

COMPETENCY-BASED VERSUS TASK-BASED JOB DESCRIPTIONS:  
EFFECTS ON APPLICANT ATTRACTION

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the University  
of Tennessee at Chattanooga in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirement  
of the Degree of Master's of  
Psychology

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Chattanooga, Tennessee

May 2013

## ABSTRACT

In order for organizations to attract applicants, they need to ensure they are using attractive recruitment materials. Previous research has failed to examine the effect of varying types of job description formats on applicants' level of attraction to an organization. This study examined applicants' attraction to organizations based on competency-based and task-based job descriptions. A total of 258 participants were from a Southeastern university, representing three different majors. The job descriptions were individualized based on academic major. Participants read both competency and task-based job descriptions and rated their attraction to each organization. The Big Five and Love of Learning measures were administered, as these constructs could affect attraction to a particular job description. The results of this study suggested no difference in organizational attraction based on competencies or tasks. Love of Learning was not positively related to attraction to the organization with the competency-based description. Openness to experience was positively related to competency-based job descriptions for nursing majors. Implications and future research suggestions are discussed.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Organizations can fail or thrive based on their ability to attract job candidates. As the United States recovers from the 2007-2009 recession, organizations have more vacant positions to fill. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2012), there were 3.8 million job openings at the end of June 2012. Considering the large number of positions that need to be filled, organizations need to ensure effective recruiting techniques to attract the best applicants. One way organizations can attract applicants early in the recruitment phase is to provide an attractive job description. With the changing nature of work, however, the way jobs and job descriptions have been defined and organized have evolved.

Historically, jobs have been designed by managers and reflected in job descriptions as a set of relatively inflexible tasks or activities performed by individuals (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010; Lawler, 1994; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). In the 1940s, the primary focus of job analysis was tasks, with minimal consideration on employee attributes (Landy, Shankster-Cawley, and Moran, 1995). By 1969, however, McCormick, Jeanneret, and Mecham took an approach to job analysis that considered employee attributes; they developed the Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ), a job analysis method that includes worker-oriented elements. The PAQ's inclusion of these elements was a significant shift from the earlier task-oriented approaches to a focus on the worker. Analysis of work has progressed throughout the years and the field continues to develop.

Despite the recent popularity of competencies in organizations, they are not a new concept. The term appeared in the literature as early as 1973, when McClelland proposed testing for competencies, instead of intelligence in schools, colleges, and work organizations. The American Compensation Association (ACA) (1996) noted that competencies are measurable and represented by sets of behavior combined with knowledge, skills, and personal attributes. McClelland argued that traditional aptitude and knowledge tests did not predict on-the-job success. The ACA (1996) noted that since McClelland's 1973 paper, competencies have been applied throughout the business world. A reason for the implementation of competency-based practices may be contributed to the changing nature of the work environment. Sparrow (1998) noted that organizations are adopting more flexible organizational structures, downsizing the workforce, and de-layering their structures. Organizations are attempting to increase their versatility by focusing on the workforces' competencies, which includes their skills, capabilities, adaptability, and creativity (Sparrow, 1998). Schippmann et al. (2000) noted that because organizations are becoming more flat, traditional job analysis procedures for generating task-based job descriptions may not play a central role in the practices of human resource management in the future.

### **The Present Study**

Catanzaro, Moore, and Marshall (2010) noted that gaining an understanding of the factors that affect the attraction phase of the attraction-selection-attrition cycle (ASA) is crucial for organizations who wish to attract the most qualified applicant pool. Applicants are often exposed early in the recruitment process to some form of a job description or advertisement.



Researchers have yet to examine how competency information in job descriptions affects applicants' attraction to organizations.

Attempting to understand how competency-based job descriptions influence applicant attraction could have significant practical value to organizations. Accordingly, the present study examined applicants' attraction to an organization based on the presentation of competency and task-based information in the job descriptions. Personality characteristics were examined to determine if any personal characteristics contributed to job description preference.

The following literature highlights why differences in organizational attraction could be expected based on the type of information in the job descriptions. One possible outcome, as a result of differing job descriptions, is that applicants are less attracted to organizations with competency-based job descriptions because they are more comfortable with traditional, task-based job descriptions (Lawler, 1994). Lawler (1994) proposed an alternate suggestion, noting that the competencies may contribute significantly in attracting new employees and retaining existing ones. He further noted that a competency approach, however, may be beneficial for attracting only certain types of employees; Lawler (1994) noted that applicants who are oriented toward learning new skills, taking on new responsibilities, and assisting in the management of business are likely the types of applicants who would be attracted to an organization that uses competency information. This might suggest that individuals' attitudes toward learning may affect their attraction to an organization, depending on the type of job description used. These research questions are examined in the present study, which examined the attraction to organizations that used either a competency or task-based job description and explored whether openness to experience or love of learning affected organizational attraction.

## **Job Descriptions**

Job descriptions typically support key human resource decisions, including those which link competencies with functions, such as selection, training, career development, pay determination, and promotion (Lawler & Ledford, 1992; Nybø, 2004; Pavur, 2010). Accordingly, most organizations begin their approach to organizing these functions with a job description (Lawler, 1994). Job descriptions generally include a job title, reporting relationships, a summary of responsibilities, the level of decision-making authorized, and hiring requirements information (Stybel, 2010). Job descriptions that are used for recruitment are designed to gain the attention of and attract applicants (Pavur, 2010).

Properly designed job descriptions can be used to ensure that individuals will be motivated and capable of performing certain jobs (Lawler, 1994). Further, job descriptions can be used to determine the grouping of individuals into work units and as a rationalization for the overall structure of the organization (Lawler, 1994). Traditionally, job descriptions took a task-based format, but with the growing importance of strategically aligning human resources functions, competency information is appearing more frequently in job descriptions.

## **Competency Modeling**

### **Competency Defined**

Campion et al. (2011) stated, “Competency models are much easier to use in creating HR systems than traditional job analysis information...” as a reason competency models might be becoming more popular in organizations (p. 251). The development of competency models requires a whole-person assessment, with an emphasis on individuals’ potential (Rodriguez, Patel, Bright, Gregory, & Gowing, 2002). Campion et al. noted that companies such as The

Boeing Company, Microsoft, and the U.S. Department of State are already using competency models for several different processes, including selection, appraisal, promotion, and training.

Despite the growing popularity of competency modeling in organizations, research on competency modeling has not garnered the same attention, as evidenced by the lack of a precise definition of what constitutes a *competency* (Lievens, Sanchez, & de Corte, 2004). Schippmann et al. (2000) found a wide range of definitions for “competency” by surveying similarly trained subject matter experts (SMEs) and reviewing published scientific and business literature. Two examples of SMEs’ definitions given were: “The knowledge, skills, and attributes that differentiate high performers from average performers” and “Observable, behavioral capabilities that are important for performing key responsibilities of a role or job.” (Schippmann et al., 2000, p. 706). Woodruffe (1993) wrote that, “A competency is the set of behavior patterns that the incumbent needs to bring to a position in order to perform its tasks and functions with competence” (p. 29). Halim and Abhyankar (2011) defined a competency as the part of a person’s behavior that can be observed or demonstrated, which contributes to performance of the job. The competency-based approach is also often referred to as a skill-based approach, due to the focus on workers’ skills instead of a position’s tasks (Lawler, 1994).

### **Advantages of the Competency Approach**

There are many benefits associated with using competencies in organizations. Competency models are useful for distinguishing top performers from average performers, making the link to performance more prominent than task-based models (Campion et al, 2011). Campion et al. (2011) noted that competency models are often tied to business objectives and strategies. Aligning strategy and objectives through the use of a competency model streamlines

business process, a seemingly effective and convenient approach. Lievens et al. (2004) noted that competency modeling arrived on the HR radar just in time for a business environment that requires strategic alignment of practices. Competency models are most often presented in a manner that facilitates understanding, lasting impressions, and ease of use (Campion et al., 2011). Edgar and Lockwood (2011) noted that identifying and using core competencies to create products and services results in significant, positive contributions to corporate competitiveness.

The use of a competency-based approach may result in new and more flexible approaches to organizing (Lawler, 1994). Organizations that use the competency models can take advantage of a more flexible workforce by using competencies to recruit, select, and train individuals with the skills required for successful performance. Lawler (1994) noted that organizations that use competency models can directly target the learning of new skills; this flexible approach results in a competitive advantage. With competencies' focus on individuals' skills and potential, it would seem as if competencies would be highly attractive to individuals who seek out opportunities to learn and grown in the organization. Additionally, competency approaches are more likely to emphasize long-term organizational fit as opposed to a shorter-term job match (Schippmann et al., 2000). Turnover is reduced when competencies are used in selection to determine which candidates fit in the best with the organization.

### **Organizational Use of Competencies**

Competencies are often used to match a job with an individual during employee selection (Heinsman, de Hoogh, Koopman, & van Muijen, 2007). Unlike the task-based approach, however, the goal of selecting applicants using competencies is not to match a person to a set of tasks. It is understood that successful demonstration of competencies should lead to successful

job performance. Therefore, competency-based job descriptions state the competencies individuals need for successful performance (Garman, Tyler, & Darnall, 2004).

Halim and Abhyankar (2011) noted that because of the need to identify job candidates who have the required skills, knowledge, and capabilities for an open position, organizations are adopting competency-based job descriptions to determine candidates' fit with the job opening and organization. Individuals who possess certain characteristics, for example good communication, are able to perform a variety of functions associated with those knowledge, skills, and behaviors. This allows for more flexibility across workers and aids in strategically aligning HR processes (Lawler, 1994; Lawler & Ledford, 1992; Soderquist, Papalexandris, Ioannou, & Prastacos, 2010).

Due to the demand for moving away from traditional task-based job structures, competency modeling has seen a sharp increase in popularity among organizations since their introduction (Schippmann et al., 2000). In 1996, the ACA reported that out of 1,844 total participants from organizations, 371 had competency-based applications in practice and 886 were studying or developing competency practices for their organizations (p. 11). Lawler (1994) stated that more competency-based organizations will appear in the future for a number of reasons and noted that it is important to research how individuals respond to competency-based organizations. In 2005, Hewitt Associates surveyed HR executives from 373 public and private U.S. companies and found that 100% of the top twenty companies and 73% of all other companies integrated competencies into their business practices. More recently, Soderquist et al. (2010) noted that the management of HR in an organization needs to continuously evolve to match the new requirements demanded by the environment and competitors. For organizations to meet these demands, they should focus more on individuals' competencies.

## **From Tasks to Competencies**

The traditional approach to HR focuses on the jobs as a function, and careers are thought to evolve within one or two firms in a linear progression (Sullivan, 1999). In the past, most organizations structured their job descriptions around specific duties and activities, a task-based approach (Lawler, 1994). Lawler (1994) noted that the task-based approach can be traced back to the era of scientific management, with Frederick Taylor's notion that jobs could be studied and specified, and the work methods used for jobs could be improved and rationalized.

Task-based descriptions are often criticized for their focus on how the job has been done in the past and their failure to recognize an individual's ability to contribute to the organization in ways that are not currently described (Lawler & Ledford, 1992). Task-based descriptions do not take into account the changing nature of work requirements; it is assumed that selecting individuals who can perform the current set of tasks associated with a position will result in the most effective organization. Cascio (1995) noted that traditional, task-based jobs represent clusters of similar tasks that are assigned to specialist workers. Rodriguez et al. (2002) noted several disadvantages of task-based analysis and information: cost of time and resources, quickness to become outdated, lack of ability to make comparisons across jobs, and they are not easily integrated into other HR practices.

Despite the differences between task-based and competency-based practices, there is a considerable amount of overlap between the two concepts. Many researchers have made note of the concept of an inferential leap (Goffin & Woycheshin, 2006; Lievens et al., 2004; Soderquist et al., 2010). An inferential leap, in this case, refers to the use of task-related job position information to determine the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) and

competencies that are needed for that same position (Goffin & Woycheshin, 2006; Lievens et al., 2004). The “leap” made is the inference of KSAOs and competencies that are required to perform previously identified tasks (Goffin & Woycheshin, 2006). This approach to identifying competency information uses information directly from the tasks.

Because competencies are often derived directly from task information, this suggests that competency job descriptions are fundamentally similar to task-based descriptions. The approach of identifying a position’s requirements and the implications of each approach, however, is different. The differences between the descriptions may result in varying reactions from applicants; attraction to an organization may vary depending on whether a task-based or competency based job description is used. Based on the millennial generations’ propensity to change jobs, it would seem likely that they would be more attracted to an organization with a job description that focuses on skills rather than position-specific tasks (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Further, individuals may find the focus on the individual more attractive than a focus on the job. Therefore, I hypothesized that:

*Hypothesis 1: Individuals are more attracted to an organization that describes jobs in terms of required competencies than required job tasks*

This difference in job description format preference likely results from different personal characteristics of applicants, but there currently is no research on this issue (Lawler, 1994). This study examined two types of individual differences, attitude toward learning and openness to experience and their effects on organizational attraction.

## **Individual Differences**

### **Openness to Experience**

Individuals' personalities affect many of their life decisions, from who they choose as friends to the hobbies they take up. Accordingly, personality affects individuals' behaviors in an organizational context, as well. People are attracted to different careers as a product of their personality (Schneider, 1987). Further, personality constructs have been useful for explaining and predicting attitudes, behaviors, performance, and outcomes in organizations (Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Judge, 2007). Based on this information, it would seem likely that individuals would also have different preferences for job descriptions based on their personality characteristics. The different types of information may attract applicants with different personality traits.

Individuals who are open to experience tend to be curious, creative, nonconforming, and autonomous (Judge & Cable, 1997). Mussel, Winter, Gelleri, and Schuler (2011) noted that openness to experience is highly relevant in business domains such as job advertisements, competence profiles, and definitions of organizational culture; they listed creativity, willingness to learn, thinking out of the box, curiosity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and adaptability as the openness attributes that are most likely to be expressed in job advertisements. Competency-based information is not often included in job descriptions, and thus, may appear to be a new form of displaying information about a position. Individuals who are open to experience are likely to be more attracted to organizations that use competencies in job descriptions. As previously mentioned, flexibility is a key component of competency-based models, and individuals who are more flexible are likely to be attracted to organizations with a more flexible structure (Lawler, 1994; Lawler & Ledford, 1992; Soderquist et al., 2010). Flexibility is expressed through the listing of skills, instead of specific job tasks. Individuals who are not bound by the comfort of traditional, task-based job descriptions and are open to experience are



expected to be more attracted to organizations that use competency-based job description. It was expected that individuals who score higher in openness to experience will be more attracted to organizations that highlight individual traits, competencies, than organizations that use specific inflexible task-based descriptions. Therefore, I hypothesized:

*Hypothesis 2: The difference between individuals' competency-based and task-based organizational attraction ratings is greater for individuals who are more open to experience.*

The literature does not suggest any links between neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, or conscientiousness with attraction to different organizational structures or job description formats. These four traits will not likely affect applicants' attraction to organizations using different formats of the job descriptions. The willingness to learn component of openness to experience is particularly relevant to the present study, and thus, attitude toward learning was investigated further.

### **Love of Learning**

Due to the constantly evolving work environment, organizations have begun to focus on more strategic and dynamic approaches to organizing work (Pang, Chua, & Chu, 2008). This shift is in line with competency-based job descriptions. With organizations beginning to view employees as human capital assets, it is important that employees have the characteristics that match a position's needed competencies. Some individuals, however, may not find the competency approach attractive. Some individuals may be used to jobs being defined in terms of tasks; individuals may prefer knowing the details of the job they will be doing rather than what traits an ideal candidate possesses. Applicants and incumbents who are flexible in the way they

do their work and seek opportunities to learn and grow would have a good fit with organizations that use competency-based practices.

The set of skills an individual starts a job with may not be the same required for high performance 10 years after being hired; for many jobs, especially knowledge-based jobs, employees must be willing to continually learn in order to capitalize on the assets he or she brings to his or her position (Ward, 2007). The American Society of Training and Development (2011) stated that competencies provide a means to discuss various career paths and ways for employees to develop and leverage their strengths.

Lawler (1994) suggested that employees who are oriented toward learning new skills are more likely than those who are not oriented toward learning to be attracted to competencies. Therefore, attitude toward learning could affect the relationship between attraction to organizations and the type of job description information the organizations present. Organizations may be able to take advantage of competency-based descriptions to attract applicants who are likely to be devoted to learning. Attracting these types of employees, however, would be most beneficial to organizations that emphasize a learning culture as well as knowledge-based and service-based workforces.

*Hypothesis 3: The difference between individuals' competency and task-based organizational attraction ratings is greater for individuals with a more positive attitude toward learning.*

### **Attraction**

Applicant attraction is an attitude or general, positive emotion of an individual toward an organization (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001). Braddy, Meade, Michael, and Fleenor (2009) noted that the attraction component of Schneider's (1987) ASA model suggests that job seekers obtain information about an organization, including the organization's culture, from the

sources that are available to decide if they should pursue employment with the organization. The sources by which applicants obtain employment information act as a primary influence on initial attitudes toward the recruiting organizations (Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). General impressions of an organization's recruitment images are strong predictors of applicants' attraction and job choice decisions (Lee, Hwang, Yeh, 2013). In the present study, the only difference in organizational image is the presentation of requirements in either the form of competencies (applicant-focused) or tasks (job-focused). Attraction to an organization, as a result of early impressions, is related to job acceptance decisions (Powell & Goulet, 1996).

It is important to understand how individuals interpret information, and thus affects their attraction to organizations. Signaling theory proposes that applicants interpret the information they have about an organization as signals of organizational characteristics in the absence of complete information (Turban, 2001). The theory does not specify which variables applicants interpret to make their decisions but can explain the influence of many predictors on organizational attraction (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). The job description information in the present study was manipulated so that only the type of requirements differed, and would elicit different interpretations of the organizations advertising the positions.

Schneider, Goldstein, and Smith (1995) noted that the organizational attraction process is related to the fact that people's preferences for particular organizations are based on judgments of the congruence of their personal characteristics and the characteristics of potential work organizations. In other words, because people differ in terms of their values and preferences, the attractiveness of organizations will also differ because of variability in the characteristics of the organizations. In the present study, a point of interest was whether the personal characteristics of openness to experience or love of learning affected attraction to an organization on the basis of

either competency or task-based information in job descriptions. It is unknown, however, whether attraction to the same position, in the same organization would differ depending on whether the job description is presented with competency-based or task-based information. Previous research has not examined the usefulness of competencies to attract applicants.

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

#### **Participants**

Participants were 258 undergraduate students from a midsized, public university in the southern United States. Data collection targeted junior and senior level undergraduates who were nearing graduation and actively searching for employment within one year. Finance ( $n= 111$ , 43%), management ( $n= 82$ , 31.8%), and nursing majors ( $n= 65$ , 25.2%) participated in this study. Of the participants, 50% were male and the average age was 23.37 years ( $SD=5.32$ ). In terms of race/ethnicity, 220 participants reported being Caucasian (85.3%), 22 African American (8.4%), 5 Asian (1.9%), 4 Hispanic (1.6%), and 7 “other” (2.7%).

A total of 132 participants (51.4%) reported having previous work experience in their field of study, while 125 (48.6%) reported no previous experience. A total of 247 participants (95.7%) reported that they would be seeking a job within their field of study upon graduation, and 11 participants (4.3%) reported they would not seek a job within their field upon graduation. A total of 99 participants (38.5%) reported they were currently seeking a job in their field compared to 157 (61.1%) who indicated they were not currently seeking a job, and one participant did not respond to this question (0.4%). A total of 214 participants (82.9%) indicated they would be searching for a job in the next 6 months to one year and 44 (17.1%) indicated they would not be searching for a job in the next 6 months to one year. A total of 37 participants

(14.4%) reported working full-time, 138 (53.7%) part-time, 81 unemployed (31.5%), and one participant did not respond (0.4%).

## **Materials**

All scales are included in Appendix A.

### **Research Conditions**

The descriptions for each field of study represented the same position advertised, but the competency-based description listed the competencies required for the position and the task-based description listed the tasks an applicant is required to perform. Finance majors viewed descriptions for a financial analyst position. Management majors viewed descriptions for a general manager position. Nursing majors viewed job descriptions for a registered nurse position. All other aspects of the descriptions were parallel to each other to ensure the only difference in the descriptions was the type of information included for the position's requirements. In addition to the use of SMEs and pilot data, participants were asked to rate the readability of each job description and their understanding of the information on a seven-point Likert scale, where one indicated difficult to read and understand and seven indicated easy to read and understand, to control for any affects these variable could have had on ratings of attraction.

Competency-based descriptions ( $M = 5.77$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) and task-based descriptions ( $M = 5.79$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) were similar in terms of ease of read,  $t(257) = -.13$ ,  $p = .89$ . Competency-based descriptions ( $M = 5.87$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) and task-based descriptions ( $M = 5.89$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) did not differ significantly in individuals' ability to understand the information presented  $t(256) = -.19$ ,

$p = .85$ . Thus, any differences in organizational attraction ratings cannot be contributed to the readability or the understanding of the information in the descriptions.

### **Attraction**

The attraction measure (Highhouse et al., 2003) consisted of 10 items, with two highly correlated subscales, general attraction and intentions to pursue employment. The attraction measure was included twice in the study, once for attraction to the organization using the competency-based job description and again for the organization using the task-based description. Because the scales are so highly correlated for organizations using competency ( $r = .83, p < .01$ ) and task-based ( $r = .85, p < .01$ ), they were analyzed as one measure of attraction in the present study. The attraction measure used for analysis, thus consisted of 10 items on a 7-point scale. This was a modification from the original 5-point scale, (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). A high score indicated a high level of attraction to an organization. The attraction measure was reliable for the organization with the competency-based description ( $\alpha = .94$ ) and the organization with the task-based description ( $\alpha = .95$ ).

### **Personality**

To assess personality traits, the 50-item Big Five measure was used. A high score on each of the five personality sub-scales indicated a greater association between that personality trait and the individual. The answer responses were presented using a 7-point Likert response format. A high score on each scale indicated a greater association with the personality trait (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). Extraversion ( $\alpha = .91$ ), conscientiousness ( $\alpha = .81$ ),

neuroticism ( $\alpha = .85$ ), agreeableness ( $\alpha = .84$ ), and openness to experience ( $\alpha = .79$ ) were measured.

### **Love of Learning**

Attitude toward learning was measured using the Love of Learning scale, which is a 10-item scale ( $\alpha = .75$ ) from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP). This was presented using a 7-point Likert scale response format (1=*strongly disagree*; 7=*strongly agree*). A high score on the Love of Learning scale indicated a more positive attitude toward learning.

### **Procedure**

Prior to data collection, the present study was approved by the Institutional Review Board. A pilot study was conducted with 33 participants to evaluate participants' feedback on the job descriptions. In the pilot study, the participants completed all portions of the study; they were given a consent form, rated their attraction to the organizations based on the two job descriptions, rated their love of learning, rated their personality, and filled out demographic information. As a result of the pilot study, the length of time participants viewed each job description was shortened, salary information was included, and some job tasks were revised to more accurately represent the field of interest. The remaining procedures were the same for the pilot and actual study.

The competency-based and task-based job descriptions were tailored to an entry-level job one would expect to obtain with a bachelor's degree in each field of study. The job descriptions were developed through an analysis of current online job advertisements, job descriptions, competency libraries, O\*NET profiles, and the pilot study. Five industrial-organizational



psychology specialists and HR representatives were given the job descriptions for each field of study to ensure the competencies and tasks represented the same job, the formats of each type of job description were similar, and the wording was similar. The competency and task-based descriptions both had the same tense of words, number of bullet points (requirements), and similar word counts to control for any extraneous effects on attraction to the organizations.

Students from each of the three major fields targeted for this study were recruited with the assistance of professors from each of the three academic majors. The informed consent form was first administered to each participant. The informed consent form provided contact information for the primary researcher as well as the contact e-mail address of the supervising faculty. Before proceeding to the study, the researcher verbally indicated that participation was voluntary and then briefly explained that participation would require the students to view two different job descriptions for a type of position they could expect upon graduation.

Participants read and studied the first job description (the order of the job descriptions were randomly assigned) for two and a half minutes. After the two and a half minutes were over, participants rated their attraction to the organization using either a competency or task-based description on Highhouse et al.'s (2003) attraction measure. Participants were asked what influenced their ratings to gain additional insight to their preferences. After viewing and rating the first job description, participants were given two and a half minutes to view the second description; after the time was up, they rated their attraction to the second organization's job description. If the first job description seen was competency-based then the second description was task-based and vice versa. Participants then responded to the measures of attitude toward learning, personality traits, and demographic characteristics.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

Correlations and descriptive statistics for all majors are presented in Table 1. Finance majors' correlations and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2. Management majors' correlations and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3. Nursing majors' correlations and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4.

#### **Analysis of Hypothesis 1**

A Paired samples *t*-test analysis were conducted to test the hypothesis that the organization using competency-based job descriptions would be rated as more attractive than the organization that used task-based descriptions. There was not a significant difference in the overall attraction rating between the organization using the competency-based description ( $M = 51.34$ ,  $SD = 11.60$ ) and the organization using the task-based description ( $M = 50.45$ ,  $SD = 12.46$ ),  $t(257) = 1.13$ ,  $p = .26$ . Cohen's effect size value ( $d = .07$ ) suggested low practical significance. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

#### **Analyses of Hypothesis 2**

A bivariate Pearson correlation was conducted to analyze the relationship between the difference score of competency-based minus task-based overall attraction ratings with openness to experience. It was expected that higher openness to experience scores would be positively

related to competency minus task overall attraction difference scores. Openness to experience was not related to greater overall attraction to organizations with competency-based descriptions ( $r = -.01, p = .83$ ). When an analysis which was filtered by major was conducted, however, it was found that openness to experience was significantly, positively related to the competency-task difference overall attraction score ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ) for nursing majors. Further openness was significantly, positively related to the competency base scores for general attraction ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ) and intentions to pursue employment for nursing majors ( $r = .27, p = .03$ ), with openness' relationship to general attraction achieving a moderate effect size. The opposite effect was found for the relationship between openness to experience and competency-task overall attraction difference scores ( $r = -.25, p = .03$ ) and for the base scale for intentions to pursue employment based on the competency description for management majors ( $r = -.32, p < .01$ ), which demonstrated a moderate effect size for the relationship between openness and intentions to pursue. Based on analysis of the individual majors' responses, partial support was found for Hypothesis 2.

### **Analyses of Hypothesis 3**

A bivariate Pearson correlation was conducted to analyze the relationship between the competency-task overall attraction difference scores with Love of Learning scores. It was expected that individuals who reported a higher Love of Learning score would be more attracted to organizations with competency-based descriptions than organizations with task-based descriptions. When all majors were included in the analysis, a significant relationship between the competency-task overall attraction difference score and Love of Learning score was not found ( $r = -.07, p = .27$ ). When cases were filtered by major, it was found that a higher Love of

Learning score was significantly negatively related to the competency-task overall attraction difference score ( $r = -.23, p = .04$ ) for management majors, a relatively small effect size. Thus, no support was found for Hypothesis 3.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Matrix for All Majors

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Competency Overall Attraction	51.34	11.60	--										
2. Task Overall Attraction	50.45	12.46	.45 **	--									
3. Competency General Attraction	25.51	6.39	.96 **	.41 **	--								
4. Task General Attraction	25.06	6.82	.45 **	.97 **	.45 **	--							
5. Competency Intentions	25.83	5.73	.95 **	.44 **	.83 **	.40 **	--						
6. Task Intentions	25.38	6.14	.41 **	.96 **	.34 **	.85 **	.45 **	--					
7. Overall Attraction Difference Score	.45	6.34	.48 **	-.58 **	.48 **	-.54 **	.43 **	-.57 **	--				
8. General Attraction Difference Score	.45	6.96	.45 **	-.57 **	.48 **	-.57 **	.37 **	-.52 **	.97 **	--			
9. Intentions Difference Score	.45	6.21	.47 **	-.54 **	.43 **	-.47 **	.47 **	-.57 **	.96 **	.86 **	--		
10. Love of Learning	52.92	7.83	-.03	.04	-.05	.04	-.02	.04	-.07	-.08	-.05	--	
11. Openness to Experience	51.20	7.62	.05	.06	.05	.05	.04	.07	-.01	.00	-.03	.42 **	--

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics Pearson Correlation Matrix for Finance Majors

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Competency Overall Attraction	50.05	13.32	--										
2. Task Overall Attraction	49.55	14.60	.49 **	--									
3. Competency General Attraction	24.61	7.45	.97 **	.45 **	--								
4. Task General Attraction	24.23	8.14	.47 **	.98 **	.46 **	--							
5. Competency Intentions	25.43	6.41	.95 **	.50 **	.84 **	.44 **	--						
6. Task Intentions	25.32	6.89	.48 **	.97 **	.41 **	.88 **	.52 **	--					
7. Overall Attraction Difference Score	.25	7.10	.44 **	-.57 **	.45 **	-.56 **	.39 **	-.55 **	--				
8. General Attraction Difference Score	.39	8.15	.42 **	-.57 **	.46 **	-.58 **	.33 **	-.51 **	.97 **	--			
9. Intentions Difference Score	.11	6.56	.43 **	-.53 **	.40 **	-.50 **	.44 **	-.55 **	.96 **	.86 **	--		
10. Love of Learning	52.26	8.60	-.05	-.01	-.07	-.01	-.03	-.02	-.04	-.06	-.01	--	
11. Openness to Experience	51.11	7.65	.05	.05	.04	.05	.05	.06	-.01	-.01	-.02	.48 **	--

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

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Matrix for Management Majors

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Competency Overall Attraction	51.61	10.49	--										
2. Task Overall Attraction	49.96	11.17	.51 **	--									
3. Competency General Attraction	25.73	5.75	.96 **	.47 **	--								
4. Task General Attraction	25.07	6.02	.54 **	.95 **	.55 **	--							
5. Competency Intentions	25.88	5.25	.95 **	.51 **	.82 **	.49 **	--						
6. Task Intentions	24.89	5.73	.43 **	.95 **	.34 **	.81 **	.48 **	--					
7. Overall Attraction Difference Score	.83	5.36	.48 **	-.54 **	.45 **	-.46 **	.40 **	-.57 **	--				
8. General Attraction Difference Score	.66	5.60	.40 **	-.54 **	.44 **	-.51 **	.32 **	-.52 **	.95 **	--			
9. Intentions Difference Score	.99	5.63	.45 **	-.49 **	.42 **	-.37 **	.45 **	-.57 **	.95 **	.82 **	--		
10. Love of Learning	51.74	6.31	-.17	.06	-.18	.04	-.14	.07	-.23 *	-.24 *	-.20	--	
11. Openness to Experience	51.54	7.71	-.16	.09	-.10	.05	-.21	.13	-.25 *	-.16	-.32 **	.36 **	--

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

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Matrix for Nursing Majors

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Competency Overall Attraction	53.22	9.48	--										
2. Task Overall Attraction	52.58	9.66	.16	--									
3. Competency General Attraction	26.77	4.87	.95 **	.12	--								
4. Task General Attraction	26.48	4.88	.13	.95 **	.16	--							
5. Competency Intentions	26.45	5.06	.96 **	.18	.82 **	.10	--						
6. Task Intentions	26.11	5.21	.17	.96 **	.09	.83 **	.24	--					
7. Overall Attraction Difference Score	.32	6.20	.64 **	-.66 **	.63 **	-.64 **	.59 **	-.62 **	--				
8. General Attraction Difference Score	.29	6.34	.63 **	-.64 **	.65 **	-.65 **	.55 **	-.57 **	.98 **	--			
9. Intentions Difference Score	.34	6.34	.62 **	-.65 **	.59 **	-.60 **	.60 **	-.63 **	.98 **	.91 **	--		
10. Love of Learning	55.54	7.69	.09	.07	.07	.08	.09	.06	.01	-.01	.03	--	
11. Openness to Experience	50.94	7.55	.37 **	.05	.34 **	.06	.37 **	.03	.25 *	.21	.27 **	.42 **	--

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



### Additional Analyses

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which variables predict the overall attraction score. Age, sex, and grade point average (GPA) were entered in the first step as control variables, and openness to experience and Love of Learning were entered second. The three demographic measures accounted for a non-significant amount of variability in attraction differences,  $R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(3, 246) = .55$ ,  $p = .65$ . Openness to experience and Love of Learning did not account for a significant proportion of difference in attraction variance after controlling for the effects of age, sex, and GPA,  $R^2$  change = .01,  $F(2, 244) = .87$ ,  $p = .51$ .

All personality variables were included in a correlation analysis (see Table 5). Neuroticism was found to be significantly negatively related to general attractiveness of competency descriptions ( $r = .15$ ,  $p = .02$ ), general attractiveness of task descriptions ( $r = .19$ ,  $p < .01$ ), intentions to pursue employment for competency descriptions ( $r = -.15$ ,  $p = .02$ ), and intentions to pursue employment for task descriptions ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Agreeableness was significantly positively related to general attractiveness of task-based descriptions ( $r = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and intentions to pursue employment for task-based descriptions ( $r = .16$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Further, agreeableness was negatively related to the difference between competency and task general attraction scores ( $r = -.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

The correlations conducted with all personality, attraction, and Love of Learning variables, filtered by major, indicated that nursing majors' openness to experiences was positively related to general attraction ( $r = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and intentions to pursue employment ( $r = .37$ ,  $p < .01$ ) for competency-based descriptions. The relationship between openness to experience and intentions to pursue employment for competency-based descriptions approached significance ( $r = -.21$ ,  $p = .06$ ) for management majors. Agreeableness was significantly

negatively related to the competency minus task intentions difference score ( $r = -.29, p = .02$ ) for nursing majors. Agreeableness was significantly positively related to task general attraction ( $r = .20, p = .04$ ) for finance majors.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if any differences across variables were affected by academic major. Agreeableness differed significantly across the majors,  $F(2, 255) = 10.23, p < .01$ . Love of Learning scores also differed significantly across the majors,  $F(2, 255) = 5.11, p < .01$ . Tukey post-hoc comparisons of the three groups indicated that nursing majors ( $M = 59.03$ ) rated themselves as significantly more agreeable than finance ( $M = 54.25$ ) and management ( $M = 53.73$ ) majors. Post-hoc analyses indicated that nursing majors ( $M = 55.54$ ) rated themselves as having a greater love of learning than finance ( $M = 52.26$ ) or management ( $M = 51.74$ ) majors.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Correlation Matrix with Personality Variables for All Majors

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Competency Overall Attraction	51.34	11.60	--												
2. Task Overall Attraction	50.45	12.46	.45 **	--											
3. Competency General Attraction	25.51	6.39	.96 **	.41 **	--										
4. Task General Attraction	25.06	6.82	.45 **	.97 **	.45 **	--									
5. Competency Intentions	25.83	5.73	.95 **	.44 **	.83 **	.40 **	--								
6. Task Intentions	25.38	6.14	.41 **	.96 **	.34 **	.85 **	.45 **	--							
7. Overall Attraction Difference Score	.45	6.34	.48 **	-.58 **	.48 **	-.54 **	.43 **	-.57 **	--						
8. General Attraction Difference Score	.45	6.96	.45 **	-.57 **	.48 **	-.57 **	.37 **	-.52 **	.97 **	--					
9. Intentions Difference Score	.45	6.21	.47 **	-.54 **	.43 **	-.47 **	.47 **	-.57 **	.96 **	.86 **	--				
10. Extraversion	46.67	11.29	.08	-.03	.06	-.02	.09	-.04	.10	.07	.12	--			
11. Agreeableness	55.29	8.02	.08	.19 **	.08	.20 **	.06	.16 **	-.12	-.12 *	-.10	.18 **	--		
12. Conscientiousness	52.26	8.45	.09	.04	.06	.04	.11	.05	.04	.02	.06	.00	.15 *	--	
13. Neuroticism	33.01	9.86	-.15 *	-.21 **	-.15 *	-.19 **	-.15 *	-.22	.07	.05	.09	-.19 **	-.04	-.06	--

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

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

It was the aim of this study to examine the effects of competency-based information presented in job descriptions on applicants' attraction to an organization. Participants did not rate competency-based job descriptions as more overall attractive than task-based job descriptions, as was proposed in Hypothesis 1. As Lawler (1994) discussed, individuals may be used to and therefore more comfortable with task information in a job description. It may take more exposure to competencies in organizations and job descriptions before the use of competencies are well received. Individuals may not have felt attracted to competency-based descriptions if they had not experienced the use of competencies in an organization before. Presenting only competency information in job descriptions, an artificial manipulation of the present study, does not appear to be significantly more useful in attracting applicants to an organization than presenting only task-based information.

Participants may not have made the distinction between the competency and task-based descriptions. Additional information about the jobs and organizations was provided, and no measures were taken to ensure participants read all parts of the job description. Applicants may have chosen information, other than the competency or task information to make their decisions. Overall attraction to organizations with competency-based descriptions was significantly, positively related to overall attraction to organizations with task-based descriptions for finance and management participants (See Tables 2 and 3). Thus, these participants may not have made

the distinction. Participants may have made their decisions based on the information that was common between job descriptions (salary, years of experience, educational requirements, etc.). Salary is one of the most influential factors for organizational attraction (Rynes & Barber, 1990). The salary information in the present study, however, was the same for both organizations' descriptions and may have lead individuals to find the organizations equally attractive based on salary (Cunningham, 2008).

Hypothesis 2 was partially supported. Overall, higher openness to experience scores were not correlated with higher competency-task overall attraction difference scores. Higher openness to experience scores, however, were associated with a greater competency-task overall attraction and intention difference scores for nursing majors. Openness to experience was also positively and significantly related to general attraction and intentions to pursue employment scale scores for competency-based descriptions among nursing students. It was expected that the more open to experience an individual is, the more he or she would be attracted to a flexible, competency-based job description. This relationship was present for nursing majors.

A potential explanation for this finding may be a result of the actual competencies listed as requirements for the different job positions, which varied by major. The competency *adaptability* was listed for the registered nurse and financial analyst positions, but it was not listed for the general manager position. Considering adaptability is a component of openness, the ASA theory would suggest that individuals who are open to experience would be more attracted to organizations who value openness to experience; individuals who are high in openness to experience would likely be more attracted to organizations with open-oriented information (i.e. adaptability requirement) presented in their job descriptions (Schneider, 1987). Since no key descriptors of openness were included in the general management competency

description, this may have negatively affected the relationship between openness to experience and attraction to organizations with competency information.

Hypothesis 3 was not supported. It was actually found that there was a significant relationship between Love of Learning scores and competency-task overall attraction difference scores for management majors, but this relationship was not in the direction it was expected. Higher scores on the Love of Learning scale were associated with a lower competency-task difference score on overall attractiveness for management majors. This indicates that a greater love of learning, or a more positive attitude about learning, does not result in greater attraction to competency-based job descriptions for management majors. Further, a regression analysis revealed that while controlling for age, sex, and GPA, openness to experience and Love of Learning were not predictors of attraction to organizations using either competency or task-based information.

The findings from Hypothesis 3 do not agree with Lawler's (1994) suggestion that employees who are oriented toward learning new skills would be the most attracted to a competency-based model. It certainly was not expected that higher Love of Learning scores would be negatively related to the difference between competency and task general attraction ratings. Since competencies are focused on individuals' skills and their potential, individuals who had a higher Love of Learning score were expected to rate competency-based descriptions as more generally attractive (Rodriguez et al., 2002). It may be the case, however, that individuals who viewed the general manager position did not view that particular position as having room for growth and the ability to further learn and develop skills.

While a focus on individuals' competencies typically indicates an organization's willingness to invest in employees, simply listing the required competencies instead of tasks does

make a clear link to investment in employees' knowledge and skills. Even if individuals were able to make the distinction between the job description with competencies and the one with tasks, there was no direct indication that the organization with the competency information was willing to invest in employees' skills through continuous learning and training opportunities. This may explain why a positive correlation between Love of Learning scores and competency-task general attraction and intentions to pursue employment difference scores was not found.

### **Limitations of the Present Study**

As with any study, the present one has its limitations. First, although the study recruited students in junior and senior level courses in hopes that such a population would be currently or soon to be applying for jobs, other class levels participated as well. Thus, the results may not generalize to other populations. A total of 158 of the participants in the study were not currently seeking employment; 214 participants, however, indicated they would be actively seeking employment in the next six months to a year. Since the purpose of the study was to examine job applicants' preferences for particular job descriptions, it would have been ideal to collect data from individuals who were seeking employment at the time of the study.

The same company name and description were used for both job descriptions. As previously mentioned, the competency and task-based descriptions were similar; efforts were taken in this study to make sure the competencies represented the tasks in the descriptions. In fact, organizational attraction based on competencies was highly correlated with organizational attraction based on tasks. Both job descriptions provided little organization-specific information, had the same salary information, listed the same educational and previous experience requirements, and included the same company name and description; this may have resulted in

participants rating the descriptions similarly. As previously mentioned, participants may not have read or been able to distinguish the competency and task information portions of the job descriptions.

### **Practical Implications and Suggestions for Future Research**

Although not a hypothesis of this study, it was found through additional analyses that agreeableness was significantly and positively related to general attraction and intentions to pursue employment based on task-descriptions. Individuals who are agreeable may not have wanted to challenge the way job descriptions have traditionally been presented. Individuals who are high in neuroticism were less likely to report being attracted to or rate high intentions to pursue employment based on either description. It would seem likely that other personal traits would affect attraction to competencies or tasks.

The results from this study suggest that competencies may not be useful for attracting applicants to organizations. Organizations are able to align many HR functions, such as selection assessment, training needs assessment, promotion, and pay determination through the use of competencies (Lievens et al., 2004). Competencies are prevalent and invasive in many organizations, and thus, future research should examine how the use of competency models affects employee satisfaction with various competency-focused functions. While organizations may not rely on providing competency information to recruit employees, competencies are useful for organizations in many other domains; it is important to examine employees' attitudinal and behavioral responses to such practices.

Although one of the present study's aims was to contribute to the competency literature, the main outcome variable was organizational attraction. Attracting talented and qualified



applicants to organizations is an imperative function for organizational success. Future research could examine what applicants are attracted to in an organization by having participants create their own, ideal job descriptions. Participants could write what they are looking for and most attracted to in a job description/advertisement. Basic guidelines could be given for the creation of the job descriptions, and the information participants included could be analyzed. Instead of presenting applicants with information that may seem attractive to employers and HR specialists, information that actual job applicants want in a job description could be identified and used to attract individuals.

The present study has implications for practice in organizations. The incorporation of competency modeling has many strategic benefits for organizations. Competencies help align business functions and allow for more flexibility (Lievens et al., 2004). While it was expected that competencies would also be beneficial for attracting talent to organizations, the present study did not find evidence that competency-based descriptions are more effective at attracting applicants than task-based descriptions. Since competencies have clear benefits for aligning HR functions, they should not be left out of the recruitment phase. Organizations would likely benefit from providing both task and competency information in a single job description. Providing details about the job itself (task information), as well as a description of the type of person who would succeed on the job (competency information) gives candidates more information to help determine fit and attraction to the organization.

Despite the limitations, the present study contributed to the organizational competency literature. Previous studies had not examined the effects of competencies on job applicants. While this study found no significant difference in attraction to organizations using either a competency or task-based description, future research could examine variables that may affect

attraction that were not included in this study. Future research should also examine why different variables for differing fields of study affected attraction to organizations.

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APPENDIX A  
MEASURES

**General Attractiveness Items**

(Highhouse et al., 2003)

Consider the job description you have just read. Please read each item and respond using the following 7-point response scale:

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7  
Strongly                      Neither Agree or                      Strongly  
Disagree                      Disagree                      Agree

1		For me, this company would be a good place to work
2		I would not be interested in this company except as a last resort
3		This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.
4		I am interested in learning more about this company
5		A job at this company is very appealing to me.

**Intentions to Pursue Items**

(Highhouse et al., 2003)

Consider the job description you have just read. Please read each item and respond using the following 7-point response scale:

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7  
Strongly                      Neither Agree or                      Strongly  
Disagree                      Disagree                      Agree

1		I would accept a job offer for this job position.
2		I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer.
3		If this company invited me for a job interview, I would go.
4		I would exert a great deal of effort to submit an application to this company
5		I would recommend this company to a friend looking for a job



**Love of Learning**  
IPIP

The following items describe attitudes and behaviors. Please indicate the level of accuracy in which the statement describes you. So that you can describe yourself in an honest manner, your responses will be kept in absolute confidence. Please read each statement carefully, and then fill in your response that corresponds to the number on the scale.

Response Options

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7  
 Very                      Neither Inaccurate                      Very  
 Inaccurate                      nor Accurate                      Accurate

1	1	Go out of my way to attend educational events.
2	2	Don't like to learn new things.
3	3	Am thrilled when I learn something new.
4	4	Am a true life-long learner.
5	5	Read all the time.
6	6	Consult the library or the Internet immediately if I want to know something.
7	7	Do not like to visit museums.
8	8	Don't read nonfiction books for fun.
9	9	Read a large variety of books.
10	10	Look forward to the opportunity to learn and grow.

**Big Five Personality**  
IPIP

**Instructions**

On the following pages, there are phrases describing people's behaviors. Please use the rating scale below to describe how accurately each statement describes *you*. Describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of your same sex, and roughly your same age. So that you can describe yourself in an honest manner, your responses will be kept in absolute

confidence. Please read each statement carefully, and then fill in your response that corresponds to the number on the scale.

Response Options

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7  
 Very                      Neither Inaccurate                      Very  
 Inaccurate                      nor Accurate                      Accurate

1	I am the life of the party.
2	I feel little concern for others.
3	I am always prepared.
4	I get stressed out easily.
5	I have a rich vocabulary.
6	I don't talk a lot.
7	I am interested in people.
8	I leave my belongings around.
9	I am relaxed most of the time.
10	I have difficulty understanding abstract ideas.
11	I feel comfortable around people.
12	I insult people.
13	I pay attention to details.
14	I worry about things.
15	I have a vivid imagination.
16	I keep in the background.
17	I sympathize with others' feelings.
18	I make a mess of things.
19	I seldom feel blue.
20	I am not interested in abstract ideas.
21	I start conversations.
22	I am not interested in other people's problems.
23	I get chores done right away.
24	I am easily disturbed.
25	I have excellent ideas.

26	I have little to say.
27	I have a soft heart.
28	I often forget to put things back in their proper place.
29	I get upset easily.
30	I do not have a good imagination.
31	I talk to a lot of different people at parties.
32	I am not really interested in others.
33	I like order.
34	I change my mood a lot.
35	I am quick to understand things.
36	I don't like to draw attention to myself.
37	I take time out for others.
38	I shirk my duties.
39	I have frequent mood swings.
40	I use difficult words.
41	I don't mind being the center of attention.
42	I feel others' emotions.
43	I follow a schedule.
44	I get irritated easily.
45	I spend time reflecting on things.
46	I am quiet around strangers.
47	I make people feel at ease.
48	I am exacting in my work.
49	I often feel blue.
50	I am full of ideas.

**Demographics**

The following items are designed solely to collect background information of the research participants. Please respond to all items truthfully. All responses will be kept anonymous and confidential.

What is your current age? \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

Please indicate your ethnical background

\_\_\_\_Caucasian, \_\_\_\_African American, \_\_\_\_Asian, \_\_\_\_Hispanic, \_\_\_\_Other

What is your current major and concentration?

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Have you had any previous work experience in your field of interest?

\_\_\_\_Yes, \_\_\_\_No

What is your current GPA? \_\_\_\_\_

Upon graduation, do you intend to utilize your degree and seek employment in your field of interest? \_\_\_\_Yes, \_\_\_\_No

Are you currently seeking employment? \_\_\_\_ Yes, \_\_\_\_ No

Will you be actively seeking employment within the next 6 months to one year? \_\_\_\_Yes, \_\_\_\_No

What is your current school status? \_\_\_\_ Freshman, \_\_\_\_ Sophomore, \_\_\_\_ Junior, \_\_\_\_ Senior, \_\_\_\_ Graduate, \_\_\_\_ Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your current work status.

\_\_\_\_Full-time \_\_\_\_Part-time \_\_\_\_Unemployed

If you are currently employed, what is your estimated monthly income? \_\_\_\_\_

If you depend on someone else (i.e., parent, spouse, etc.) for financial support, what is your estimated total monthly income for your family as a whole? \_\_\_\_\_

Did you rate one job description as more attractive than the other? Yes: 1<sup>st</sup> \_\_\_\_, 2<sup>nd</sup> \_\_\_\_,  
No: \_\_\_\_

If yes, what characteristics about the job description influenced your higher rating?

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APPENDIX B  
CONSENT FORM

## **Consent to Be a Research Participant in the Study:**

### **Examining Job Preference**

A research project on job preference is being conducted by Candace Hawkes in the Department of Psychology at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The purpose of the study is to examine what types of organizations people prefer based on information provided in job descriptions and if certain personal characteristics affect preference.

You are being asked to take part in this study by reviewing job information for two different organizations and completing a series of questionnaires. Your participation will take approximately 30-45 minutes. Please be aware that you are not required to participate in this research and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You may also omit any items on the questionnaire(s) you prefer not to answer.

Although we are collecting your names, this is only to ensure that participants do not take the survey more than once. There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this research study. The anticipated benefit of this research is a better understanding of what factors affect an employee's attraction to an organization.

There are no risks, other than the rare potential for mild boredom and/or emotional discomfort associated with answering personal questions, involved in participating in this research. If you should experience this, please be aware that you may contact the principal investigator, Candace Hawkes, for assistance.

If you have questions regarding this study or would like to be informed of the results when the study is completed, please feel free to contact Candace Hawkes through email at [Candace-Hawkes@mocs.utc.edu](mailto:Candace-Hawkes@mocs.utc.edu) or Dr. Bart Weathington at [Bart-Weathington@utc.edu](mailto:Bart-Weathington@utc.edu). If you have questions or concerns regarding the manner in which the study is conducted, you may contact Dr. Bart Weathington, the chair of the Institutional Review Board at (423) 425-4289. Additional contact information is available at [www.utc.edu/irb](http://www.utc.edu/irb). (IRB # 12- 170)

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
IRB APPROVAL

## MEMORANDUM

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TO: Candace Hawkes IRB # 12- 170  
Dr. Bart Weathington

FROM: Lindsay Pardue, Director of Research Integrity

DATE: October 29, 2012

SUBJECT: IRB # 12-170: Competency-based versus task-based job descriptions: Effects on applicant attraction

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed and approved your application and assigned you the IRB number listed above. You must include the following approval statement on research materials seen by participants and used in research reports:

***The Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (FWA00004149) has approved this research project #12-170.***

Please remember that you must complete a Certification for Changes, Annual Review, or Project Termination/Completion Form when the project is completed or provide an annual report if the project takes over one year to complete. The IRB Committee will make every effort to remind you prior to your anniversary date; however, it is your responsibility to ensure that this additional step is satisfied.

Please remember to contact the IRB Committee immediately and submit a new project proposal for review if significant changes occur in your research design or in any instruments used in conducting the study. You should also contact the IRB Committee immediately if you encounter any adverse effects during your project that pose a risk to your subjects.

For any additional information, please consult our web page <http://www.utc.edu/irb> or email [instrb@utc.edu](mailto:instrb@utc.edu)

Best wishes for a successful research project.



APPENDIX D  
JOB DESCRIPTIONS



#### **Position Information**

**Company:** RWB Hospital

**Location:** United States

**Job Status:** Full Time

**Job Title:** Registered Nurse

**Work Experience:** 1-3 years

**Education:** Bachelor's in Nursing

**Licensure:** Current License as an RN

**Salary and Benefits:** Competitive

#### **Registered Nurse**

##### **Job Description:**

Assess patient health problems and needs, develop and implement nursing care plans, and maintain medical records. Educate patients about various health conditions. Provide advice and emotional support to patients and their family members.

##### **Job Tasks:**

- Monitors, records, and reports symptoms or changes in patients' conditions.
- Orders, interprets, and evaluates diagnostic tests to identify and assess patient's condition.
- Modifies patient treatment plans as indicated by patients' responses and conditions.
- Consults and coordinates with healthcare team members to assess, plan, implement, or evaluate patient care plans.
- Monitors all aspects of patient care, including diet and physical activity.
- Instructs individuals, families, or other groups on topics such as health education, disease prevention, or childbirth.
- Prepares patients for and assists with examinations or treatments.



### Position Information

**Company:** RWB Hospital

**Location:** United States

**Job Status:** Full Time

**Job Title:** Registered Nurse

**Work Experience:** 1-3 years

**Education:** Bachelor's in Nursing

**Licensure:** Current License as an RN

**Salary and Benefits:** Competitive

### Registered Nurse

#### Job Description:

Assess patient health problems and needs, develop and implement nursing care plans, and maintain medical records. Educate patients about various health conditions. Provide advice and emotional support to patients and their family members.

#### Competencies

- **Adaptability:** Adapts behaviors or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.
- **Analyzing/Critical Thinking:** Uses strategy to evaluate information, predict outcomes, and decides how to achieve the best outcome.
- **Communication:** Clearly conveys information and ideas to individuals or groups.
- **Communication:** Keeps others informed as appropriate.
- **Customer Service:** Makes customers and their needs a primary focus of one's actions.
- **Judgment and Decision Making:** Evaluates information and decides an appropriate course of action.
- **Planning/Organizing:** Organizes work, sets priorities, and determines resource requirements.



## General Manager

### Job Description:

Plan, direct, or coordinate the operations of the organization. Ensures that all activities are consistent with and supportive of the company's business plan. Ensures all employees are performing their job responsibilities.

### Job Tasks:

- Oversees activities directly related to making products or providing services.
- Reviews financial statements, sales and activity reports, and other performance data to measure productivity and goal achievement and determine areas needing cost reduction and program improvement.
- Manage staff, preparing work schedules and assigning specific duties.
- Directs and coordinates organization's financial and budget activities.
- Establishes, implements, and monitors departmental policies, goals, objectives, and procedures.
- Determines staffing requirements, interviews, hires, and trains new employees.
- Plans and directs activities with other departments as required and coordinates the activities of departments concerned with the production, pricing, sales, or distribution of products.

### Position Information

**Company:** RWB Incorporated

**Location:** United States

**Job Status:** Full Time

**Job Title:** General Manager

**Work Experience:** 1-3 years

**Education:** Bachelor's in Management or related field

**Salary and Benefits:** Competitive



## General Manager

### Job Description:

Plan, direct, or coordinate the operations of the organization. Ensures that all activities are consistent with and supportive of the company's business plan. Ensures all employees are performing their job responsibilities.

### Competencies:

#### Position Information

**Company:** RWB Incorporated

**Location:** United States

**Job Status:** Full Time

**Job Title:** General Manager

**Work Experience:** 1-3 years

**Education:** Bachelor's in Management or related field

**Salary and Benefits:** Competitive

- **Analyzing/Critical Thinking:** Uses strategy to evaluate information, predict outcomes, and decides how to achieve the best outcomes.
- **Communication:** Clearly conveys information and ideas to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message, and invites response and feedback.
- **Communication:** Keeps others informed as appropriate.
- **Customer Service:** Makes customers and their needs a primary focus of one's actions; meets customer's expectations.
- **Judgment and Decision Making:** Evaluates information and decides an appropriate course of action.
- **Leadership/Coaching:** Influences, guides, and supports others to accomplish common goals.
- **Planning/Organizing:** Organizes work, sets priorities, and determines resource requirements; manages time and resources.



## Financial Analyst

### Job Description:

Conduct quantitative analyses of information affecting investment programs. Analyze financial performance and trends. Create detailed financial reports to be presented to senior management and auditors.

### Job Tasks:

#### Position Information

**Company:** RWB Financial

**Location:** United States

**Job Status:** Full Time

**Job Title:** Financial Analyst

**Work Experience:** 1-3 years

**Education:** Bachelor's in Finance, Accounting, or related field

**Salary and Benefits:** Competitive

- Draws charts and graphs, using computer spread sheets, to illustrate technical reports.
- Informs investment decisions by analyzing financial information to forecast business, industry, or economic conditions.
- Interprets data on price, yield, stability, future investment-risk trends, economic influences, and other factors affecting investment programs.
- Monitors fundamental economic, industrial, and corporate developments by analyzing information from financial publications and services, investment banking firms, government agencies, trade publications, company sources, or personal interviews.
- Recommends investments and investment timing to companies, investment firm staff, or the public.
- Prepares plans of action for investment, using financial analyses.
- Evaluates and compares the relative quality of various securities in a given industry.
- Presents oral or written reports on general economic trends, individual corporations, and entire industries.



## Financial Analyst

### Job Description:

Conduct quantitative analyses of information affecting investment programs. Analyze financial performance and trends. Create detailed financial reports to be presented to senior management and auditors.

### Competencies:

- **Adaptability:** Adapts to changes in the work environment, assignments, and priorities quickly and positively.
- **Adaptability:** Adapts behaviors or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles.
- **Analyzing/Critical Thinking:** Uses strategy to evaluate information, predict outcomes, and decide how to achieve the best outcome.
- **Communication:** Clearly conveys information and ideas to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message, and invites response and feedback.
- **Communication:** Keeps others informed as appropriate.
- **Customer Service:** Makes customers and their needs a primary focus of one's actions; meets customer's expectations.
- **Judgment and Decision Making:** Evaluates information and decides an appropriate course of action.
- **Planning/Organizing:** Organizes work, sets priorities, and determines resource requirements.

### Position Information

**Company:** RWB Financial

**Location:** United States

**Job Status:** Full Time

**Job Title:** Financial Analyst

**Work Experience:** 1-3 years

**Education:** Bachelor's in Finance, Accounting, or related field

**Salary and Benefits:** Competitive

## VITA

Candace Hawkes is from Johnson City, Tennessee. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology, with a minor in Management at East Tennessee State University. She relocated to Chattanooga, Tennessee to attend graduate school and earn her Master of Science in Industrial-Organizational Psychology. Candace is currently a graduate assistant at the University of Tennessee and is looking forward to obtaining her degree so she can use the knowledge and skills she has learned to contribute to an organization.