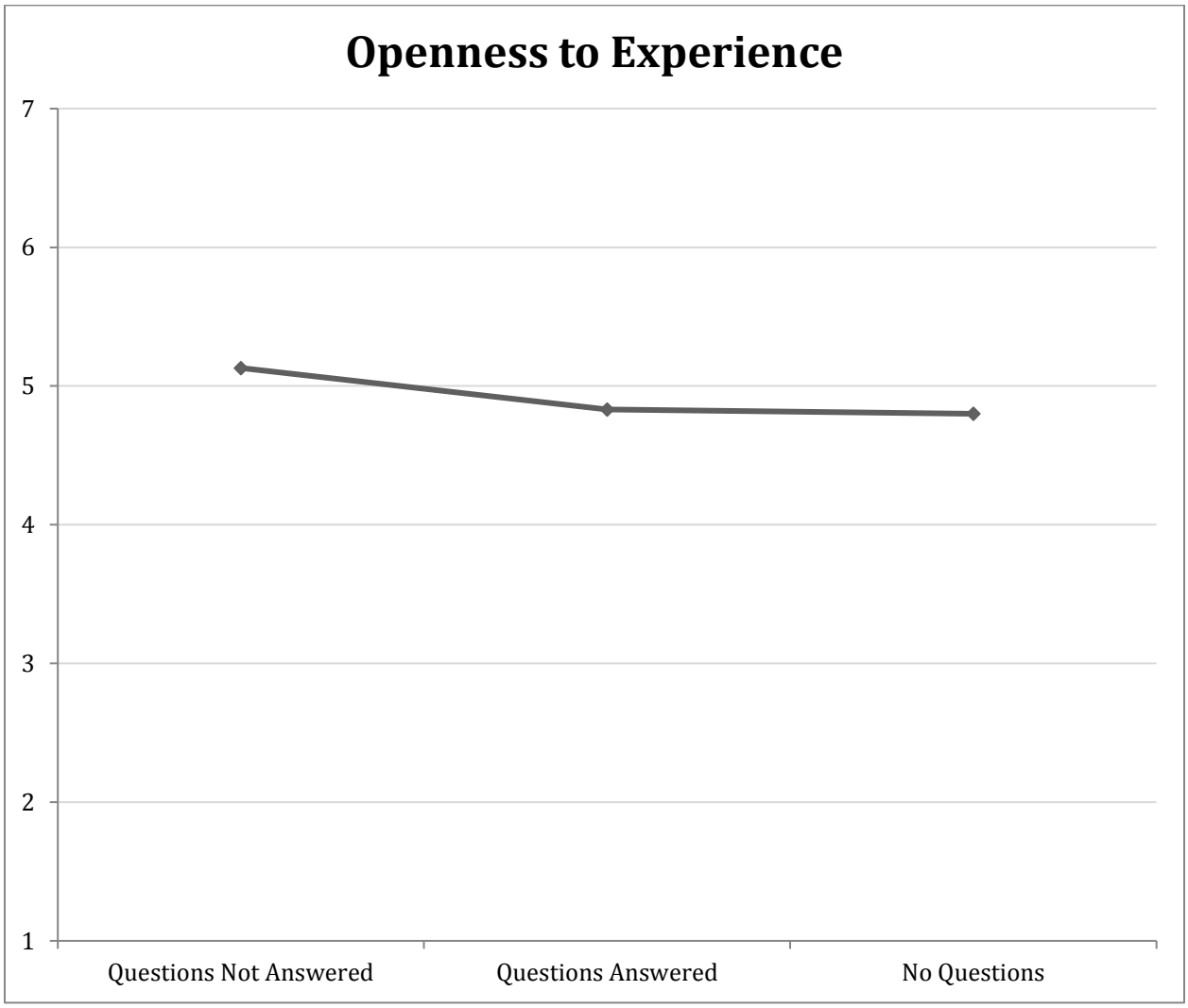

Figure 4. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant openness to experience. Applicants who asked questions not answered on the website were perceived by interviewers as statistically significantly more open to experience than those who asked no questions and applicants who asked questions that could have been answered on the website.

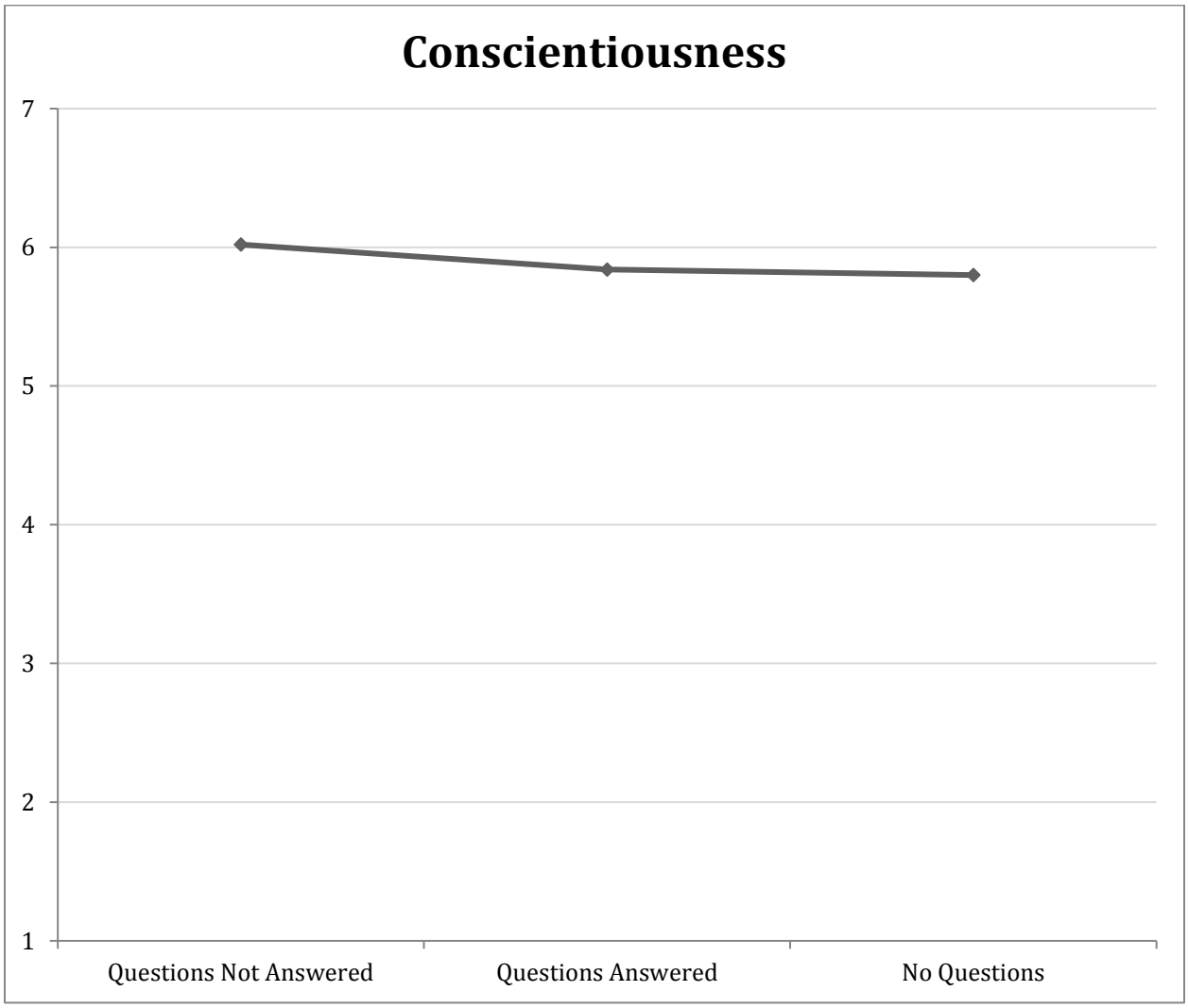

Figure 5. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant conscientiousness. No significant differences were found between applicant question groups for conscientiousness.

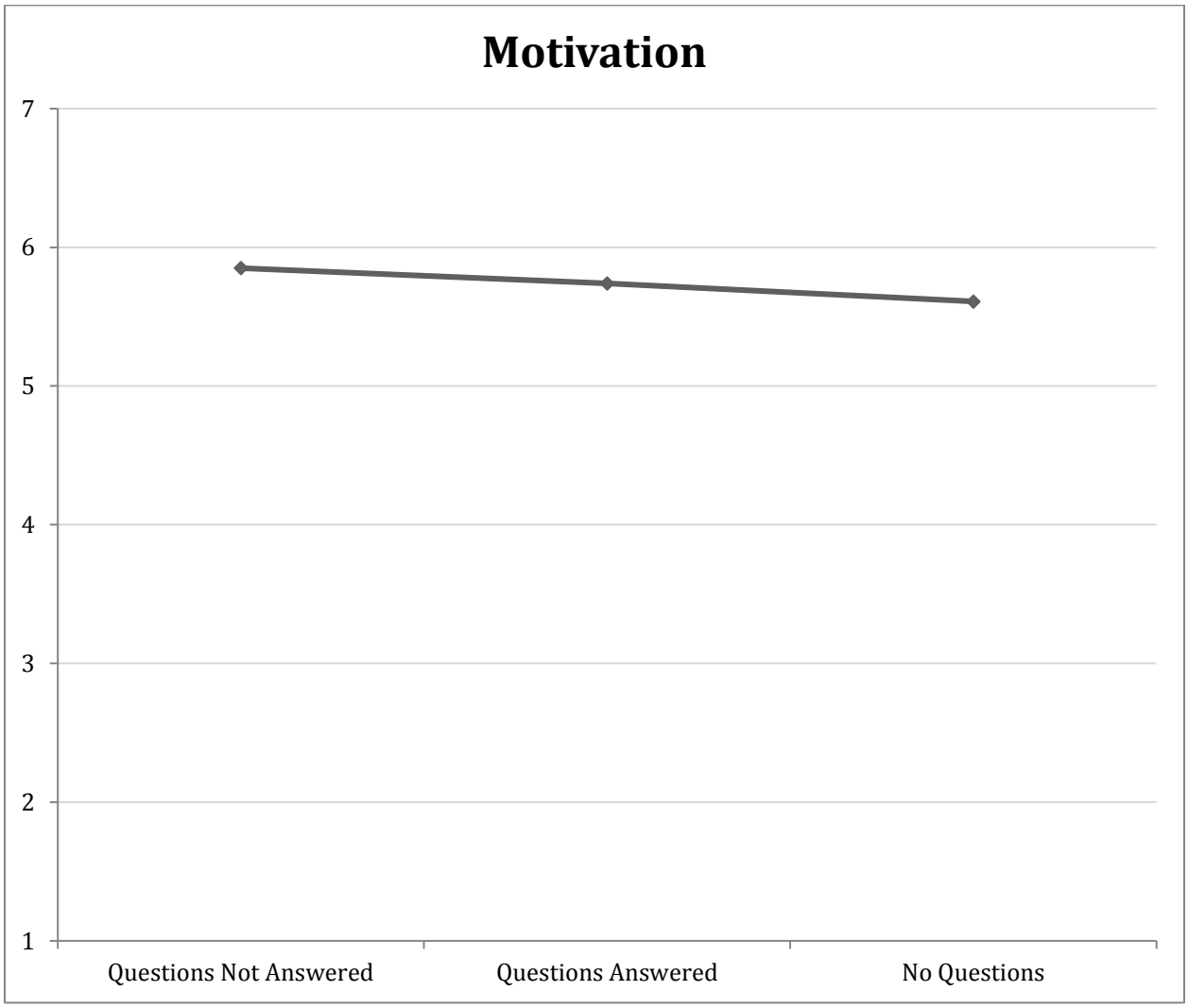

Figure 6. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant motivation. No significant differences were found between applicant question groups for motivation.

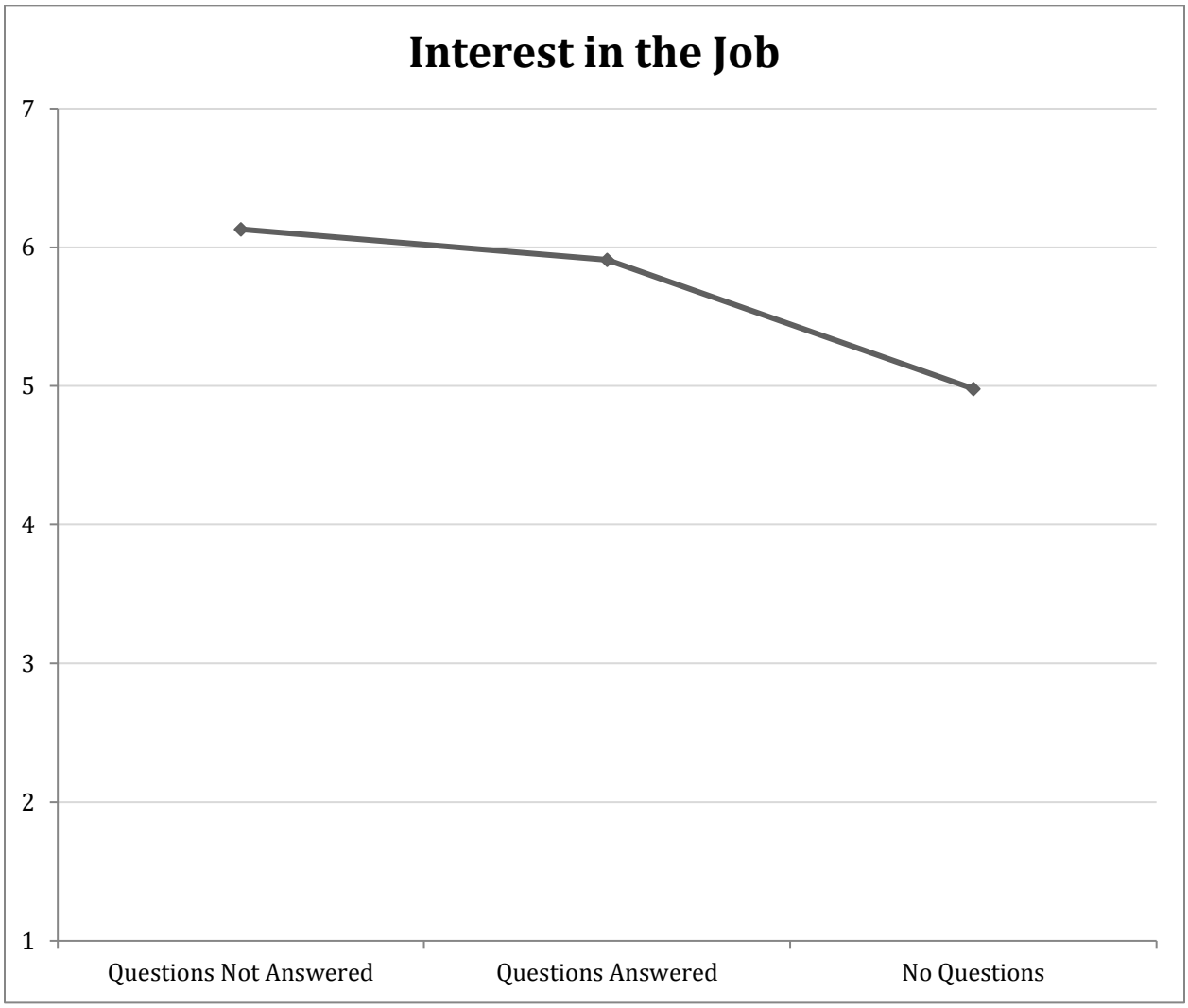

Figure 7. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant interest in the job. No significant differences were found between applicant question groups for interest in the job.

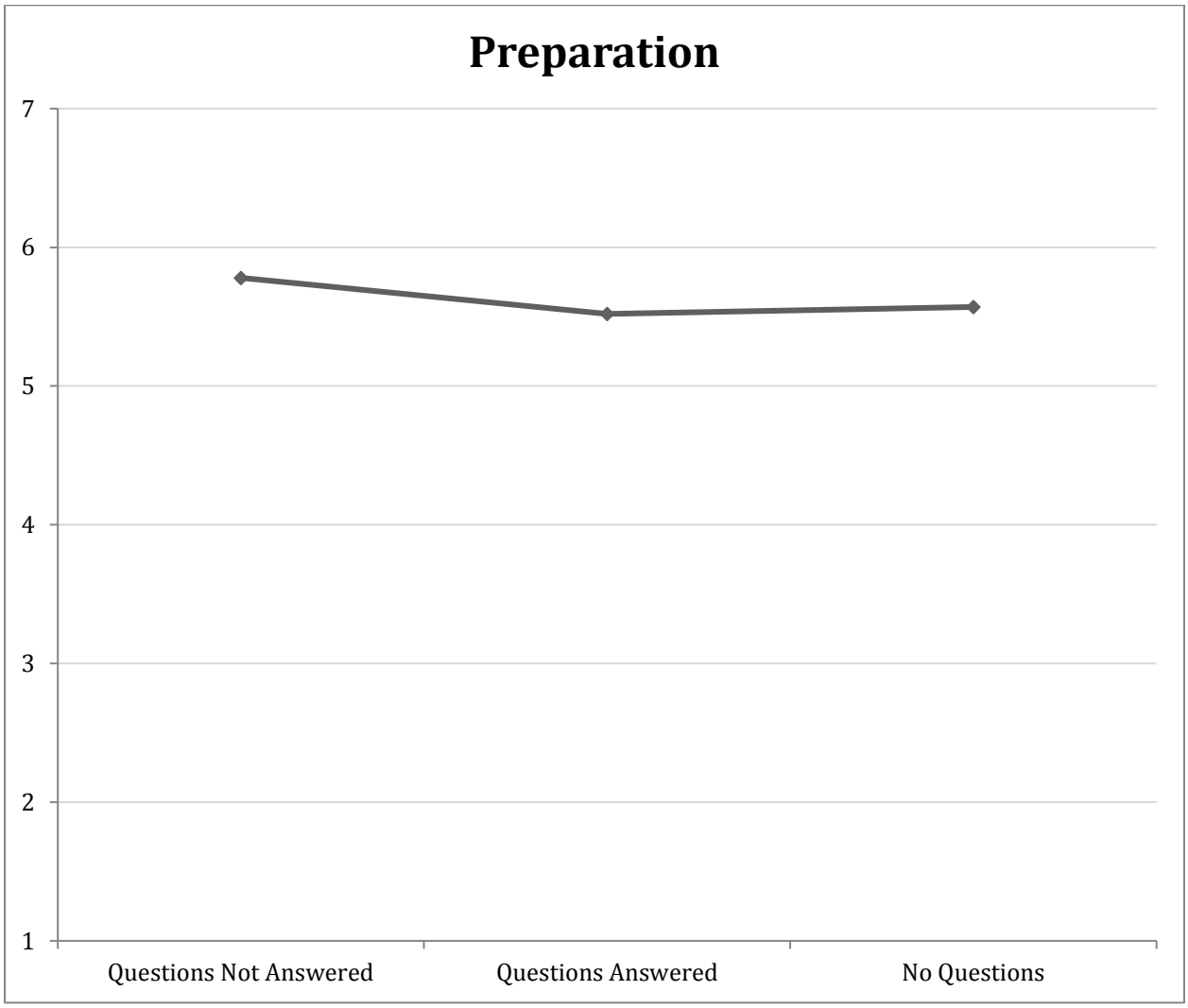

Figure 8. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant preparedness for the interview. No significant differences were found between applicant question groups for preparation.

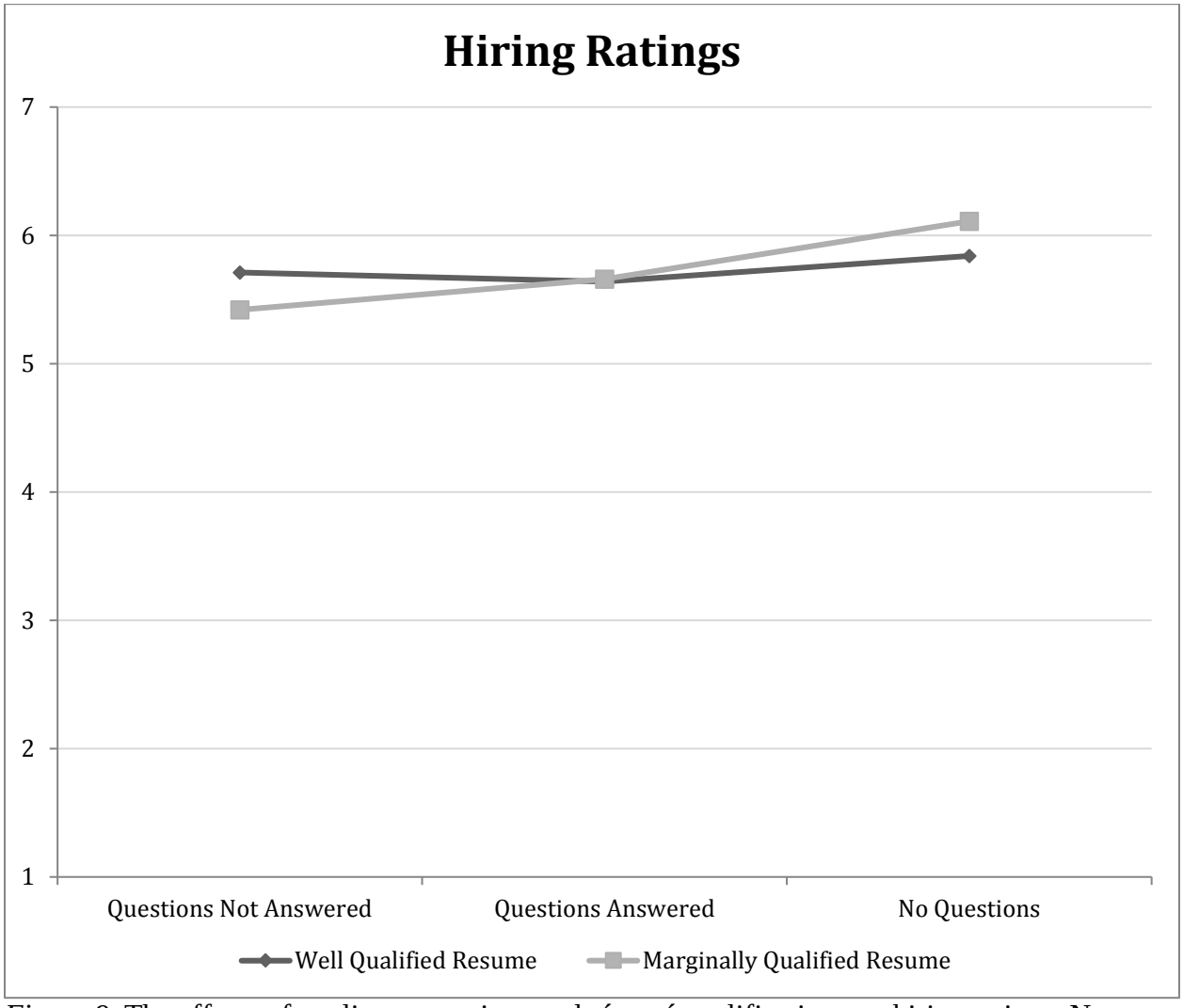

Figure 9. The effects of applicant questions and résumé qualifications on hiring ratings. No significant differences were found between applicant question groups or résumé qualifications for hiring ratings.

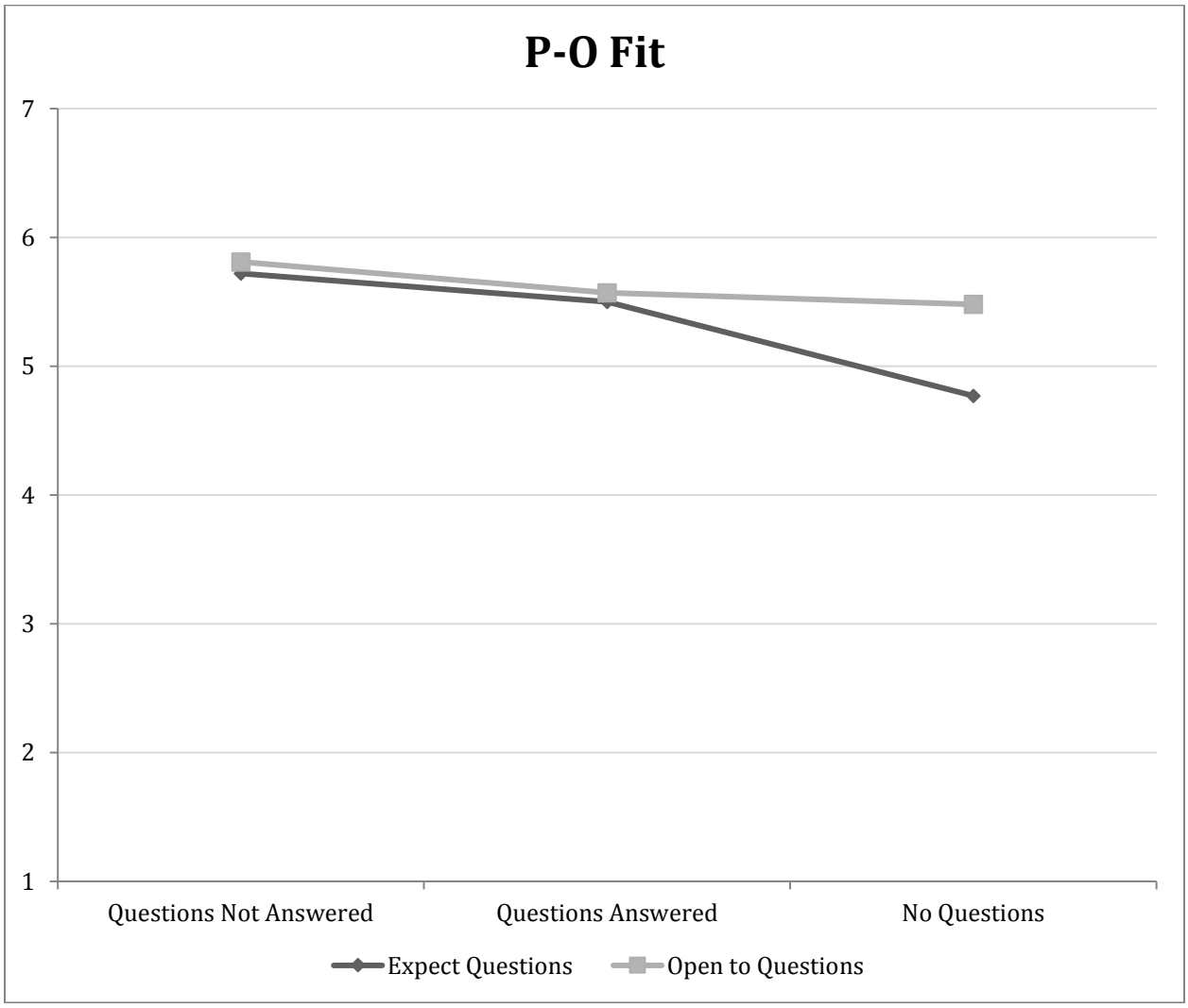

Figure 10. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant P-O Fit. When interviewers expect questions, applicants who ask questions were perceived as having greater P-O Fit than applicants who did not ask questions. When interviewers are open to questions, there is no difference between the three applicant question groups.

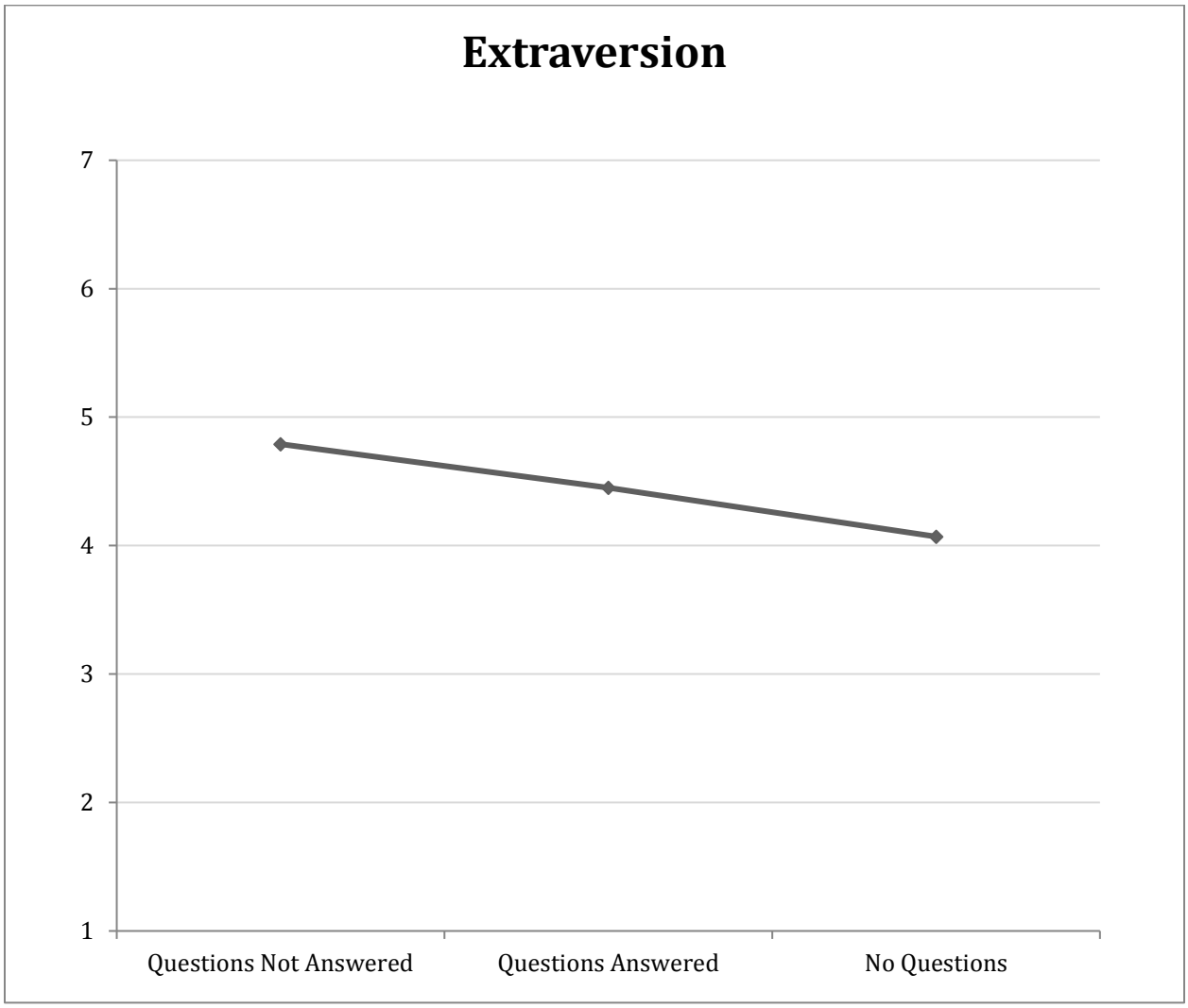

Figure 11. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant extraversion. Applicants who asked questions were perceived as statistically significantly more extraverted than applicants who did not ask questions.

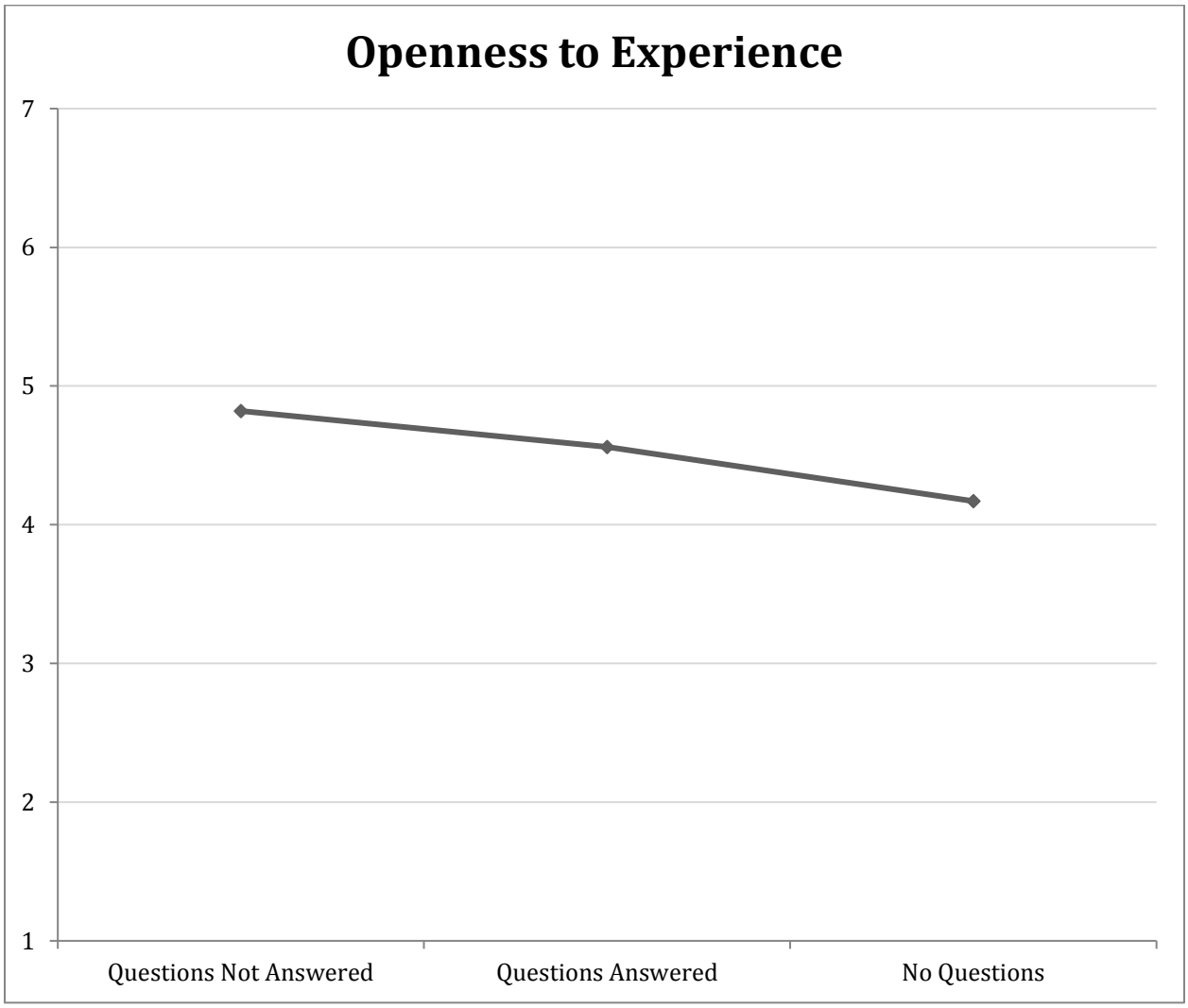

Figure 12. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant openness to experience. Applicants who asked questions were perceived as statistically significantly more open to experience than applicants who did not ask questions.

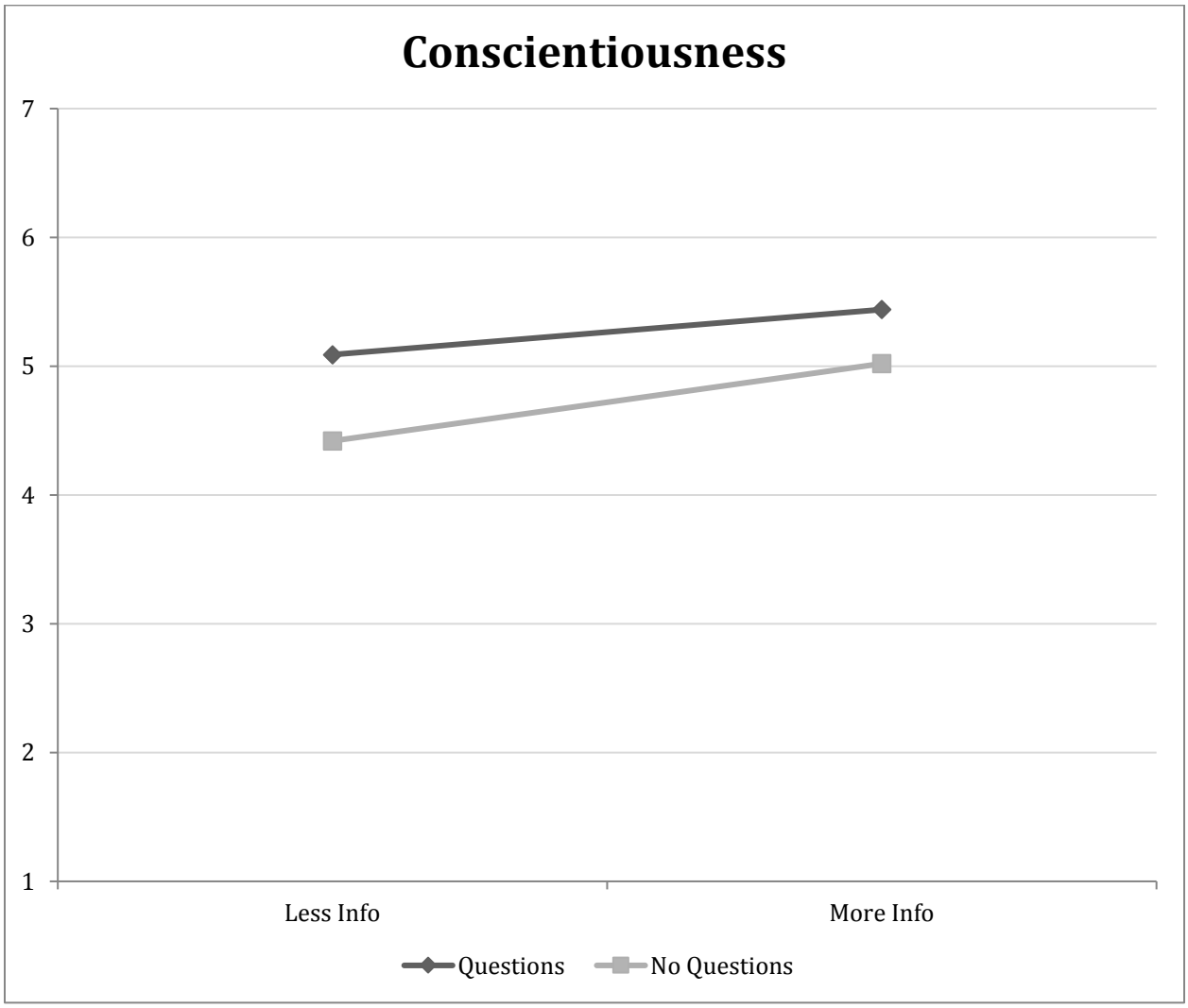

Figure 13. The effect of asking questions and amount of information available on interviewers' perceptions of applicant conscientiousness. There was a significant interaction between amount of information available and applicant questions. When no questions were asked, interviewers exposed to the website with more information available rated applicants as more conscientious than those exposed to the website with less information on it. When less information was available, applicants who asked questions that could not have been answered were perceived as more conscientious than applicants who did not ask questions.

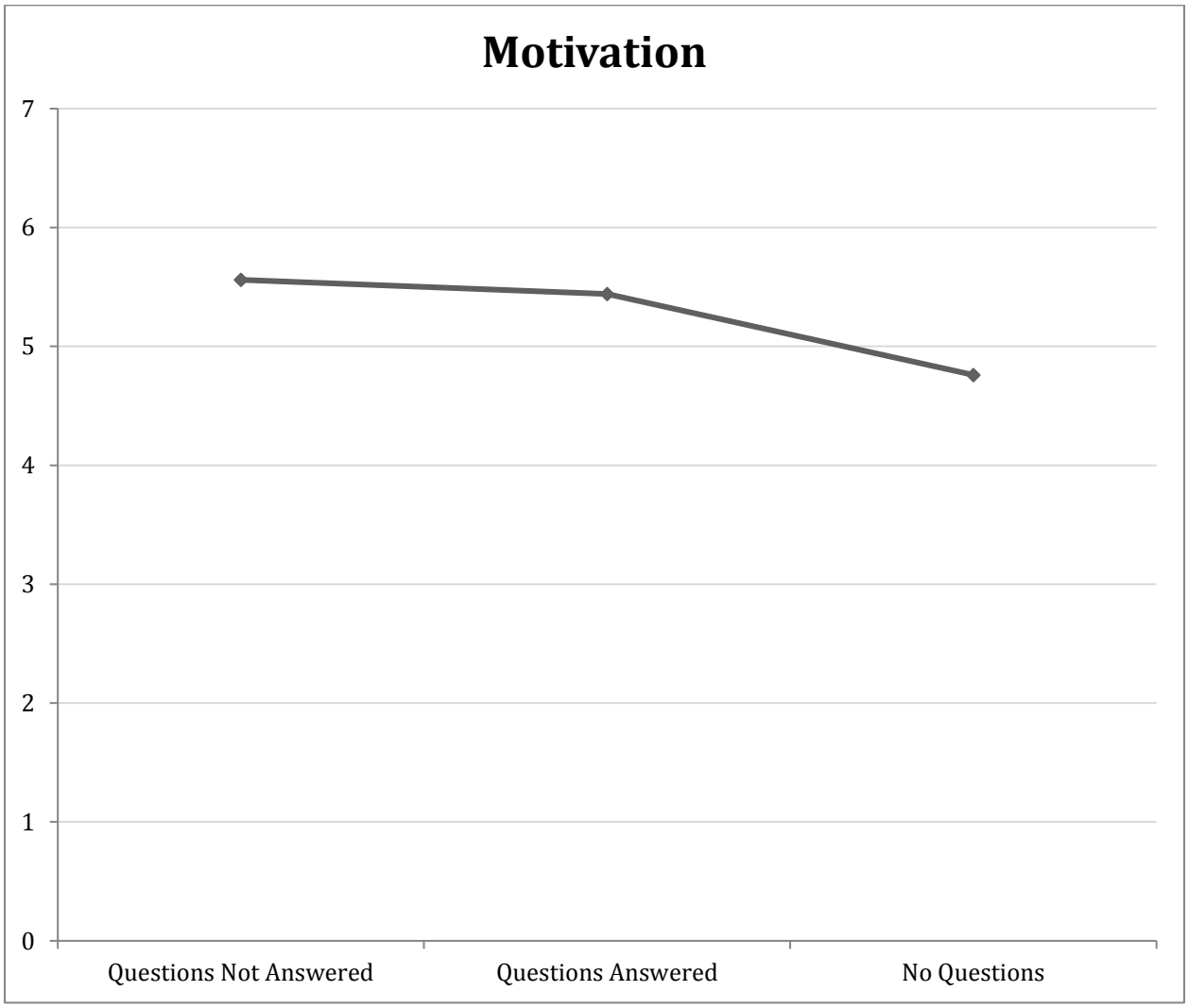

Figure 14. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant motivation. Applicants who asked questions were perceived as more motivated than applicants who asked no questions.

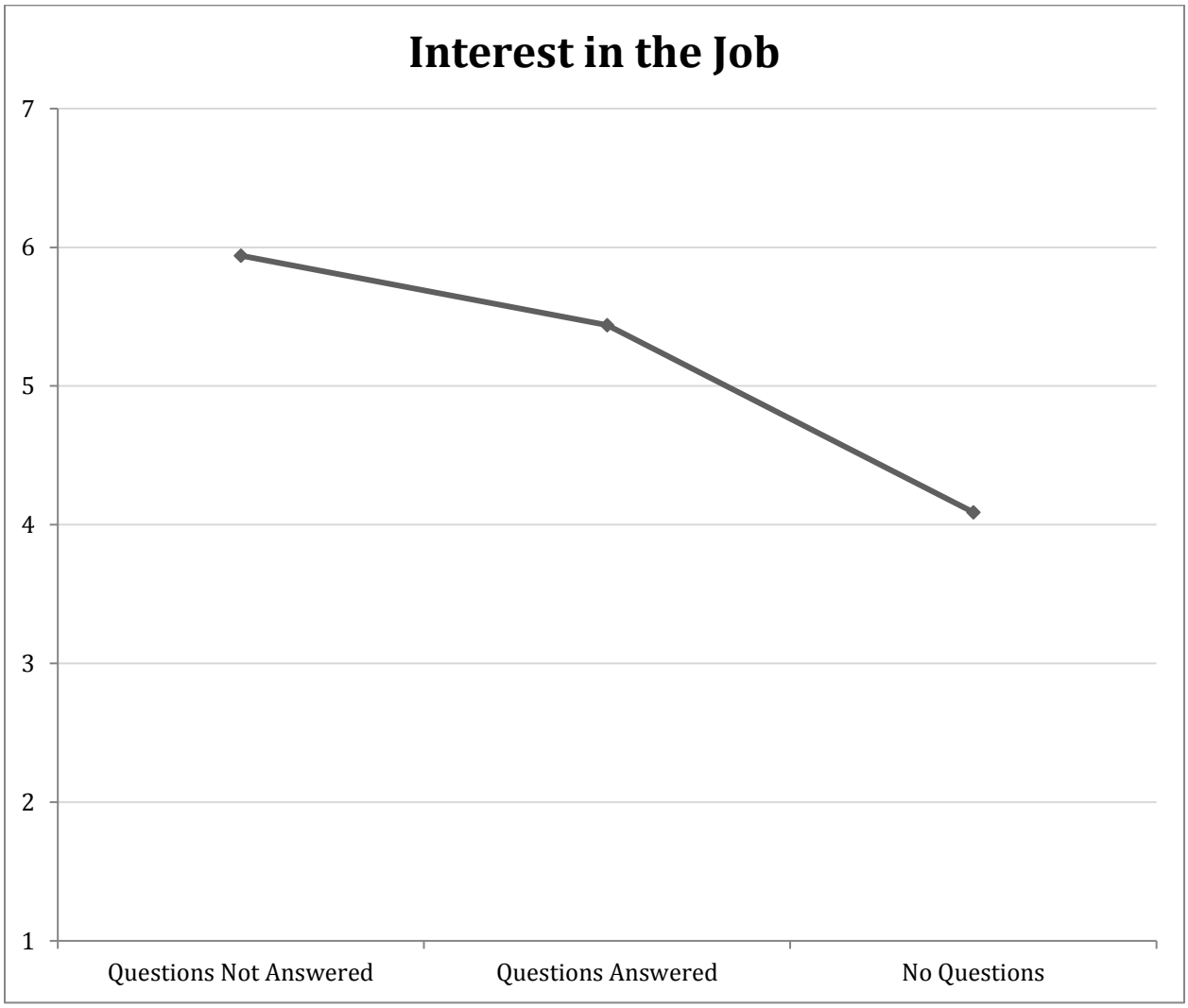

Figure 15. The effect of applicant questions on interviewers' perceptions of applicant interest in the job. There were significant differences found between all three applicant question groups.

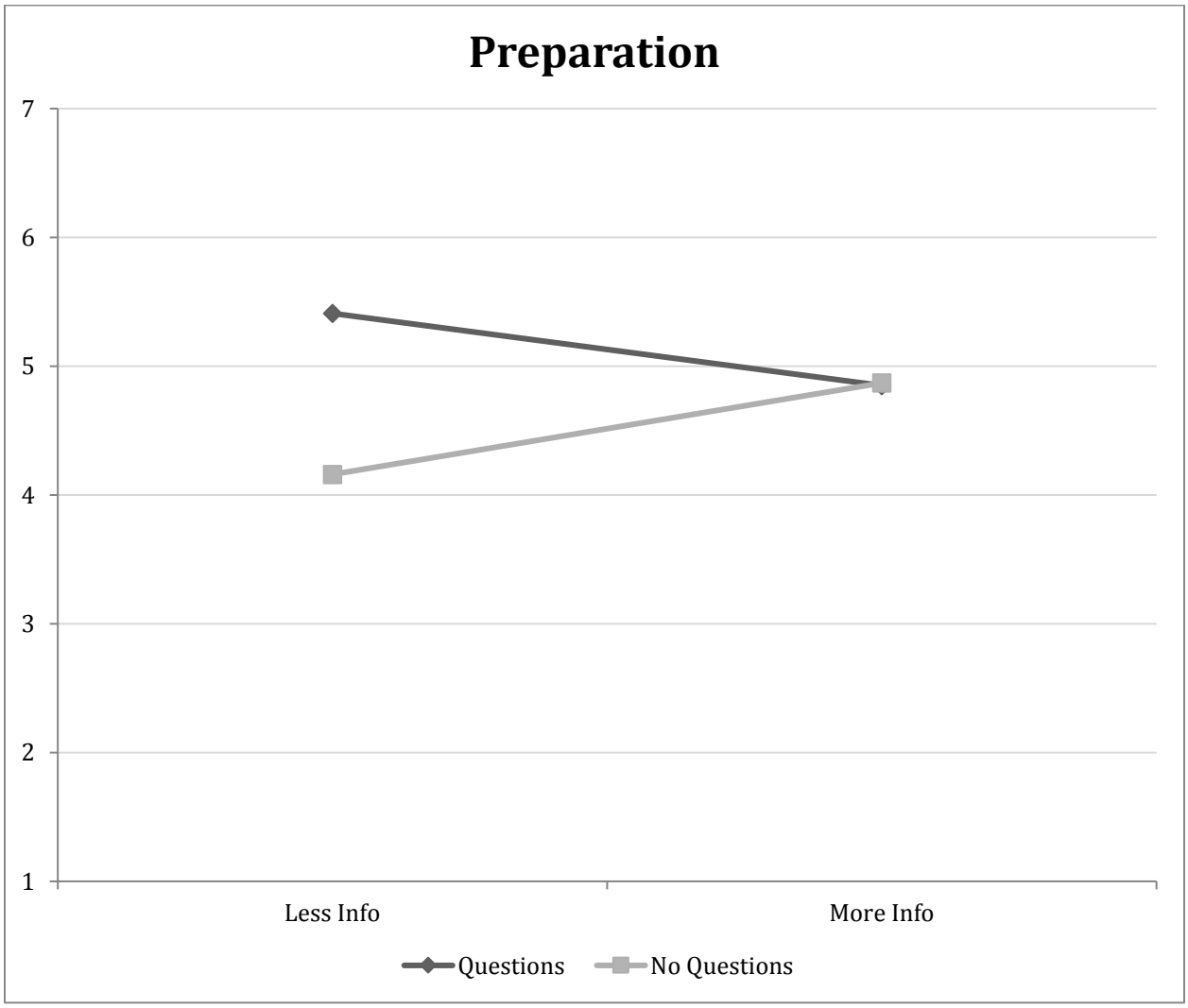

Figure 16. The effect of asking questions and amount of information available on interviewers' perceptions of applicant preparation for the interview. There was a significant interaction between amount of information and applicant questions. When no questions were asked, interviewers exposed to the website with more information available rated applicants as more prepared than those exposed to the website with less information on it. When less information was available, applicants who asked questions that could have been answered were perceived as more prepared than applicants who did not ask questions.

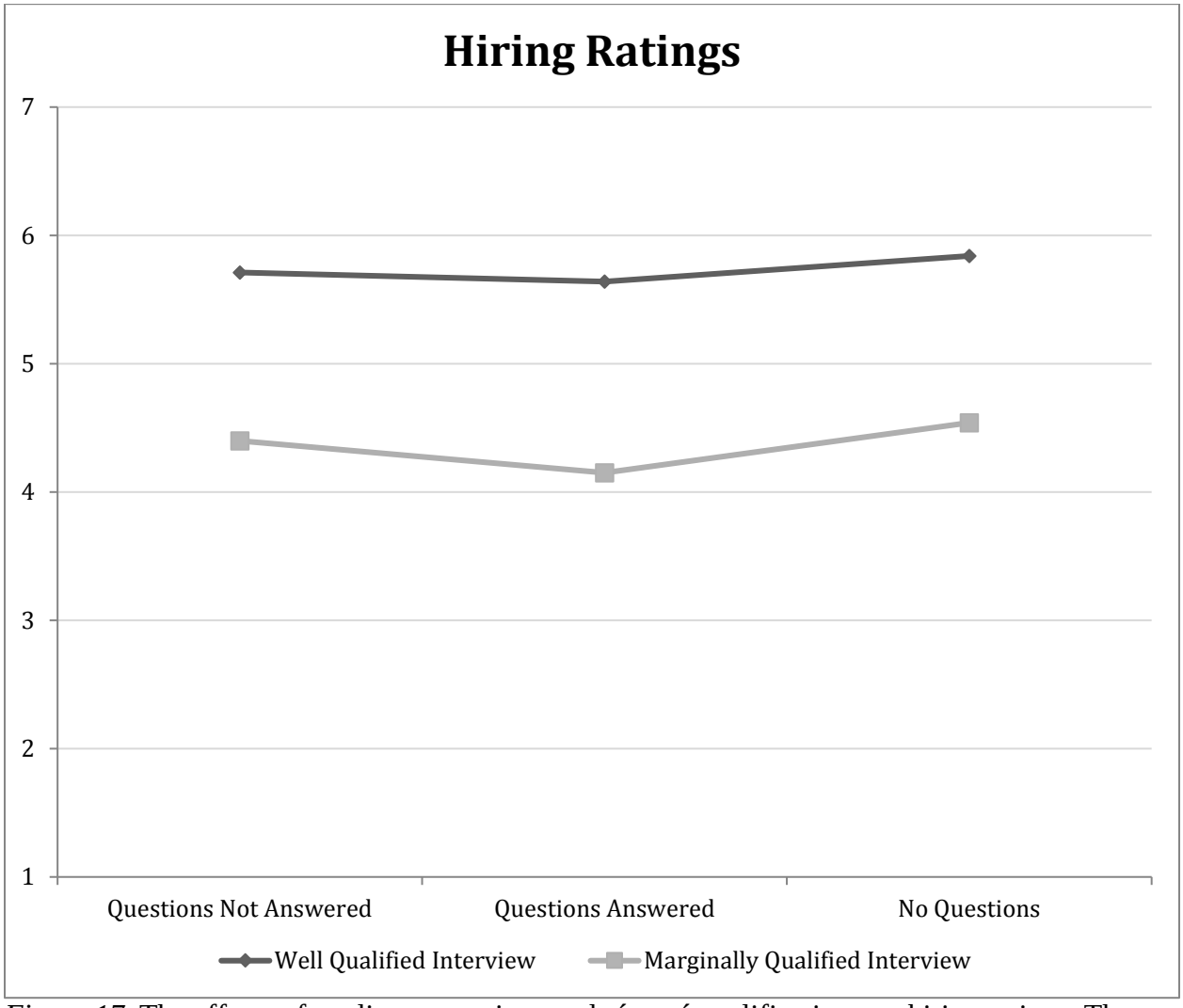

Figure 17. The effects of applicant questions and résumé qualifications on hiring ratings. There was a significant main effect of interview qualifications – applicants with well qualified interviews received better hiring ratings than applicants with marginally qualified interviews.

Table 1

Conditions of Participants Who Failed the Manipulation Check in Study 1

Condition	Number Removed
Asks questions answered on the website – qualified résumé	7
Asks questions answered on the website – marginal résumé	7
Asks questions not answered on the website – qualified résumé	7
Asks questions not answered on the website – marginal résumé	7
Did not ask questions with more info on website – qualified résumé	6
Did not ask questions with more info on website – marginal résumé	4
Did not ask questions with less info on website – qualified résumé	4
Did not ask questions with less info on website – marginal résumé	9

Table 2

Description and Sample Sizes of Study 1 Conditions

Condition ID	Description	n
1	Well qualified, asks questions, less information on website (i.e., questions are not answered)	38
2	Well qualified, asks questions, more information on website (i.e., questions are answered)	36
3	Well qualified, does not ask questions	45
	Well qualified, does not ask questions, more information on website	23
	Well qualified, does not ask questions, less information on website	22
4	Marginally qualified, asks questions, less information on website (i.e., questions are not answered on website)	40
5	Marginally qualified, asks questions, more information on website (i.e., questions are answered on website)	38
6	Marginally qualified, does not ask questions	41
	Marginally qualified, does not ask questions, more information	18
	Marginally qualified, does not ask questions, less information	23

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables for Study 1

Measures	*M*	*SD*								
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1) PO Fit	6.14	.87	(.91)							
2) Extraversion	4.81	1.17	.46**	(.88)						
3) Openness to Experience	4.92	.81	.53**	.58**	(.79)					
4) Conscientiousness	5.88	.95	.75**	.53**	.62**	(.91)				
5) Preparation	5.62	1.10	.66**	.43**	.42**	.64**	(.85)			
6) Motivation	5.73	1.05	.70**	.58**	.57**	.65**	.67**	(.85)		
7) Interest in the Job	5.65	1.30	.50**	.50**	.55**	.46**	.52**	.64**	(.91)	
8) Applicant Confidence	5.72	1.23	.60**	.56**	.49**	.62**	.61**	.59**	.51**	(.85)
9) Hiring Rating	5.74	1.23	.62**	.40**	.46**	.61**	.53**	.58**	.41**	.39**
10) Hiring Recommendation Item	1.58	.78	-.63**	-.51**	-.52**	-.62**	-.59**	-.61**	-.58**	-.60**
11) Expectation for Applicant Questions	2.30	.46	.04	.10	.05	.11	.06	.11	.08	.03
12) Expectation for Preparation	7.40	5.17	<.01	- .01	- .03	- .01	<.01	- .03	.09	.20**
13) Evaluation of Preparation	13.50	5.11	.12	.12	.15*	.14*	.16*	.16*	.07	- .07
14) Evaluation of Applicant Questions	5.32	1.40	.36**	.30**	.31**	.27**	.50**	.35**	.35**	.38**
15) Frequency Conducting Interviews	1.36	.79	-.25**	- .05	- .07	-.16*	-.20**	-.17**	- .06	- .11
16) Interviewing Skills	2.16	1.21	-.19**	- .11	- .08	-.15*	- .10	-.13*	- .02	- .11
17) Number of Interviews Over Career	8.44	44.07	-.24**	- .06	- .09	-.14*	-.18**	-.20**	- .10	- .05
18) Career Length	5.60	4.20	- .04	.09	- .09	- .03	<.01	- .04	<.01	.17*
19) Gender	1.71	.46	.05	.03	.02	.01	- .01	.03	.04	.01
20) Age	22.97	4.89	- .06	- .01	-.17**	- .10	- .04	- .12	- .05	.04
21) Ethnicity	2.89	1.20	.06	- .05	.14*	.06	.06	.06	.03	- .07

Note. Internal consistency estimates on diagonal. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3 Continued

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables for Study 1

Measures	*M*	*SD*								
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1) PO Fit	6.14	.87								
2) Extraversion	4.81	1.17								
3) Openness to Experience	4.92	.81								
4) Conscientiousness	5.88	.95								
5) Preparation	5.62	1.10								
6) Motivation	5.73	1.05								
7) Interest in the Job	5.65	1.30								
8) Applicant Confidence	5.72	1.23								
9) Hiring Rating	5.74	1.23	(.92)							
10) Hiring Recommendation Item	1.58	.78	-.57**	--						
11) Expectation for Applicant Questions	2.30	.46	.21**	- .08	--					
12) Expectation for Preparation	7.40	5.17	-.58**	- .02	-.17*	(.79)				
13) Evaluation of Preparation	13.50	5.11	.66**	- .12	.16*	-.95**	(.82)			
14) Evaluation of Applicant Questions	5.32	1.40	- .02	-.24**	<.01	.30**	-.19*	(.93)		
15) Frequency Conducting Interviews	1.36	.79	- .11	.15*	- .05	- .02	.01	- .14	--	
16) Interviewing Skills	2.16	1.21	-.16*	.14*	- .06	- .01	<.01	- .02	.42**	--
17) Number of Interviews Over Career	8.44	44.07	- .11	.18**	- .08	- .05	.04	- .12	.60**	.30**
18) Career Length	5.60	4.20	- .04	- .03	- .07	.07	- .05	.05	.28**	.21**
19) Gender	1.71	.46	.02	.08	.05	- .03	.05	.04	- .05	- .08
20) Age	22.97	4.89	- .09	.03	-.16*	.08	- .08	<.01	.24**	.18**
21) Ethnicity	2.89	1.20	- .06	- .07	- .01	.15*	-.14*	<.01	.04	.08

Note. Internal consistency estimates on diagonal **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3 Continued

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables for Study 1

Measures	*M*	*SD*					
			17	18	19	20	21
1) PO Fit	6.14	.87					
2) Extraversion	4.81	1.17					
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6) Motivation	5.73	1.05					
7) Interest in the Job	5.65	1.30					
8) Applicant Confidence	5.72	1.23					
9) Hiring Rating	5.74	1.23					
10) Hiring Recommendation Item	1.58	.78					
11) Expectation for Applicant Questions	2.30	.46					
12) Expectation for Preparation	7.40	5.17					
13) Evaluation of Preparation	13.50	5.11					
14) Evaluation of Applicant Questions	5.32	1.40					
15) Frequency Conducting Interviews	1.36	.79					
16) Interviewing Skills	2.16	1.21					
17) Number of Interviews Over Career	8.44	44.07	--				
18) Career Length	5.60	4.20	.25**	--			
19) Gender	1.71	.46	.05	-.14*	--		
20) Age	22.97	4.89	.21**	.79**	- .09	--	
21) Ethnicity	2.89	1.20	.02	.03	- .09	- .06	

Note. Internal consistency estimates on diagonal **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 4. Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Study 1

Variable	*B*	SE_B	β	*p*
Intercept	-.23	.46		.62
P-O Fit	.35	.12	.25	*
Preparation	.09	.08	.08	.30
Motivation	.23	.10	.19	.02
Interest	<-.01	.06	-<.01	.98
Extraversion	-.01	.07	-.01	.89
Conscientiousness	.27	.11	.21	.01
Openness to Experience	.10	.11	.06	.38

Note. *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE_B = standard error of the coefficient; β = standardized coefficient. ** is $p < .001$. * is $p < .01$

Table 5

Conditions of Participants Who Failed the Manipulation Check in Study 2

Condition	*Number Removed*
Asks questions answered on the website – qualified interview	6
Asks questions answered on the website – marginal interview	4
Asks questions not answered on the website – qualified interview	6
Asks questions not answered on the website – marginal interview	5
Did not ask questions with more info on website – qualified interview	6
Did not ask questions with more info on website – marginal interview	9
Did not ask questions with less info on website – qualified interview	5
Did not ask questions with less info on website – marginal interview	12

Table 6

Description and Sample Sizes of Study 2 Conditions

Condition ID	Description	n
1	Strong interview performance, asks questions, less information on website (i.e., questions are not answered)	38
2	Strong interview performance, asks questions, more information on website (i.e., questions are answered)	36
3	Strong interview performance, does not ask questions	45
	Strong interview, does not ask questions, more information	23
	Strong interview, does not ask questions, less information	22
4	Marginal interview performance, asks questions, less information on website (i.e., questions are not answered)	23
5	Marginal interview performance, asks questions, more information on website (i.e., questions are answered)	23
6	Marginal interview performance, does not ask questions	69
	Marginal interview, does not ask questions, more information	34
	Marginal interview, does not ask questions, less information	35

Table 7

Internal Reliabilities for Scales in Study 2

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha
P-O Fit	.96
Extraversion	.88
Conscientiousness	.95
Openness to Experience	.93
Preparation	.93
Motivation	.90
Interest in the Job	.94
Confidence	.89
Hiring Ratings	.97
Expectations about what Applicants Should do to Prepare	.84
Beliefs about what Applicants Did to Prepare	.92
Evaluation of Questions	.93

Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables for Study 2

Measures	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1) PO Fit	5.34	1.47	(.96)							
2) Extraversion	4.35	1.18	.55**	(.88)						
3) Openness to Experience	4.44	0.93	.73**	.69**	(.93)					
4) Conscientiousness	5.00	1.44	.84**	.58**	.74**	(.95)				
5) Preparation	4.83	1.54	.81**	.56**	.69**	.78**	(.93)			
6) Motivation	5.14	1.35	.78**	.62**	.73**	.78**	.81**	(.90)		
7) Interest in the Job	4.91	1.62	.63**	.59**	.69**	.64**	.71**	.79**	(.94)	
8) Applicant Confidence	5.01	1.57	.74**	.65**	.69**	.73**	.77**	.74**	.71**	(.89)
9) Hiring Rating	5.10	1.55	.77**	.49**	.59**	.74**	.69**	.71**	.53**	.56**
10) Hiring Recommendation Item	2.28	1.29	-.87**	-.58**	-.72**	-.85**	-.81**	-.79**	-.70**	-.77**
11) Expectation for Applicant Questions	2.30	0.46	.09	.04	.08	.07	.15*	.13*	.09	.07
12) Expectation for Preparation	7.01	4.63	- .03	- .04	- .03	- .07	- .06	- .07	- .01	.01
13) Evaluation of Preparation	14.20	4.04	.05	.07	.05	.07	.13	.11	.06	- .03
14) Evaluation of Applicant Questions	4.53	1.64	.65**	.51**	.65**	.62**	.72**	.61**	.59**	.59**
15) Frequency Conducting Interviews	1.42	0.81	-.19**	- .02	- .09	- .09	- .12	-.15*	- .06	- .08
16) Interviewing Skills	2.03	1.13	-.15*	- .02	- .06	- .12	- .12	- .07	- .02	- .03
17) Number of Interviews Over Career	10.67	46.94	-.20**	- .12	-.15*	- .1	-.170*	-.19**	-.16*	- .11
18) Career Length	6.15	5.53	-.18**	- .05	-.21**	- .12	-.140*	-.14*	- .12	- .05
19) Gender	1.73	0.44	- .01	<.01	<.01	<.01	- .01	- .03	- .04	- .03
20) Age	23.77	6.35	-.15*	- .04	-.18**	- .12	-.140*	- .11	- .09	- .06
21) Ethnicity	2.83	1.14	- .01	- .06	- .02	- .06	- .01	.02	- .04	- .01

Note. Internal consistency estimates on diagonal **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 8 Continued

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables for Study 2

Measures	*M*	*SD*								
			9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1) PO Fit	5.34	1.47								
2) Extraversion	4.35	1.18								
3) Openness to Experience	4.44	0.93								
4) Conscientiousness	5.00	1.44								
5) Preparation	4.83	1.54								
6) Motivation	5.14	1.35								
7) Interest in the Job	4.91	1.62								
8) Applicant Confidence	5.01	1.57								
9) Hiring Rating	5.10	1.55	(.97)							
10) Hiring Recommendation Item	2.28	1.29	-.76**	--						
11) Expectation for Applicant Questions	2.30	0.46	.19**	- .11	--					
12) Expectation for Preparation	7.01	4.63	-.25**	.03	-.14*	(.84)				
13) Evaluation of Preparation	14.20	4.04	.41**	- .06	.21**	-.91**	(.92)			
14) Evaluation of Applicant Questions	4.53	1.64	.43**	-.63**	.06	.22**	-.24**	(.93)		
15) Frequency Conducting Interviews	1.42	0.81	- .09	.12	- .11	.12	- .07	- .05	--	
16) Interviewing Skills	2.03	1.13	-.17**	.14*	-.14*	.05	- .05	.01	.51**	--
17) Number of Interviews Over Career	10.67	46.94	- .09	.15*	- .11	.05	- .02	- .16	.59**	.36**
18) Career Length	6.15	5.53	- .09	.15*	- .12	.07	- .06	<.01	.30**	.23**
19) Gender	1.73	0.44	.05	.04	.02	- .05	.12	.02	- .03	- .02
20) Age	23.77	6.35	- .06	.14*	-.16*	.06	- .04	- .01	.28**	.25**
21) Ethnicity	2.83	1.14	- .10	- .01	- .05	.25**	-.24**	.10	.05	.06

Note. Internal consistency estimates on diagonal **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 8 Continued

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Study Variables for Study 2

Measures	*M*	*SD*					
			17	18	19	20	21
1) PO Fit	5.34	1.47					
2) Extraversion	4.35	1.18					
3) Openness to Experience	4.44	0.93					
4) Conscientiousness	5.00	1.44					
5) Preparation	4.83	1.54					
6) Motivation	5.14	1.35					
7) Interest in the Job	4.91	1.62					
8) Applicant Confidence	5.01	1.57					
9) Hiring Rating	5.10	1.55					
10) Hiring Recommendation Item	2.28	1.29					
11) Expectation for Applicant Questions	2.30	0.46					
12) Expectation for Preparation	7.01	4.63					
13) Evaluation of Preparation	14.20	4.04					
14) Evaluation of Applicant Questions	4.53	1.64					
15) Frequency Conducting Interviews	1.42	0.81					
16) Interviewing Skills	2.03	1.13					
17) Number of Interviews Over Career	10.67	46.94	--				
18) Career Length	6.15	5.53	.34**	--			
19) Gender	1.73	0.44	.07	- .01	--		
20) Age	23.77	6.35	.32**	.89**	.01	--	
21) Ethnicity	2.83	1.14	.02	<.01	- .05	.03	

Note. Internal consistency estimates on diagonal **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 9

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Study 2

Variable	*B*	SE_B	β	*p*
Intercept	48	.34		.16
P-O Fit	.41	.10	.40	**
Preparation	.06	.09	.06	.48
Motivation	.34	.11	.30	*
Interest	-.12	.08	-.12	.12
Extraversion	.03	.08	.02	.70
Conscientiousness	.22	.10	.21	.02
Openness to Experience	-.08	.13	-.05	.54

Note. *B* = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE_B = standard error of the coefficient; β = standardized coefficient. ** is $p < .001$. * is $p < .01$

Appendix A

Company Website Content: About Us and Program Description

Program Description: Questions Answered

Introduction to Company Information Pages

On the next page you will review website content from the organization's "About Us" page, and the Management Trainee Program description from the career section of the website where the applicant applied. It is very important that you consider the requirements and responsibilities of the role as detailed in the program description to help you determine whether the applicant is right for the position. To ensure that you understand the role, please read the program description thoroughly. After carefully reviewing the description, you will be asked to reflect on what you have read and answer some open-ended questions. Before you can proceed to the rest of the study, you will also have to accurately complete a brief quiz about the program description.

You will learn more about the Management Trainee Program on the next page, but first let's highlight some of the information from the description. The Management Trainee Program is an annual program, and anywhere between 10 and 20 people get accepted each year. The purpose of the program is to train associates to become eventual Managers in one of 6 areas important to the company. Trainees will proceed through the program as a group, and will work closely together in even smaller groups as they gain exposure to each of the six different areas during their rotations. At the end of rotations, trainees will collaborate with leaders in the company to choose one of the six areas that aligns with their interests, while also taking into account the organization's talent needs and the trainee's performance during rotations. After work areas are selected, the management trainee program lasts another year. While the goal is to train individuals for management positions upon completion of the program, being immediately promoted at the end of the program is not guaranteed, but likely within 2 years of finishing.

About Us Page

About Us

Our organization believes in our products and services. We make it a point to provide excellent customer service. While our customers and products are vital to our success, we never lose sight of our most valued asset – our employees. We are committed to helping our employees reach their career goals. To do so, we provide employees with resources, development, and a supportive culture to help them reach their potentials.

There are many benefits to working here:

- **Collaboration**. Our employees help one another and share resources. You will work with teams that are passionate and committed to common goals.
- **Developmental Opportunities**. We provide workshops, on-the-job training, online learning, and tuition assistance.
- **Work-Life Balance**. We support balance between work and life through flextime, job-sharing, and other personalized solutions to help reduce stress.
- **Transparency**. We believe in open communication. We are upfront about our goals, strategies, and company performance so you can understand how you fit in. We urge our employees to be honest and direct with one another.
- **Diversity and Inclusion.** We welcome individuals from all backgrounds to encourage different perspectives and creative thinking.
- **Bonuses Based on Company Performance**. Our employees receive bonuses when the company exceeds its yearly goals.

Program Description

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Management Trainee Program

Opportunities in Finance, Sales, Marketing, Information Systems, Supply Chain, and Human Resources

Our Management Trainee Program is a hands-on experience that prepares individuals for a career in management. Every year, **10 to 20 applicants are accepted into the program**. **These hires proceed through the program as a group and attend training courses together.** During the rotational part of the program, trainees are spread among various departments. They will work on real projects driving business needs. **Trainees in the same rotational groups work on many of the same projects together,** although they will be given unique solo work as well. For development, trainees are paired with mentors who have previously completed the program. Mentors serve as resources that can help with networking, provide career advice, and advise about the program.

The rotational program takes two years to complete. Below is an overview of the program timeline.

Year 1 (Months 1-6): Rotational Training

During your first six months, you will rotate through six focus areas:

1. Finance
2. Sales
3. Marketing
4. Information Systems
5. Supply Chain
6. Human Resources

Rotations will help you learn how the organization operates and how the various areas impact one another. It will also help you decide which focus area interests you the most for your full time placement. The rotational period gives us a chance to assess your fit, expertise and skills. Your performance will be evaluated during each step of the rotation to help us better understand your strengths and areas needing development.

When you apply for the program, you do not need to know which focus area you wish to pursue. **You and program leadership will collaboratively decide the best focus area for you after rotations are finished**. A number of factors influence this decision. First, we want you to be excited about growing and developing your career here. Our goal is to find an area that you are passionate about, that you feel is a good fit, and that matches your career goals. While **we do our best to reach a mutually agreeable decision based on your preferences**, we also have to consider the organization's needs. Y**our skills, previous experience, and performance during the rotational period will also affect placement decisions.**

Year 1 (Months 7-12): Primary Focus Area

After your focus area is agreed upon, you will become more deeply involved in the activities of your new department. You will take ownership of projects of increasing size and scope. You may be asked to supervise others informally (e.g., small teams and special projects), and will participate in several leadership training courses to prepare you to formally manage others within the organization.

Year 2: Supervision and Project Work

During your second year, you will continue to work on projects of increasing size and importance within your area. In addition, your formal managerial duties will begin when you are promoted to an assistant manager. Before moving into this role, you must complete all required training and meet performance standards.

Program Completion

At program completion, you will be able to mentor, develop, and manage others. Assistant managers are often quickly promoted to managers. **Although being promoted to a managerial position is NOT guaranteed to occur immediately upon finishing, 90% of our program graduates are promoted to managers within 2 years**. **Cases in which employees are not promoted to managers are often the result of poor performance, shifting career paths, or poor fit with the organization.**

Basic Qualifications:

- Must be a graduating college senior or have a completed Bachelor's degree
- Must have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5
- Must be able to work full time, 40 hours per week
- Should be eager to learn and open to new experiences

Compensation:

- This is a salaried, full time position with benefits
- Relocation assistance provided

Reflection Questions

Please answer the following questions regarding what you have just read about the company and the Management Trainee Program.

1. Describe why teamwork and getting along well with others might be important as trainees progress though the Management Trainee Program.

2. Describe how both the trainee and the organizational leadership are involved in choosing the final area for the trainee to work after rotations.

3. What are some of the reasons that an individual may not be immediately promoted to Manager following completion of the Management Trainee Program?

4. What is one of the benefits to working at the organization that you find most appealing?

Program Description: Questions NOT Answered

Introduction to Company Information Pages

On the next page you will review website content from the organization's "About Us" page, and the Management Trainee Program description from the career section of the website where the applicant applied. It is very important that you consider the requirements and responsibilities of the role as detailed in the program description to help you determine whether the applicant is right for the position. To ensure that you understand the role, please read the program description thoroughly. After carefully reviewing the description, you will be asked to reflect on what you have read and answer some open-ended questions. Before you can proceed to the rest of the study, you will also have to accurately complete a brief quiz about the program description.

You will learn more about the Management Trainee Program on the next page, but first let's highlight some of the information from the description. The Management Trainee Program accepts a number of interested applicants every year. The purpose of the program is to train associates to become eventual

Managers in one of 6 areas important to the company. These areas are Finance, Sales, Marketing, Information Systems, Supply Chain, and Human Resources. Trainees gain exposure to each of the six different areas during rotations in the first year, but work exclusively in one area for the second and final year of the program. After their second year, trainees graduate from the program and continue their work in the organization.

About Us Page

About Us

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There are many benefits to working here:

- **Collaboration**. Our employees help one another and share resources. You will work with teams that are passionate and committed to common goals.
- **Developmental Opportunities**. We provide workshops, on-the-job training, online learning, and tuition assistance.
- **Work-Life Balance**. We support balance between work and life through flextime, job-sharing, and other personalized solutions to help reduce stress.
- **Transparency**. We believe in open communication. We are upfront about our goals, strategies, and company performance so you can understand how you fit in. We urge our employees to be honest and direct with one another.
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Program Description

CURRENT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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The rotational program takes two years to complete. Below is an overview of the program timeline.

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5. Supply Chain
6. Human Resources

Rotations will help you learn how the organization operates and how the various areas impact one another. It will also help you decide which focus area interests you the most for your full time placement. The rotational period gives us a chance to assess your fit, expertise, and skills. Your performance will be evaluated during each step of the rotation to help us better understand your strengths and areas needing development.

When you apply for the program, you do not need to know which focus area you wish to pursue. This will be decided after your rotational period is complete. A number of factors will affect placement decisions.

Year 1 (Months 7-12): Primary Focus Area

Once you have a focus area, you will become more deeply involved in the activities of your new department. You will take ownership of projects of increasing size and scope. You may be asked to supervise others informally (e.g., small teams and special projects), and will participate in several leadership training courses to prepare you to formally manage others within the organization.

Year 2: Supervision and Project Work

During your second year, you will continue to work on projects of increasing size and importance within your area. In addition, your formal managerial duties will begin when you are promoted to assistant manager. Before moving into this role, you must complete all required training and meet performance standards.

Basic Qualifications:

- Must be a graduating college senior or have a completed Bachelor's degree
- Must have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5
- Must be able to work full time, 40 hours per week
- Should be eager to learn and open to new experiences

Compensation:

- This is a salaried, full time position with benefits
- Relocation assistance provided

Reflection Questions

Please answer the following questions regarding what you have just read about the company and the Management Trainee Program.

1. What do you think would help someone to be successful in the Management Trainee Program?

2. Describe what rotations are and what happens after rotations end.

3. According to the program description, what happens upon completion of the program after the second year?

4. What is one of the benefits to working at the organization that you find most appealing?

Appendix B

Quiz Used to Reinforce Manipulations

Quiz following Program Description

1. Which of the following was NOT listed as a benefit to working at the organization?
    a. Collaboration
    b. An Onsite Fitness Center

2. What is the length of the Management Trainee Program?
    a. 2 Years
    b. However long it takes individuals to complete their requirements

3. How do applicants progress through the program?
    a. In groups
    b. This was not shared in the program description

4. How many people are hired each year into the Management Trainee Program?
    a. 10-20
    b. This was not shared in the program description

5. Applicants must choose a focus area (i.e., Finance, Sales, Marketing, Information Systems, Supply Chain, or HR) in which they wish to work before the program begins.
    a. True
    b. False

6. How are focus areas chosen?
    a. Collaboratively based on employee preferences, skills, and performance, as well as organizational needs.
    b. This was not shared in the program description

7. Are all employees promoted to managerial positions upon completing the program?
    a. No, but 90% are promoted to Manager within 2 years of finishing
    b. This was not shared in the program description

8. The Management Trainee Program is unpaid.
    a. True
    b. False

9. Applicants must have a Bachelor's degree or be a graduating college senior to apply for this program.
    a. True
    b. False

10. Both full and part time opportunities are available.
    a. True

b. False

11. What is the GPA requirement for acceptance into the program?
    a. 2.5
    b. There is no GPA requirement

Quiz recap when questions are not answered on the website:

To Recap:

- A **collaborative culture** is a benefit to working at the organization.
- The Management Trainee Program lasts **2 years**.
- Applicants proceed through the program **in groups.**
- **10-20** people are hired into the program each year.
- Applicants do **NOT** need to choose a focus area prior to beginning. **Both leadership and associates** will **collaboratively** choose this area based on employee preferences, skills, performance, and organizational needs.
- **90%** of program grads are **promoted to manager** within 2 years of finishing.
- The management trainee program is a **paid** position.
- Applicants must have **already graduated** with their bachelors OR **be about to graduate**.
- Only **full time** opportunities are available.
- Applicants must have a **2.5 cumulative GPA** to be accepted.

Quiz recap when questions are not answered on the website:

To Recap:

- A **collaborative culture** is a benefit to working at the organization.
- The Management Trainee Program lasts **2 years**.
- The program description **did not mention whether associates progress through the program in groups.**
- The program description **did not mention the exact number of people that are hired each year.**
- Applicants do **NOT** need to choose a focus area prior to beginning.
- The program description **did not mention how focus areas are chosen.**

- The program description **did not mention whether all employees are promoted to managerial positions at the end of the program.**
- The management trainee program is a **paid** position.
- Applicants must have **already graduated** with their bachelors OR **be about to graduate**.
- Only **full time** opportunities are available.
- Applicants must have a **2.5 cumulative GPA** to be accepted.

Appendix C

Résumés of the Applicant

Résumé for Qualified Applicant

Michael Fairmont

CAREER OBJECTIVE

To obtain a full-time career in management; capitalizing on my business degree and further developing the business acumen I will need to find smart solutions to business and personnel issues. Will bring an attention to detail, a "can-do" attitude, and the ability to learn quickly to a management trainee position.

EDUCATION

University of Kansas | Lawrence, Kansas | 2010-2014

- Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration
- Minor: Accounting
- Cumulative GPA: 3.9

WORK EXPERIENCE

Audit & Finance Intern | Dairy Farmers of America | Kansas City, Kansas | May 2014 – September 2014

- Prepared presentations for the finance and accounting departments.
- Conducted financial and operational audits, and filled out audit work papers documenting steps in the audit process.
- Performed transaction and compliance testing to evaluate the existence, efficiency and effectiveness of internal control procedures.
- Created a technical report and delivered an oral presentation to management at the conclusion of the audit, discussing deficiencies, recommending corrective action, and suggesting improvements to internal controls.

Guest Service Team Leader | Target | Lawrence, KS | September 2010 – April 2014

- Troubleshot and resolved guests' issues and concerns so they left the store satisfied with their experience at Guest Services.
- Handled difficult interactions with angry guests, maintaining a level head and a high degree of professionalism.
- Managed team schedules to ensure the necessary number of team members were covering each shift to be able to meet guests needs quickly
- Used a cash register to accurately scan and bag items, as well as calculate and collect payment.
- Started as a Guest Service Team Member and was promoted to Guest Service Team Leader in January 2014.

Organizational Development Internship | Garmin | Olathe, KS | June 2013 – August 2013

- Worked with managers to chart out training programs.
- Created training policies and evaluated training effectiveness after program completion.
- Conducted training sessions relating to leveraging innovation at work.
- Worked on the development of a new online safety training course to be implemented in 2015.

SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Computer – MS Office Suite, MS Access, MS Outlook, QuickBooks, Oracle

ORGANIZATIONS

- Alpha Kappa Psi Business Fraternity
- Delta Sigma Pi Business Fraternity
- Finance Club

PUBLICATIONS

- *Self-Insight and Training Effectiveness: Barriers and Facilitators of Learning Under Time Pressure. Presented at the 56th Midwest Academy of Management Conference; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; October 2013*

Résumé for Marginally Qualified Applicant

Michael Fairmont

CAREER OBJECTIVE

To obtain a full-time career in management; capitalizing on my business degree and further developing my skills relating to business-relevant issues.

EDUCATION

University of Kansas | Lawrence, Kansas | 2010-2014

- Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration
- Cumulative GPA: 2.7

WORK EXPERIENCE

Audit & Finance Intern | Dairy Farmers of America **| Kansas City, Kansas | May 2014 – September 2014**

- Drafted presentations for the finance and accounting departments
- Assisted with audits by filling out audit work papers documenting steps in the audit process.
- Helped perform transaction and compliance testing to evaluate the existence, efficiency and effectiveness of internal control procedures.
- Worked together with other interns to create a technical report and deliver a presentation with recommendations to management at the conclusion of the audit.

Guest Service Team Member | Target | Lawrence, KS | September 2010 – April 2014

- Troubleshot and resolved guests' issues and concerns so they left the store satisfied with their experience at Guest Services. Referred more serious complaints to Team Leader.
- Handled difficult interactions with angry guests, maintaining a level head and a high degree of professionalism.
- Used a cash register to accurately scan and bag items, as well as calculate and collect payment.

Waiter | Mario's Pizzeria | Olathe, KS | March 2009 – August 2010

- Presented menus to patrons and answered questions about menu items, making recommendations upon request.
- Served food and beverages to patrons.
- Checked that customers were enjoying their meals and resolved any issues they had with their orders.
- Prepared checks that itemized and total meal costs and sales taxes.

SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Computer – MS Office Suite, MS Access and MS Outlook

ORGANIZATIONS

Delta Sigma Pi Business Fraternity

Appendix D

Interview Scripts for the Videotaped Employment Interview

Qualified Interview Script

Interviewer: Hi. My name's Brian, and I'll be interviewing you today. You must be Michael.

Applicant: I am. It's nice to meet you.

Interviewer: Likewise - I'm glad you could meet with me. I've already looked over your résumé, so let's go ahead and jump right in. We use what are called behavioral interviews here. It will consist of four questions. When you answer, first I'd like you to describe the situation and set the scene. Then you should tell me about your specific actions to address the situation, and the resulting outcome. Your examples can come from work or relevant school experiences, given this is an entry-level position. Does that make sense?

Applicant: Yes it does.

Interviewer: Just to let you know, I will be taking notes during the interview to help me remember your examples later. Do you need anything before we get started? Can I get you some water?

Applicant: No, I'm fine. Thanks.

Interviewer: Ok then. First, I'd like you to tell me about a time you voluntarily took the lead on a project or initiative. This could be either a formal or informal leadership role.

Applicant: Sure…

I think a good example would be during my Finance internship. The organization introduced innovation training, which everyone was required to take. However, there was some push back from the people in my department because they felt the training didn't seem to apply to us. Plus, the training focused on why innovation was important, but didn't really show *how* to be innovative, particularly in Finance. I brought up the issue with my manager, and we talked about how specific training tied to the work we do in Finance might help. I'd taken a class on training and development in college, and proposed an e-learning course focusing on specific strategies we could use in Finance. I volunteered to take the lead on developing the training, and my Manager assigned two others to work on it with me.

We got started right away by first discussing what the overall goal of the training course was. I wanted to make sure we were all on the same page and see if my teammates had any other particular ideas that I may not have thought of. Once we were agreed on the overall vision,
we brainstormed potential problems that could arise so that we could address them proactively. Since I was already halfway through my summer internship, I didn't have a lot of time but we had a lot of work to do. I delegated work according to our individual strengths and interests to speed
up our progress. Whenever any of us got stuck, we worked together to figure out a solution. In the end, we came up with some really amazing content. We even had time to enlist the help of one of the company's graphic designers to create some visual elements.

Interviewer: Great! So what was the ultimate outcome of the project? Did you finish the training?

Applicant: Yes, the training was set to go "live" in our department shortly after I left.

Interviewer: So would you say the project was a success then?

Applicant: I'd say so. We accomplished our goals, and the process helped me realize my strengths as a leader as well as what I need to work on. Since this was my first experience leading a team in a professional setting, I asked for feedback throughout the process, which helped me focus on the things I needed to improve.

Interviewer: Good – that sounds like it was a great learning experience for you. Next, I'd like you to describe a time when you dealt with a problem—at work, or in a class, for instance—and describe for me how you designed or worked toward a solution.

Applicant: Ok…. Um, my freshman year of college I joined Delta Sigma Pi, a national business fraternity, and during my junior year I served on the executive board of the fraternity. The exec board had been aware that the number of new pledges has been dropping year after year for quite some time. I put together an initiative to look into the issue and increase membership numbers. We started by surveying current business students, both those who were members of our fraternity and those who weren't. We quickly realized that people were choosing to join other business organizations on campus because if the intensity of our pledging process. With that information in hand, we began brainstorming ideas on how we could change others' perceptions of DSP. From one of my business classes, I learned one way to make brainstorming more effective is to have people write down ideas individually before getting together as a group, so we asked everyone to bring at least three ideas to get as many ideas on the table as possible.

The group agreed on three ideas. First, we were completely up-front about the pledging process to eliminate any misinformation floating around campus. Second, we increased advertising by hosting more campus events, holding more informational sessions, passing out fliers at the beginning of each semester, and asking our members to talk-up the organization more to non-members. Finally, we began really selling the advantages of membership, such as networking opportunities with DSP alumni. The next recruitment season, we actually saw an increased number of pledges over the previous year. To make sure this increase in pledges wasn't just a coincidence, we conducted focus groups with new members.

Interviewer: So walk me through what you discussed in those focus groups.

Applicant: We mainly focused on as why they chose to join DSP and any hesitations they may have had. However, we also asked for any feedback they had on the pledging process, because even though I think the solutions we came up with that first semester were a good start, there is always room to improve.

Interviewer: Great! Being open to change and potential improvement are definitely important to success. Just give me a minute here while I finish writing...

Ok, next question. Tell me about a time you had to adjust your work priorities to meet changing demands.

Applicant: One of my main projects as an Audit Intern was to create a technical report and presentation with recommendations for improvement following our audit. I like to organize when working on long term project like this one, so I created to-do lists for myself everyday to help me stay focused and make good progress. One day near the end of my internship, I had scheduled time to read through my notes and start outlining what the technical report would cover on our most recent audit. However, that morning my manager was told that a presentation she was scheduled to give the following week was pushed up, meaning we had one and a half days to get the presentation put together rather than an entire week. My manager had her hands full with another project, so when she asked if someone from our team could help her, I volunteered to put the presentation together for her. I still had a few weeks to work on the technical report and presentation, so I put that aside. Ultimately, I wanted to take on the task because I knew it would give me a chance to work on something that otherwise I wouldn't have had a chance to do. Plus, I was happy to help my manager out, and it gave me a chance to show her what I was capable of.

Interviewer: So were you able to get the presentation done?

Applicant: Yes, I got the entire thing done for her that day. Then she had the next morning to make some tweaks to it before she had to present it. She said the presentation went really well so I was happy.

Interviewer: I'm sure your boss appreciated the extra help you gave her. A little help can go a long way when you have unexpected issues that come up like that.

Next, can you tell me about a time when you gained commitment to an idea you had?

Applicant: Hmm. One thing that comes to mind was during my time in Guest Services. I liked the work, but it could be a lot more difficult to handle after the holiday season. The department is crowded with people returning gifts, and people are exhausted and irritated from waiting in long lines. I was dreading the upcoming after holiday shifts, and I approached my manager with some ideas I had about handling this year's rush. First, I thought we could set up tables with snacks and beverages for Guests. Also, I thought it would be helpful to set up specific lines in Guest Services to cater to different needs, such as returns, exchanges, pick-ups, and customer questions.

My manager was skeptical at first, but I made my case. For one thing, the stress of the season can be so high that a lot of our workers end up quitting just after the Holidays. Plus, we always got the highest number of negative comment cards from Guests right after the holidays, showing we were falling short of our goal to give Guests the best experience possible. Supplying food and drinks was a relatively low cost way to help Guests relax, and in turn, have more pleasant interactions with employees. Multiple lines could allow individuals with brief questions to quickly be on their way without having to wait behind people returning items. My manager said he would consider it. Before my next shift, I looked online to see if any stores had tried similar strategies after the holidays, and I found a couple of examples of stores trying similar things with positive results. To minimize the risk of trying something new, I suggested trying the method for a couple of hours, and if it wasn't working, then we could easily revert back to normal where each team member handles all types of requests.

Interviewer: So did your idea work?

Applicant: My manager agreed to try it, and we ended up using the specialized lines all day, although after a couple of hours it became clear that we needed to devote more people to returns and even fewer to answering questions and handling customer pick-ups. After making those changes and adjusting as the

day went on, the lines worked really well to help people get in and out quicker. My team members and Guests generally seemed to be happier, and we were delivering better service because we were not interacting with as many irritated customers. Plus, we cut the number of negative comment cards in half from the previous year.

Interviewer: Excellent. Well, those are all the questions I have for you today. It's been a pleasure talking to you. We will be conducting more interviews over the next two weeks, after which you can expect to hear from us regarding whether we will be offering you a position in the Management Trainee Program.

Is there anything you'd like to go over before we bring this to an end?

Version without questions:

Applicant: No, I don't think so. Thank you for meeting with me! I look forward to hearing from you!

Interviewer: It was wonderful meeting you. Let me see you out.

Version with questions:

Applicant: I actually have a few questions about the program if we have enough time to go over them.

Interviewer: Sure.

Applicant: After the rotational period is over, do we get to choose the area in which we would prefer to work?

Interviewer: You'll have a chance to voice your preference, but the final decision will be more of a collaboration between you and leadership. We definitely want you to be able to work in the area you are passionate about, but at the same time we also have to consider your skills, background, performance during your rotations, and the needs of the organization.

Applicant: Ok, that makes sense. Are employees ever not promoted to manager at the end of the program, and if so, why?

Interviewer: Being immediately promoted to Manager at the end of the program is not guaranteed. However, 90% of program graduates are promoted within 2 years of completion. The most common reasons people don't become managers are poor performance, not fitting with the organization, and sometimes graduates decide management is not for them and decide to change their career path.

Applicant: How many people are accepted into the program, and will I work closely alongside other trainees?

Interviewer: We do this program every year, and usually end up accepting about 10-20 people at a time. You will definitely work closely with other trainees, because everyone proceeds as a group and will complete training courses together. You will also be split into smaller groups for rotations where you will work on projects with your program members.

Applicant: Ok, that was my last question. Thanks for answering those for me, and thank you again for meeting with me! I look forward to hearing from you!

Interviewer: It was great meeting you. Let me see you out.

Marginally Qualified Interview

Interviewer: Hi. My name's Brian, and I'll be interviewing you today. You must be Michael.

Applicant: I am. It's nice to meet you.

Interviewer: Likewise - I'm glad you could meet with me. I've already looked over your résumé, so let's go ahead and jump right in. We use what are called behavioral interviews here. It will consist of four questions. When you answer, first I'd like you to describe the situation and set the scene. Then you should tell me about your specific actions to address the situation, and the resulting outcome. Your examples can come from work or relevant school experiences, given this is an entry-level position. Does that make sense?

Applicant: Yes it does.

Interviewer: Just to let you know, I will be taking notes during the interview to help me remember your examples later. Do you need anything before we get started? Can I get you some water?

Applicant: No, I'm fine. Thanks.

Interviewer: Ok then. First, I'd like you to tell me about a time you voluntarily took the lead on a project or initiative. This might be either a formal or informal leadership role.

Applicant: Hmmm… Ok. ……

Sorry I'm just trying to think of what the best example would be….

Ummmm. I think maybe a good example would be during my Finance internship. The organization introduced innovation training, which everyone was required to take. However, people in my department were complaining because they didn't think the training really applied to us. My manager thought training, such as an e-learning course specifically for Finance might help. She asked for a volunteer to create the training, and my coworker convinced me this would look good on my résumé so I decided to work on it with him, and two others were assigned to our team. Plus, I needed a break from what I was working on at the time, even if I wasn't completely sold on the new project.

Thinking of strategies to increase innovation was more difficult than I thought it would be since everything I knew about training was from my classes and not actual work experience. Plus, I didn't have a lot of time to research innovation due to the tight deadline. My teammates all had different ideas about what the training should look like and couldn't agree on anything. I wasn't sold on any of the ideas brought forward, but with the deadline being so short I just made the call and we moved forward with my co-leader's idea. When we showed our manager the first draft, it wasn't exactly what she had in mind. However, I did what I could with the resources, time constraints, and ideas that were given to me.

Interviewer: Did you ever approach your manager for more guidance since this was an area you weren't as familiar with?

Applicant: No. I definitely had quite a few questions, but I decided not to bother my manager with them because I didn't want her to think I couldn't handle it.

Interviewer: So what was the ultimate outcome of the project? Did you finish the training?

Applicant: Almost. We finished the content, but didn't get to the final step, putting the content together with graphics, videos, and other elements before my internship ended.

Interviewer: So would you say the project was a success then?

Applicant: I'd say so. It was at least headed in the right direction, and we laid the groundwork for the training by getting all the content done. The content may have been stronger if my teammates agreed on the overall vision of the training.

Interviewer: Well hopefully you learned something from that experience for the next time you are in a similar situation. Next, I'd like you to describe a time when you dealt with a problem—at work, or in a class, for instance—and suggested or designed a solution.

Applicant: Ok…

……

Umm, is it ok if I talk about a problem we had in the business fraternity I was in?

Interviewer: That's fine.

Applicant: Ok. Uhhh… So. My freshman year of college I joined Delta Sigma Pi, a national business fraternity. Our organization was aware that our pledge numbers had been dropping year after year for quite some time. So, some other members and I joined a task force to look into the issue and increase membership numbers. First, we discussed potential causes. I had personally heard more than once that people decided not to join because of the intensity of our pledging process. That seemed to be in line with what other members of the task force heard as well. With that information in hand, we began brainstorming ideas of how we could change others' perceptions of DSP. The most practical idea to come out of our brainstorming session was to get serious about advertising around campus. We also tried to really sell the advantages of membership that others might not know about. The next recruitment season, we saw a small increase in the number of interested individuals and new pledges, so our strategy appeared to have worked.

Interviewer: So how do you know that it was your strategy that increased pledging? Couldn't it have just been a coincidence?

Applicant: Hmm… I didn't think of that. I guess it could have been a coincidence, but that doesn't seem likely since our pledging numbers had been getting smaller year after year before we made the change. I

guess we should have asked new pledges the reason for joining to see if any of them mentioned the advantages of membership we started spreading around. Then we would have known for sure.

Interviewer: Yea – that would have probably been a good first step. But I bet it felt pretty good to increase membership either way.

Applicant: Definitely!

Interviewer: Alright, now why don't you tell me about a time you had to adjust your work priorities to meet changing demands.

Applicant: One of my main projects as an Audit Intern was to create a technical report and presentation with ideas of how to improve following our audit. One day near the end of my internship, I had scheduled time to work on the technical report. I had been putting it off for a while because it seemed like such a huge task and I didn't know where to start. However, that morning my manager was told that a presentation she was scheduled to give the following week was pushed up, meaning we had one and a half days to get the presentation together rather than a week. My manager had her hands full with another project, so she asked if I could help put the presentation together for her. I figured this would be a nice distraction from the technical report, so I agreed to work on the presentation instead.

Interviewer: So were you able to get the presentation done?

Applicant: I did some research and put together a presentation outline for her. All that was left for her to do was to fill in the details since she was more familiar with the information that needed to be shared than I was.

Interviewer: I'm sure your boss appreciated the extra help you gave her. A little help can go a long way when you have unexpected issues come up like that.

Next, can you tell me about a time when you gained commitment to an idea you had?

Applicant: Hmm.

Let me just think about this a minute.

Ok, one thing that comes to mind was during my time in Guest Services. I liked the work, but it could be a lot more difficult to handle after the holiday season. The department is crowded with people returning gifts, and people are exhausted and irritated from waiting in long lines. A month before Christmas, my manager challenged the team to come up with some ideas for handling this year's rush. I suggested setting up tables with snacks and beverages for Guests. It wouldn't cost a whole lot and I know when I am tired and hungry I get cranky – which just makes a bad situation worse. My manager was skeptical at first. However, considering the high number of negative comment cards we get after the holidays, I managed to convince him that it couldn't hurt to try.

Interviewer: So did your idea work?

Applicant: We ended up putting the food right in front of Guest Services. I don't think the placement was the best because the food table area got really crowded, making it difficult to get to Guest

Services. But we learned that if we were going to try the same thing again in the future we needed to think more about the placement. I think people still appreciated the cookies even if it did congest the area in front of Guest Services a bit.

Interviewer: Excellent. Well, those are all the questions I have for you today. It's been a pleasure talking to you. We will be conducting more interviews over the next two weeks, after which you can expect to hear from us regarding whether we will be offering you a position in the Management Trainee Program.

Is there anything you'd like to go over before we bring this to an end?

Version without questions:

Applicant: No, I don't think so. Thank you for meeting with me! I look forward to hearing from you!

Interviewer: It was wonderful meeting you. Let me see you out.

Version with questions:

Applicant: I actually have a few questions about the program if we have enough time to go over them.

Interviewer: Sure.

Applicant: After the rotational period is over, do we get to choose the area in which we would prefer to work?

Interviewer: You'll have a chance to voice your preference, but the final decision will be more of a collaboration between you and leadership. We definitely want you to be able to work in the area you are passionate about, but at the same time we also have to consider your skills, background, performance during your rotations, and the needs of the organization.

Applicant: Ok, that makes sense. Are employees ever not promoted to manager at the end of the program, and if so, why?

Interviewer: Being immediately promoted to Manager at the end of the program is not guaranteed. However, 90% of program graduates are promoted within 2 years of completion. The most common reasons people don't become managers are poor performance, not fitting with the organization, and sometimes graduates decide management is not for them and decide to change their career path.

Applicant: How many people are accepted into the program, and will I work closely alongside other trainees?

Interviewer: We do this program every year, and usually end up accepting about 10-20 people at a time. You will definitely work closely with other trainees, because everyone proceeds as a group and will complete training courses together. You will also be split into smaller groups for rotations where you will work on projects with your program members.

Applicant: Ok, that was my last question. Thanks for answering those for me, and thank you again for meeting with me! I look forward to hearing from you!

Interviewer: It was great meeting you. Let me see you out.

Appendix E

Study Scales

Rating Scale

Unless otherwise indicated, the following Likert response scale will be used for all scales:

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly

The Attributions the Interviewer Makes About the Applicant

Person-Organization Fit

1. The applicant's values seem to be similar to what is valued at this organization.
2. Based on what the applicant appears to believe is important, I believe he or she would thrive at this organization
3. The applicant seems to be a good match for this organization.
4. I believe the applicant would fit in well at this organization.
5. This applicant seems to be compatible with the organization.
6. If hired, the applicant will likely struggle to feel like they belong at this organization.
7. The applicant's qualities are just what this organization needs.

Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Openness (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991)

The applicant seems to be someone who:

1. Is talkative
2. Tends to find fault with others
3. Does a thorough job
4. Is depressed, blue
5. Is original, comes up with new ideas
6. Is reserved
7. Is helpful and unselfish with others
8. Can be somewhat careless

9. Is relaxed, handles stress well.
10. Is curious about many different things
11. Is full of energy
12. Starts quarrels with others
13. Is a reliable worker
14. Can be tense
15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker
16. Generates a lot of enthusiasm
17. Has a forgiving nature
18. Tends to be disorganized
19. Worries a lot
20. Has an active imagination
21. Tends to be quiet
22. Is generally trusting
23. Tends to be lazy
24. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset
25. Is inventive
26. Has an assertive personality
27. Can be cold and aloof
28. Perseveres until the task is finished
29. Can be moody
30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences
31. Is sometimes shy, inhibited
32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone
33. Does things efficiently
34. Remains calm in tense situations
35. Prefers work that is routine
36. Is outgoing, sociable
37. Is sometimes rude to others
38. Makes plans and follows through with them

39. Gets nervous easily
40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas
41. Has few artistic interests
42. Likes to cooperate with others
43. Is easily distracted
44. Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature.

Preparation

1. The applicant seems to have prepared for the interview.
2. It is evident that the applicant had researched the organization prior to the interview.
3. There weren't any parts of the interview that appeared to catch the applicant off guard.
4. The applicant should have spent more time getting ready for the interview. (RC)
5. The applicant's lack of preparation for the interview was apparent. (RC)
6. This applicant was prepared.

Motivation

1. The applicant appears to be an ambitious individual.
2. The applicant seemed motivated to impress the interviewer.
3. The applicant showed a desire to perform well during the interview.
4. The applicant did not seem to know what he/she wanted out of his/her next role.
5. Receiving a job offer seemed to be this applicant's top priority.
6. The applicant seemed determined to receive a job offer.

Interest in the job

1. The applicant seemed eager to learn about the job.
2. The applicant appeared to be genuinely interested in what the interviewer had to say.
3. This applicant seemed interested in the position.
4. The applicant seemed curious about the job.

Hiring Rating Measurements

Hiring Ratings (Adapted from Cunningham and Macan, 2007)

Based on all of the information you have received (i.e., the job description, résumé, interview performance), please complete the following ratings about the candidate.

1. I believe the candidate has the skills necessary to be successful in this job.
2. Based on all of the information that I have about this applicant, I would hire him/her.
3. Overall, I would recommend that this applicant NOT be hired for the position.
4. Hiring the applicant is a good decision.
5. I would evaluate this applicant's qualifications for this position favorably.

Hiring Recommendation Item:

1. Would you recommend this person be hired?
    a. Yes, I would definitely hire this person. This person is an extremely good candidate.
    b. Yes, I would hire this person with a few reservations.
    c. I'm not sure if I would hire this person.
    d. I don't think I would hire this person, although I might consider taking a look at some additional information about them.
    e. No, I would definitely not hire this person. This person is not a good candidate.

Hiring Decision Item:

1. Based on everything you know about this job and the candidate, as the hiring manager, would you hire this candidate for the position?
    a. YES, I would hire this applicant for the position.
    b. NO, I would not hire this applicant for the position.

Hiring Open Ended Items:

1. What factors contributed to your decision to hire or not hire this applicant?
2. What, if anything, would prevent you from hiring this individual?

Other Measurements for Variables of Interest

Expectation for Questions (used to categorize participants)

1. Do you expect applicant to ask the interviewer questions during the job interview?
    a. Yes, applicants who are serious about working for the organization should ask questions during the interview.
    b. I am open to hearing any questions the applicant might have, but I do not go into an interview expecting the applicant to ask or not ask questions.
    c. No, I do not believe that it is the applicant's place to ask questions during the job interview.

Expectations for Interview Preparations

Indicate the extent to which you expect an applicant, in preparing for a job interview, to do the following prior to the interview:

1 – Never

2 – Rarely

3 – Occasionally/Sometimes

4 – Frequently

5 – Always

1. Research the company
2. Research the job
3. Brainstorm questions the interviewer is likely to ask
4. Reflect on past work experiences that might be relevant to the new job
5. Practice answering interview questions
6. Think about the questions the applicant might wish to ask the interviewer
7. Write down questions to ask the interviewer to take along to the interview

Evaluation of the Applicant Interview Preparations

Indicate the extent to which you believe that applicant you watched, in preparing for this job interview, did the following:

1 – Never

2 – Rarely

3 – Occasionally/Sometimes

4 – Frequently

5 – Always

1. Research the company
2. Research the job
3. Brainstorm questions the interviewer is likely to ask
4. Reflect on past work experiences that might be relevant to the new job
5. Practice answering interview questions
6. Think about the questions the applicant might wish to ask the interviewer
7. Write down questions to ask the interviewer to take along to the interview

Manipulation Check

1. Did the applicant ask the interviewer questions at the end of the interview?
    a. Yes
    b. No

Evaluation of Applicant Questions

This scale is only to be completed for just the applicant who asks questions.

1. The questions the applicant asked the interviewer were good ones.
2. The questions asked by the applicant reflected positively on him or her.
3. I had a positive reaction to the questions the applicant asked the interviewer.
4. The applicant should have more wisely chosen the questions that he/she asked. (RC)
5. I do not feel the applicant should have asked the particular questions that he or she did. (RC)
6. The applicant asked questions to which he or she should have known the answers already (RC)

Interviewer's Beliefs about Questions

1. If an applicant asks questions during the interview, when should the applicant ask them?
    a. At the beginning of the interview
    b. At the end of the interview
    c. Throughout the interview as they naturally come up
2. Is it okay for applicant to ask questions during job interviews?
    a. Yes, applicant should ask questions if they have them.
    b. Yes, applicant should ask questions but only if and when the interviewer asks for them.
    c. No, the applicant should not ask the interviewer questions during the job interview?

Experience Conducting Interviews

1. How frequently do you conduct employment interviews?
    a. I never conduct employment interviews (o times year)
    b. I rarely conduct employment interviews (a few times a year)
    c. I sometimes conduct employment interviews (a few times a quarter)
    d. I frequently conduct employment interviews (a few times a month)
    e. Conducting employment interviews is a primary part of my job (a few times a week or more)
2. How would you describe your interviewing skills?
    a. I don't know – I have never conducted an employment interview
    b. I am a novice, and would consider myself at a beginner level
    c. My interviewing skills are average – I may not be the best, but I am competent
    d. I am a strong interviewer, and consider myself quite skilled at it
    e. I am an expert interviewer, and believe I excel at interviewing job applicants
3. Approximately how many employment interviews have you conducted over the past year (enter a number)?
4. Approximately how many employment interviews have you conducted over the course of your career (enter a number)?

5. How long of a career have you had thus far (this is the total of all years spent working, not including lapses in employment. This does not have to be at the same job or organization). Please enter a number in months and years.

Demographics

1. Gender
   - **a.** Male
   - **b.** Female

2. Age (in years)

3. Ethnicity
   - **a.** African American/Black
   - **b.** Asian/Pacific Islander
   - **c.** Caucasian/White
   - **d.** Hispanic/Latino
   - **e.** Native American
   - **f.** Other (Please Specify)

4. Are you a U.S. Citizen?
   - **a.** Yes
   - **b.** No

5. Is English your first language?
   - **a.** Yes
   - **b.** No

6. Are you employed?
   - **a.** Yes
   - **b.** No

7. Do you work full time or part time?
   - **a.** Full Time
   - **b.** Part Time

8. Did you have trouble understanding any of the questions on this survey?
   - **a.** Yes

b. No

9. Please provide a short description of what you think this study was about below (Open Ended).

10. Please provide any other comments you have for the researcher below (Open Ended).