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EFFECTIVENESS OF CEO BLOGS AS A RECRUITING TOOL: IMPACT OF MESSAGE CONGRUENCE WITH APPLICANT PERSONALITY AND IMPLICIT LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Rebekkah Beeco
Clemson University, rfwills@gmail.com

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Rebekkah Faith Wills Beeco
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Accepted by:
Dr. Patrick Raymark, Committee Chair
Dr. Gary Giumetti
Dr. Richard Pak
Dr. Cynthia Pury
Dr. Mary Anne Taylor

ABSTRACT

Organizational recruitment websites have become an important tool for both recruiters and job seekers. The structural characteristics of such websites (e.g., aesthetics, usability) have received some attention but less research has examined the content of these websites. A weblog (or blog), specifically a leader or CEO blog, is one novel way that organizations can impact recruitment through their website. Although research is limited, anecdotal evidence suggests that blogs may be a powerful recruiting tool.

In line with research that suggests followers prefer leaders who are similar to themselves (e.g., Keller, 1999), the effectiveness of leader blog messages for recruitment purposes may be a function of how well the content and/or style match the characteristics of the job seekers. The current study examined job applicant personality characteristics as well as implicit leadership theories (ILTs; Offerman, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994) as predictors of leader preference, and subsequent attraction to the organization, using an organizational recruitment website with leader information presented in a weblog. Perceptions of the leader were found to be more favorable when the content of the blog was consistent with participants' ILT, such that increases in ratings of the corresponding ILT component were associated with increased preference for the leader. The current study provides support for the position that ILTs are important for understanding ratings of leader preference, and furthermore, that these effects can be found simply by reading a blog on a website.

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INTRODUCTION

Recruitment practices have experienced many changes with the growing use of technology. Accordingly, organizational recruitment websites have become an important tool for both recruiters and job seekers. The structural characteristics of such websites (e.g., aesthetics, usability) have received some attention but less research has examined the content of these websites. Organizational recruitment sites can provide a wealth of information in many ways. A blog, specifically a leader or CEO blog, is one novel way that organizations can impact recruitment through their website. The types of messages communicated through CEO blogs have not been thoroughly examined, however, the types of messages sent by leaders through other forms of communication (i.e., speeches) have received more attention. Specifically, leader communications can be classified by content and style (e.g., De Vries, Bakker-Pieper, & Oostenveld, 2010; Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997). In line with research that suggests followers prefer leaders who are similar to themselves (e.g., Keller, 1999), the effectiveness of leader blog messages for recruitment purposes may be a function of how well the content and/or style match the characteristics of the job seekers.

The overriding purpose of the current study was to enhance our knowledge of how the organizational perceptions of job seekers may be influenced by the content of a CEO blog. To this end, I will first review the emerging literature on the use of organizational websites as a recruiting tool, and then the literature examining the content of leader messages. To more fully illuminate how CEO blogs might impact job seeker reactions, I will then introduce the possibility that job seeker characteristics (e.g., implicit

leadership theories, job seeker personality) will partially determine which type of CEO

blog content is perceived to be effective for recruitment purposes. I will begin by

reviewing the relevant literature on organizational recruitment websites.

Organizational Recruitment Websites

The widespread use of technology has presented organizations with new

challenges and opportunities in recruiting applicants. The use of organizational

recruitment websites is increasingly common; however knowledge of their effectiveness

is lacking (Dineen, Ling, Ash, & DelVecchio, 2007). Among Global 500 companies, as

of 2003, 94% had some form of career section or job information on their web site

(Taleo, 2007). The popularity of such methods may be explained by the opportunity to

provide a seemingly unlimited amount of information in a variety of ways (e.g. text,

videos, pictures) to job seekers which can be accessed at anytime from anywhere (Cober,

Brown, Blumental, Doverspike, & Levy, 2000). This information comes at a low cost to

job seekers as it allows them to access information from many different organizations

quickly and requires less effort to be invested when compared to traditional recruitment

methods (Dineen et al., 2007). Given this, the site must capture the job seeker's attention

otherwise the viewer may leave the site or may not adequately evaluate the information

on the site.

Cober, Brown, Keeping, and Levy (2004) proposed a theoretical model

examining website characteristics that may be pertinent to the formation of a job seeker's

attitude and attraction toward the organization. According to the model, an individual's

initial affective reactions to the website are formed by the aesthetic characteristics of the

site. The relationship between aesthetic characteristics and initial affective reactions are proposed to be moderated by prior feelings toward the organization. Additionally, a job seeker's attitude toward the website is a result of initial affective reactions, perceptions of usability, and the individual's search behavior. Most importantly, applicant attraction is proposed to be formed through one's attitude toward the recruitment website, and their attitude toward, as well as their familiarity with, the organization.

Dineen et al. (2007) suggest that "good aesthetics are likely to be useful only if accompanied by useful content." Research examining what content is considered useful is lacking however. Additionally, the site content, including organization and job information, is not incorporated in Cober et al.'s (2004) model, which has been used as a basis for much research in this area. Traditional recruitment literature has examined the type of information that influences attraction, such as realistic job previews and diversity statements (e.g., Bretz & Judge, 1998; Rau & Hyland, 2003), but application of this to web-based recruitment has been limited. Organizations can present much more information in more ways (e.g., video, blog, etc.) on a website compared to traditional recruitment methods which may impact job seeker's attraction differently.

Corporate Blogs

A Weblog, or blog, is defined by Merriam-Webster as "a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer" (n.d.). In recent literature, blogs have been defined as "online publications that are characterized by short entries which are usually written in an expressive and authentic style and are arranged in reverse chronological order" (Fleck, Kirchhoff, Meckel, &

Stanoevska-Slabeva, 2007, p. 228). Blogs typically have several other distinguishing

elements, including archives and a blogroll (i.e. links to other blogs; Holtz &

Demopoulos, 2006). Additionally, blogs are written in a conversational tone, creating a

unique combination of interpersonal and mass communication (Kelleher & Miller, 2006).

Scoble and Israel (2006) suggest that blogs have six characteristics that differentiate them

from other forms of computer-mediated communication: they are publishable, findable,

social, viral, syndicatable, and linkable. These characteristics can be found individually

elsewhere but all six in combination are found in blogs (Scoble & Israel, 2006).

A blog published by or supported by an organization is considered a corporate

blog (Doraiswamy, 2008). Corporate blogs may be written by one or more employees

and/or executives. Corporate blogs have been categorized into five main types:

sales/promotional, newsletter, employee (single author or group) and CEO/executive

blogs (Doraiswamy, 2008; Holtz & Demopoulos, 2006; Lee, Hwang, & Lee, 2006). Cho

and Huh (2010) reported that the number of corporate blogs among Fortune 500 and

Interbrand Top 100 companies nearly doubled between 2006 and 2008, from 31 to 59.

Among Fortune 500 companies, blogs are gaining in popularity, with 79 publishing at

least one active blog about the company and/or its products according to the Fortune 500

Business Blogging Wiki (2009).

Although research is limited, anecdotal evidence suggests that blogs may be a

powerful recruiting tool. In their informal research among Microsoft bloggers, Scoble

and Israel (2006) note that "almost every Microsoft blogger we interviewed pointed to

blogging's advantages as a recruiting tool" (p. 21). Considering this, further empirical

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data is needed examining the effectiveness of blogging. A content analysis of 59 corporate blogs by Cho and Huh (2010) found that the main topic of 41% (N = 41) of corporate blogs was the company and industry while 35% (N = 21) focused on a product or the brand.

It has been suggested that a key advantage of blogs compared to more traditional organizational web site features is the ability to communicate with a conversational tone (Kelleher, 2009). Conversational human voice as it relates to online communication by an organization is "an engaging and natural style of organizational communication as perceived by an organization's publics based on interactions between individuals in the organization and individuals in publics" (Kelleher, 2009, pg. 177). Kelleher and Miller (2006) examined perceptions of conversational human voice across three conditions including a selection from an organization's blog content, a portion of the organization's website, and, as a control condition, unrelated content from a different organization's website. Participants included 42 undergraduate students who were randomly assigned to one of the conditions. The material for each condition was printed and all materials equaled six pages in length. After reading the material, participants completed an eleven item measure assessing conversational human voice. Results suggested that greater human voice was perceived in the blog condition than the organization website or control conditions.

Expanding upon this, Kelleher (2009) examined perceived conversational voice and several important public relations outcomes, including trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality. Control mutuality refers to "the degree to which

parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another" (Hon & Grunig, 1999, pg. 3). With a sample of 128 participants who had commented on an organization's blog post, Kelleher (2009) found that perceptions of conversational human voice were significantly positively correlated with trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality in their relationship with the organization. Therefore, with this unique tool, an organization's leader could positively impact perceptions by communicating organization information to job seekers using his/her interpersonal communication style.

The above literature leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The inclusion of a blog will result in more favorable reactions to the website than if no blog was present.

Furthermore, the inclusion of a blog may contribute to an individual's reaction to the website and this attitude may subsequently include his/her attraction to the organization. Specifically, the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) asserts that individuals form beliefs about an object (e.g. a website) by observing its characteristics (e.g. a blog). These beliefs are then used to develop attitudes toward the object. Behavioral intentions have been found to be partly a function of the attitude toward the object (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1973). Applicant intentions have been found to mediate a number of recruitment predictors (e.g., pay, organizational image, etc.) and job choice (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). In regards to the present study, if the individual has a very favorable attitude toward the website, the individual's intention to apply, or attraction to the organization, will be stronger. This logic leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Reactions to the website will mediate the relation between the inclusion of a blog and attraction to the organization.

Leader Communication

Research examining leader communication has focused largely on charismatic leadership. Specifically, the content of a vision articulated by charismatic leaders has been explored. Much of this research has studied speeches given by leaders who are widely considered to be charismatic based on their rhetorical skills, ability to evoke emotional reactions and persuade others. The rhetoric of politicians and organizational leaders, including former president John F. Kennedy, Jr., former Apple Inc. executive Steven Jobs, Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, political activist Jesse Jackson, and former CEO of GE Jack Welch, have been frequently used (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997; Shamir, Arthur, & House 1994). Den Hartog and Verburg (1997) assert that "effective visions incorporate goals, in terms of ideal conditions or processes rather than explicitly defined ends or production standards" and "contains focus on the people that make the vision a reality." (p. 361). The content of the vision can be examined based on the rhetoric used.

With the use of discourse analysis, Den Hartog and Verburg (1997) examined three speeches, each from a different CEO (i.e., Anita Roddick of The Body Shop, Matthew Barrett from the Bank of Montreal, and Jan Timmer of Philips), and found that they possessed the five rhetorical devices noted by Atkinson (1984) and Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) to be effective at evoking positive reactions from audiences and as characteristic of charismatic speakers. The five devices are: (1) contrast; (2) lists; (3)

puzzle-solution/headline-punchline; (4) position taking; and (5) pursuit, repetition, and alliteration. Specifically, contrast refers to describing something by its opposite. Lists of items, especially three-part lists, are also an effective device. Next, the initial presentation of a puzzle or a headline to the audience, which appeals to their intellectual ability, allows the speaker to then offer a solution or a punchline. Position taking refers to presenting a neutral description of the current status of a given matter and then the speaker takes a strong stance in agreement or disagreement with this status. Finally, pursuit is when the speaker seeks audience reaction or applause by repeating or stressing elements of the message. Repetition and alliteration can be used to do this and also effectively aid in the recall of the message. These rhetorical devices are most effective when used in combination (Den Hartog & Verburg, 1997).

Awamleh and Gardner (1999) examined the effects of speech content, delivery, and organizational performance on perceptions of leader charisma and effectiveness among 304 undergraduate students. A professional actor gave four speeches, which differed by content and delivery style, and which were recorded and presented to participants. The content was either visionary or non-visionary and the delivery style was either strong (dynamic gestures, eye contact) or weak (minimal facial expressions and gestures). Organizational performance was also manipulated with the use of two company profiles summarizing performance (e.g. sales, profit, etc.) for the past eight years. Participants completed a measure of perceived leader charisma and effectiveness. Awamleh and Gardner (1999) found that speech content, delivery, and organizational performance impacted perceptions of both leader charisma and leader effectiveness.

Further, perceived leadership styles may be, to a large extent, grounded in interpersonal communication styles (De Vries et al., 2010). With a sample of 279 employees from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, charismatic leadership has been found to be largely communicative, with ratings of charisma being strongly correlated with communication styles such as expressiveness, preciseness, assuredness, and supportiveness (De Vries et al., 2010). Human-oriented leadership was strongly associated with supportiveness and a lack of verbal aggressiveness in communication. These results suggest that there may be distinguishable differences in the communication styles of charismatic and relationship-oriented leaders. Charismatic leadership as well as relationship-oriented leadership (i.e., leader sensitivity) will be discussed further.

Leader Charisma. Charisma is a component of several leadership theories including charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1998). The concept of charismatic leadership was first established by Weber (1947), who described a charismatic person as one who is viewed to have traits that are exceptional or divinely received and, as such, is treated as a leader. The construct of charisma is still considered, as Weber noted, an attribution made about a leader by his followers, subordinates, or other individuals (Conger & Kanungo, 1998). A leader's influence is largely determined by the followers' perceptions according to the charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership frameworks (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999).

Vision is often considered one of the primary sources of a leader's perceived charisma (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Shamir, 1995). Vision, as defined by Conger and Kanungo (1998) is "a set of idealized future goals established by the leader that represent a perspective shared by followers" (p.156). A vision is often described by several characteristics including if it is optimistic, ambitious, against the status quo or conventional wisdom, challenges existing norms, conveys higher performance goals for followers, and increases followers commitment to and confidence in completing the goals (Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). These elements of the vision can distinguish charismatic leaders from others.

Shamir (1995) suggests that the notion of vision may be more important in socially distant relationships between the follower and leader. Specifically, such idealized visions may be closely scrutinized by close followers, who may look for and find flaws or problems in the vision and then feel neither motivated nor inspired. Additionally, visions are future-oriented, which some followers may consider to be inappropriate if they must produce results in a shorter time span within the organization. Distant followers, however, may not have all of the pertinent information to discover flaws in the vision. Given this, the leader's vision may be particularly influential to job seekers and other followers who are socially distant.

Leader Sensitivity. Leader sensitivity can be defined as the tendency to be sympathetic, compassionate, and understanding of the needs and desires of followers. A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the related constructs of leader

consideration (e.g., Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004) and relationship-oriented leadership (e.g., Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Fielder, 1971). Key characteristics of relationship-oriented leadership are emphasizing communication, showing trust, treating subordinates with kindness and respect, and showing appreciation for others' contributions (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001).

Although there may be some degree of overlap between charismatic and relationship-oriented leaders, Ehrhart and Klein (2001) note that "the key behaviors that characterize each of those leadership styles are distinctive" (p. 155). Additionally, Howell and Frost (1989) examined differences among three different leadership styles (charismatic, considerate, and structuring) in a laboratory study. The charismatic leader communicated a goal, high performance expectations, confidence in others' ability to meet the goals, and empathy with the needs of the followers. The considerate leader communicated concern for others' welfare, emphasized well-being, and engaged participants in conversation. Paralinguistic cues (e.g., a warm tone) and nonverbal cues (e.g., direct eye contact) were also used to demonstrate each leadership style. Results revealed that participants were able to accurately distinguish differences between these three leadership styles.

With a sample of 267 students who read three leader vignettes, Ehrhart and Klein (2001) found that over half of participants (51.3%) indicated a preference to work with a relationship-oriented leader rather than a charismatic or task-oriented leader. Each vignette emphasized four behaviors depicting the central characteristics of the given leadership style. The charismatic leader description communicated high performance

expectations, confidence in followers' abilities, willingness to take risks, and vision. The relationship-oriented leader description communicated kindness and respect for subordinates, willingness to listen and communicate with subordinates, trust and confidence, and recognition for subordinates' efforts. Preference for a charismatic leader was positively correlated with participant self-esteem, achievement orientation, intrinsic work value, and participation work value while preference for a relationship-oriented leader was correlated with interpersonal relations work value. One possible explanation for these findings is the similarity-attraction effect, which will be discussed in more detail.

Similarity-Attraction Effect

Social psychological research has provided substantial evidence for the similarity-attraction effect. Specifically, this research has demonstrated that similarity in attitudes (e.g., Byrne, Griffitt, Hudgins, & Reeves, 1969) and personality (e.g., Byrne, Griffitt, & Stefaniak, 1967) is a strong predictor of attraction. Similarity has been measured in one of two ways: perceived similarity or actual similarity. Overall, perceived similarity has been found to be more strongly correlated with positive outcomes than actual similarity (e.g., Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008; Strauss, Barrick, & Connerley, 2001).

In line with this, leadership research has found that followers prefer leaders who they perceive as being similar to themselves (Keller, 1999) and, further, leader-follower similarity has important implications for outcomes such as leader-member exchange (Bernerth, Armenakis, Field, Giles, & Walker, 2008; Epitropaki & Martin, 2005), job satisfaction (Turban & Jones, 1988), and performance ratings (Pukalos & Wexley, 1983;

Strauss, Barrick, & Connerly, 2001). As such, the effectiveness of leader messages or blog postings for recruitment purposes may be a function of how the blog content matches the characteristics of the job seekers.

Additionally, recruitment research has found that job seekers are more attracted to organizations when they perceive the employees to be similar to them (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008). Devendorf and Highhouse (2008) examined whether perceived similarity with employees at a given organization and congruence between one's self-image and the organization's image influenced attraction to the organization. With a sample of 296 undergraduate students, results suggested that participants were more attracted to organizations when the employees were perceived to be more similar to themselves.

Thus, similarity judgments appear to be crucial in determining whether individuals are attracted to particular organizations. Furthermore, within the context of the current study, it is possible that the influence of a blog post on applicant attraction may be a function of some type of "similarity" judgment on the part of the applicant.

Based on the above literature, it is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 3: Attraction to the organization will be positively influenced by perceived similarity with the leader.

However, at this point it is unclear what comparison process applicants might use when trying to assess this degree of "similarity." One possibility is that applicant attraction may be a function of the similarity between their perception of the person writing the blog and their perception of a prototypical leader (i.e., their implicit

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leadership theory). A second possibility is that applicant attraction may be a function of the similarity between the personality constructs emphasized in the blog content and the applicants self-reported personality characteristics. Each of these possibilities will be discussed next.

Implicit Leadership Theory

Implicit leadership theory posits that individuals have cognitive structures of what traits or behaviors are associated with leaders (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Keller, 1999). These beliefs, which are formed through past experiences and interpersonal interactions (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004), are used to guide one's encoding of information, perceptions of leadership, and recollection of information pertaining to the leader (Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986). Discrepancies between the observed behavior and prototype may then impact the impression formed of that individual. Specifically, individual ILTs may result in one attending to information consistent with his/her prototype and s/he may also misremember information consistent with their prototype when the information is not present (Lord & Maher, 1990 as cited in Keller, 1999).

Early research in this area by Lord, Foti, and De Vader (1984) classified ILT traits into two categories, prototypic and antiprototypic, by examining 59 attributes associated with leadership (e.g., honest, intelligent). More recently, Offerman, Kennedy, and Wirtz (1994) attempted to discover the primary content traits that comprise ILTs. Items were initially generated by 115 undergraduate participants who were instructed to list up to 25 traits or characteristics of a leader. A total of 455 items were provided. Item frequency was considered, such that items appearing only once or twice were removed.

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Additionally, responses that were behaviors, rather than traits or characteristics, were removed. Responses resulted in a pool of 160 items, which included considerable overlap with the attributes used by Lord et al. (1984). Next, Offerman et al. examined data from 686 undergraduate participants who rated the 160 items based on the extent to which the trait was considered characteristic of a stimulus person (i.e., a leader, an effective leader, or supervisor). With the use of factor analysis, these items were reduced to 57 items representing the eight factors. Another sample of 44 students completed a sorting task to further examine the traits. Participants were provided eight cards with each factor and its definition as well as 57 cards with each trait. The trait cards were then assigned to a factor category by participants. Forty-one of the items were retained as a result. The eight factors were further supported with a sample of 260 working individuals who were recruited in public waiting areas of an airport and asked to rate how characteristic each of the 41 traits was of a leader. At the end of this process, Offerman et al. identified eight distinct factors in ILTs: sensitivity, dedication, tyranny, charisma, attractiveness, masculinity, intelligence, and strength.

Two of the characteristics identified by Offerman et al. (1994) seem particularly appropriate when considering the potential impact of a CEO blog: sensitivity and charisma. As noted in the literature examining internet blogs, one of the advantages of a blog compared to traditional web site content is that the information is communicated in a conversational tone. These particular characteristics (sensitivity and charisma) may be more easily expressed through this medium than other ILT factors. Further, as discussed previously, research supports that there are distinguishable differences between

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charismatic and sensitive or relationship-oriented communication (e.g., De Vries et al., 2010; Howell & Frost, 1989). Furthermore, by extending the literature on the similarity-attraction hypothesis, individuals may have more positive reactions to a blog when the content is consistent with the traits most heavily emphasized in their implicit leadership theory. This leads to the following hypotheses:

> Hypothesis 4: Ratings of ILT components will be positively related to ratings of leader preference when the ILT component corresponds to the content of the blog. More specifically:
>
> > H4a: Ratings of the charisma component of ILTs will be positively related to ratings of leader preference when the blog content is charismatic.
> >
> > H4b: Ratings of the sensitive component of ILTs will be positively related to ratings of leader preference when the blog content is sensitive.

A more restrictive test of the same ideas would compare the above two correlations with the correlations obtained with the ILT factors that are not included in the blog content. Specifically:

> Hypothesis 5: Ratings of ILT components that correspond to the content of the blog will be more highly related to ratings of leader preference than will ratings of ILT components that do not directly correspond to the content of the blog.
>
> > H5a: Ratings of the charismatic component of ILTs will be more positively related to ratings of leader preference than ratings of the other ILT components when the blog content is charismatic.

H5b: Ratings of the sensitive component of ILTs will be more positively related to ratings of leader preference than ratings of the other ILT components when the blog content is sensitive.

In summary, the above hypotheses propose that the extent to which a job seeker forms favorable perceptions of a leader will be a function of whether the content of the blog is consistent with their ILT. The next question, however, is whether these favorable leader perceptions will subsequently influence organizational attraction. Byrne (1992) suggests that affective responses are a mediator of many similarity-attraction relations, such as organizational behavior, consumer preferences, and political choice. Support for this relation also comes from research examining how liking impacts performance appraisal ratings. Specifically, Strauss et al. (2001) examined personality similarity, liking, and performance ratings among a sample of salespeople and their supervisors. Results provided moderate support for liking as a mediator of the relation between specific personality traits (i.e., extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability) and performance ratings.

The above logic leads to the following hypotheses:

H6a: Ratings of leader preference will mediate the relation between charismatic ILT ratings and attraction to the organization when the blog content is charismatic.

H6b: Ratings of leader preference will mediate the relation between sensitive ILT ratings and attraction to the organization when the blog content is sensitive.

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Personality Characteristics

The second way in which the similarity-attraction hypothesis might be relevant to applicant reactions to a CEO blog concerns the extent to which the personality characteristics emphasized in the blog match the personality characteristics of the applicant. The five-factor model of personality can be used to provide a foundation for this discussion, as it is a widely accepted and supported taxonomy of personality traits. The five dimensions include Extraversion, Neuroticism, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. Extraversion is described by being outgoing, assertive, and active (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Neuroticism is represented by terms such as worrying, insecure, self-conscious, and temperamental (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Agreeableness refers to being courteous, trusting, tolerant, and cooperative (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Conscientiousness is represented by two facets: achievement and dependability (Judge & Bono, 2000). Openness to Experience refers to being imaginative, unconventional, and nonconforming (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002).

Of interest to the current study is the question of how individual personality characteristics may be related to perceptions of CEO blogs with different types of content. To provide a foundation for this discussion, I will briefly review research that has examined how the five dimensions of personality relate to perceptions of leadership. For example, Keller (1999) examined the relation between individual ILTs and the Big Five. Specifically, a total of 238 undergraduate participants completed a survey of personality traits and three weeks later a completed a survey of implicit leadership theories. Correlations among the Big Five and the ILT dimensions were examined.

Results suggested that individuals high in extraversion preferred a charismatic leader; individuals high in agreeableness preferred a sensitive leader; and individuals high in conscientiousness valued dedication in a leader. These relations are likely explained by the similarity-attraction effect. Specifically, individuals high in agreeableness prefer a sensitive leader because s/he would also value sympathy and kindness. Similarly, individuals high in extraversion would prefer a leader who is also energetic and spirited. While Keller provides some support for the connection between personality traits and ILTs, she did not examine how these may relate to individual preferences for a specific leader.

Felfe and Schyns (2006) did find that, when examining preferences for either a transformational or nontransformational leader, high extraversion was related with a greater perception of transformational leadership and participants high in extraversion rated the transformational leader more positively. Further, among this sample of 175 undergraduate students, it was found that acceptance of a leader was predicted by perceived transformational leadership. Similarly, among a sample of 153 clerical workers, Felfe and Schyns (2010) found that both followers' extraversion and agreeableness were significantly positively related to their ratings of their supervisor's overall transformational leadership

Based on the above literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis 7: Job seeker personality dimensions will be positively related to ratings of leader preference when the personality dimensions correspond to the content of the blog. Specifically:

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H7a: Job seeker extraversion will be positively related to ratings of leader preference when the content of the blog is charismatic.

H7b: Job seeker agreeableness will be positively related to ratings of leader preference when the content of the blog is sensitive.

A more restrictive test of the same ideas would compare the above two correlations with the correlations obtained with the personality characteristics that are not included in the blog content. Specifically:

Hypothesis 8: Job seeker personality characteristics that correspond to the content of the blog will be more highly related to ratings of leader preference than will personality characteristics that do not correspond to the content of the blog.

H8a: Job seeker extraversion will be more positively related to ratings of leader preference than other personality characteristics when the blog content is charismatic.

H8b: Job seeker agreeableness will be more positively related to ratings of leader preference than other personality characteristics when the blog content is sensitive.

Similar to the logic for why leader preference may mediate the relationship between ILTs and organizational attraction, it is also proposed that leader preference may mediate the relationship between job seeker personality and organizational attraction. Specifically:

H9a: Ratings of leader preference will mediate the relation between

extraversion and attraction to the organization when the content of the

blog is charismatic.

H9b: Ratings of leader preference will mediate the relation between

agreeableness and attraction to the organization when the content of

the blog is sensitive.

A final question explored in the current study is whether ILTs or job seeker

personality is more important when examining the impact of website content (specifically

blog content) on preference for the leader as well as organizational attraction. Given the

lack of research in this area, this will be examined as part of a research question rather

than a formal hypothesis:

Research question 1: which has more impact on preference for the leader and

organizational attraction, the similarity of blog content with job seeker ILT, or the

matching of blog content with job seeker personality?

The Present Study

The present study examines the Big Five as well as ILTs as predictors of leader

preference, and subsequently attraction to the organization, using an organizational

recruitment website with leader information presented in a weblog. In this study, two ILT

factors are examined separately through blog posts on two websites: charisma and

sensitivity. These factors are in line with De Vries et al.'s (2010) study of charismatic and

human-oriented leadership. Defined as being sympathetic, compassionate, and

understanding (Keller, 1999), leader sensitivity can be communicated through a written

message, such as a blog. Similarly, a key component of charisma is the ability to communicate a vision (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999), which also can be articulated through a written message.

<div align="center">METHOD</div>

Participants

Participants included 200 undergraduate students recruited through the Psychology Department's subject pool. Upon completion of the study, participants were given credit in an undergraduate psychology course. The mean age of participants was 19.4 (*SD* = 1.63) and 85% were female. Nearly one third-of participants were employed full or part-time (32%) and 79.5% were searching for employment or would be in the near future. Most participants reported that they had visited an organization's website to look for employment opportunities (81%) and had visited an organization's website to gather information for employment purposes (e.g., to prepare for an interview; 70%). Over half of participants had applied for a job online (58%).

Procedure

The researcher read from a prepared script (Appendix A). Participants were first given a brief description of the study and then were asked to complete two measures (i.e., personality traits and ILTs). Participants were randomly assigned to view one of three websites from a fictitious organization: a site with a charismatic leader's blog post, one with a sensitive leader's blog post, or a site with no CEO blog. Participants were asked to browse the site as if they were looking for a job and trying to determine if they should apply to this organization. After browsing the site, participants completed a measure of

information recall to evaluate if the blog post information was an effective manipulation. Next, participants reported their perceived similarity with the leader, preference for the organization's leader, reaction to the website, attraction to the organization, and demographic information (Appendix B).

Materials

Three websites were created for a fictitious organization, Memorial Hospital System. Each website contained identical content and design; however, two websites contained a blog post from the CEO which either emphasize the leader's charisma or sensitivity and one website contained a page with an equivalent amount information as the blog posts presented as a "Quarterly Report." Content for the blog posts and report were created for the study (Appendix C). The websites included links to informational pages, including About Memorial, Mission and Values, Patient and Visitor information, Services, Benefits, Current Opportunities, and either the CEO's Blog or the Quarterly Report.

Measures

Personality Characteristics. The Big 5 personality traits were assessed with a 40-item measure (International Personality Item Pool, n.d.; Appendix D). Each factor was measured with 8 items on a five-point scale (1 = not at all true, 5 = completely true). The coefficient alphas for each factor scale were .77 for agreeableness, .85 for extraversion, .84 for conscientiousness,.84 for neuroticism, and .72 for openness to experience.

ILTs. Participants completed a survey of prototypical leadership characteristics to examine their implicit leadership theory (Offerman et al., 1994; Appendix E). The eight

factors are measured by a total of 41 items answered on a 10-point scale (1 = not at all characteristic, 10 = extremely characteristic) in reference to the prompt to indicate the extent to which each trait is characteristic of a leader. Offerman et al. (1994) found the factor structure to be consistent between samples of undergraduate students and working adults. Reliability for the eight factor scales ranged from .60 to .90. Specifically, the coefficient alphas for each factor scale were .85 for sensitivity (8 items), .80 for charisma (5 items), .76 for dedication (4 items), .83 for tyranny (10 items), .84 for attractiveness (4 items), .87 for intelligence (6 items), .60 for strength (2 items), and .90 for masculinity (2 items).

Information Recall. Participants completed a measure of information recall to evaluate if the blog post information was effective. This instrument was created for this study based on the information presented throughout the organization website and the relevant blog post (Appendix F).

Perceived Similarity to the Leader. Some research has found that perceived similarity predicts satisfaction with the job and the organization better than actual similarity (Turban & Jones, 1988). As such, participants were also asked three questions assessing their perceived similarity to the leader (Appendix G). The items were adapted from Turban and Jones (1988) and were answered on a five-point scale (1 = to little or no extent, 5 = to a great extent). Coefficient alpha for the measure was .82.

Leader Preference. Participants reported their preference for the organization's leader (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; Appendix H). The six-item scale included items to examine such issues as the extent to which an individual would enjoy working with the

leader, get along with the leader, and admire the leader. All items were answered on a five-point scale (1 = to little or no extent, 5 = to a great extent). Coefficient alpha for the measure was .92.

Reaction to the Website. Participants completed a measure of their reaction to the website, measured by a nine item, seven-point semantic differential scale (Appendix I). Five items were utilized from Biehal, Stephens, and Curlo's (1992) questionnaire used to evaluate attitude toward an ad. Additionally, Sicilia, Ruiz, and Munuera (2005) assessed attitude toward the ad and toward the product with six items; however, two items overlap with Biehal et al. (1992) so the remaining four items were used. Coefficient alpha for the measure was .94.

Attraction to the Organization. Attraction to the organization was assessed using a measure of organizational attractiveness created by Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar. (2003; Appendix J). The questionnaire consisted of fifteen items, answered on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). It included questions examining the three components of organizational attraction including general attractiveness (e.g., For me, this company would be a great place to work), intentions to pursue (e.g., I would accept a job offer from this company), and prestige (e.g., This company probably has a reputation as being an excellent employer). Coefficient alpha for the measure was .95. Coefficient alphas for the three dimensions were .90 for general attractiveness, .88 for intentions to pursue, and .90 for prestige.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check and Outlier Analysis

The information recall measure was used as a manipulation check. Data from this measure were examined for any incorrect answers. Participants who did not accurately recognize the study's manipulation were removed from the sample ($n = 31$).

Next, the data were examined for outliers. Stem and leaf plots were examined for extreme cases. Data were also screened based on leverage (Mahalanobis Distance) and discrepancy (Studentized Deleted Residual). In total, five participants were removed as outliers.

As a result, the analyses were based on a sample of 164 participants. The mean age of the participants included for hypotheses testing was 19.5 ($SD = 1.68$) and 85% were female. One-third of participants were employed (33.5%) and 79.9% were searching for employment or would be searching in the near future. The majority of participants had visited an organization's website to look for employment opportunities (81.7%) and to gather information for employment purposes (e.g., to prepare for an interview; 72.0%). Over half of the participants had applied for a job online (56.7%). The demographic information for these participants by condition is presented in Table 1. Additionally, the means, standard deviations, and correlations among key study variables for all who provided usable data are presented in Table 2.

The data were also examined for normality. The ILT component of dedication (-1.43) was found to be negatively skewed. Additionally, with a range of 6 to 10 and mode of 10, there is limited variance within this component. Given the skewness and range

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restriction, the relations with dedication may be underestimated. Also, intelligence (-0.92) was found to be negatively skewed while masculinity was found to be positively skewed (0.79). These variables were retained for hypothesis testing.

Hypotheses

To test Hypothesis 1, that reactions to the website would be more favorable when viewing a site with a conversational blog post, a t-test was conducted. The blog conditions were combined to examine the presence versus absence of a blog. This hypothesis was not supported, $t(162) = .41$, $p = .68$. Participants did not report significantly more favorable reactions in the blog conditions (M = 4.98, SD = 1.07) than the non-blog condition (M = 4.91, SD = 1.16).

Next, Hypothesis 2 proposed that reactions to the website would mediate the relation between the inclusion of a blog and attraction to the organization. This hypothesis was examined by determining the significance of the indirect effect with bootstrapping analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Bootstrapping, which derives a large number of samples from the original data, is a nonparametric approach to testing mediation hypotheses. With each resampled data set, the indirect effect is computed and each estimate of the indirect effect is then averaged to provide a point estimate. Based on the estimations of the indirect effect, percentile bootstrap confidence intervals are computed. Significance of the indirect effect is determined by the exclusion of zero in the 95% confidence interval (CI). Preacher and Hayes' (2008) "Indirect" macro was used to test all mediation hypotheses. In the present study, 1,000 bootstrap samples were used. This hypothesis was not supported as the indirect effect , with a point estimate of -.036,

was not significant due to the inclusion of zero in the bias-corrected bootstrap 95% confidence interval (95% CI = -.147 to .207).

To test Hypothesis 3, that attraction to the organization will be positively influenced by perceived similarity with the leader, attraction to the organization was regressed on perceived similarity. This hypothesis was supported, $F(1,162) = 44.01$, $p < .001$. The results suggest that greater perceived similarity with the leader is associated with greater attraction to the organization ($r = .46$, $p < .001$).

Ratings of the charismatic component of ILTs were positively related to ratings of leader preference when viewing a site with a charismatic blog post ($r = .30$, $p = .03$), as predicted in Hypothesis 4a. Similarly, H_{4b}, that ratings of the sensitive component of ILTs would be positively related to ratings of leader preference when viewing a site with a sensitive blog post, was also supported ($r = .39$, $p = .004$).

To test Hypothesis 5a, that ratings of the charisma component of ILTs would be more positively related to ratings of leader preference than other ILT components when viewing a site with the corresponding blog post, correlations between the individual ILT components and ratings of preference were compared using Fisher's Z transformation. Although charisma produced a significantly higher relation to leader preference than did sensitivity, none of the other ILT components produced significantly smaller correlations. Thus, although the pattern of correlations was in the predicted form, on the whole these results do not provide support for this hypothesis (see Table 3). Another possible form of this relation was considered. Specifically, analyses were conducted to determine whether the relation between charismatic ILT and ratings of leader preference was moderated by

blog type. The interaction was not significant ($p = .126$) suggesting that the relation of charismatic ILT and preference for the CEO is the same between blog conditions. The pattern of the observed correlations was as predicted however with the correlation between the charismatic ILT and leader preference being significant in the charismatic blog condition ($r = .30$, $p = .026$) but not in the sensitive blog condition ($r = .04$, $p = 771$)

Next, Hypothesis 5b proposed that ratings of the sensitive component of ILTs would be more positively related to ratings of leader preference than other ILT components when viewing a site with the corresponding blog post. Similar, to H$_{5a}$, the correlations between the individual ILT components and ratings of leader preference were compared using Fisher's Z transformation. While not fully supported, the sensitivity component was more highly related to leader preference than five of the seven other ILT components (i.e., charisma, tyranny, attractiveness, strength, and masculinity). The other relations (i.e., dedication and intelligence) were in the predicted direction but were not significantly different from the sensitivity-preference relation (see Table 4). Additional analyses were conducted to examine another form of this relation. Specifically, whether blog type moderated the relation between ratings of leader preference and sensitive ILT was considered. The blog type by sensitive ILT interaction was significant ($p = .04$) suggesting that the relation between sensitive ILT and leader preference differs between the blog conditions. This is consistent with the observed correlations between the sensitive ILT component and leader preference in the two blog conditions. In the charismatic blog the correlation was not significant ($r = -.02$, $p = .88$) while the correlation was significant in the sensitive blog condition ($r = .39$, $p = .004$)

For Hypothesis 6a, which proposed that ratings of leader preference mediate the

relation between a charismatic ILT and attraction to the organization, bootstrapping

analysis of the indirect effect was conducted (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). This hypothesis

was not supported as the indirect effect, with a point estimate of -.168, was not significant

due to the inclusion of zero in the bias-corrected bootstrap 95% confidence interval (95%

CI = -.006 to .336). The results do, however, provide evidence for classical suppression

because the sign of the effect of charisma on attraction to the organization changes when

the mediator (leader preference) is included (see Figure 1).

Similarly, Hypothesis 6b proposed that ratings of leader preference mediate the

relation between a sensitive ILT and attraction to the organization. A bootstrap analysis

of the indirect effect provided support for mediation, with a point estimate of .131 (95%

CI = .039 to .244; see Figure 2). Additionally, when both sensitive ILT and leader

preference were included as predictors of attraction to the organization, the direct effect

of sensitive ILT was no longer significant (c'= .141, p = .058), which suggests full

mediation.

Next, examining the personality characteristics, Hypothesis 7a, that ratings of

extraversion would be positively related to ratings of leader preference when the blog

content is charismatic, did not reach traditional levels of statistical significance (r = .24, p

= .074). As predicted in Hypothesis 7b, ratings of agreeableness were positively related to

ratings of leader preference when the blog content was sensitive (r = .32, p = .019).

For Hypothesis 8a, which proposed that ratings of extraversion would be more

positively related to ratings of leader preference than other personality traits when

viewing a site with a charismatic blog post, correlations between the individual traits and ratings of leader preference were examined using Fisher's Z transformation. This hypothesis was not supported. Agreeableness and conscientiousness were both more positively related to ratings of leader preference than extraversion (see Table 5). Similar to the previous ILT hypotheses, blog type was examined as a potential moderator of the extraversion-leader preference relation. This interaction was not significant ($p = .95$), suggesting that the relation between extraversion and preference for the leader is the same between the blog conditions.

For Hypothesis 8b, which proposed that ratings of agreeableness would be more positively related to ratings of leader preference than other personality traits when viewing a site with a sensitive blog post, correlations between the individual traits and ratings of leader preference were examined using Fisher's Z transformation. This hypothesis was not supported. The results were in the predicted direction, although only the comparison with neuroticism produced a significant effect (see Table 6). Additional analyses were conducted to examine whether blog type moderated the relation between ratings of leader preference and agreeableness. This interaction was not significant ($p = .409$), suggesting that the agreeableness-leader preference relation does not differ between blog conditions.

To examine if ratings of leader preference mediated the relation between extraversion and attraction to the organization (Hypothesis 9a), bootstrapping analysis of the indirect effect was done. Support was found for a significant indirect effect according to a bias-corrected bootstrap 95% confidence interval, point estimate = .197, 95% CI =

.002 to .389. However, the Sobel test did not reach traditional levels of significance for this hypothesis, $Z = 1.76$, $p = .078$. The results do provide evidence for classical suppression because the sign of the effect of extraversion on attraction to the organization changes when the mediator (leader preference) is included (see Figure 3).

To examine if ratings of leader preference mediated the relation between agreeableness and attraction to the organization (Hypothesis 9b), bootstrapping analysis of the indirect effect was done. This hypothesis was supported as the indirect effect was significant according to a bias-corrected bootstrap 95% confidence interval, point estimate = .28, 95% CI = -.07 to .637. Moreover, when both agreeableness and leader preference were included as predictors of attraction to the organization, the direct effect of agreeableness was no longer significant (c′= .237, p = .18; see Figure 4). This provides support for full mediation.

Finally, to examine which measure (ILT or personality) is a better predictor of preference for the leader, a regression was performed including each measure for each of the conditions. Specifically, to examine the charismatic blog condition, preference for the leader was regressed on charisma ILT and extraversion in separate analyses. Ratings of the charismatic component of ILTs significantly predicted ratings of leader preference, $F(1,54) = 5.28$, $p = .026$, $R^2 = .089$. Participant extraversion was not a significant predictor of leader preference, $F(1,54) = 3.33$, $p = .074$. In the sensitive blog condition, preference for the leader was regressed on sensitive ILT and agreeableness in separate analyses. Both variables were found to predict ratings of leader preference. Ratings of a sensitive ILT explained 15% of the variance in leader preference, $F(1,51) = 9.02$, $p =$

.004. Participant agreeableness explained 10.4% of the variance in leader preference, $F(1,51) = 5.91$, $p = .019$.

Additionally, similar analyses were conducted to examine which measure is a better predictor of applicant attraction. In the charismatic blog condition, neither charisma ILT, $F(1,54) = .30$, $p = .58$, nor extraversion, $F(1,54) = .06$, $p = .81$, were significant predictors of attraction to the organization. In the sensitive blog condition, both sensitivity ILT and agreeableness explained a significant amount of variance in attraction to the organization. Sensitive ILT explained 18.7% of the variance in attraction to the organization, $F(1,51) = 11.7$, $p < .001$. Agreeableness explained 11.6% of the variance in attraction the organization, $F(1,51) = 6.71$, $p = .012$. Thus, the results suggest that relevant ILT components are better predictors of important recruitment outcomes than the corresponding personality traits.

DISCUSSION

Organizational recruitment websites are capable of providing job seekers with an abundance of information in many different formats. However, there is a lack of research examining what specific web-based content is useful and influential to job seekers. This study contributes to the web-based recruitment literature by examining the impact of CEO blogs and, more specifically, the impact of the message content on attraction to the organization. Moreover, this study provides the first experimental examination of weblogs as a recruitment tool.

The results suggest that the mere presence of a conversational blog post did not impact participants' reactions to the website. While measures were taken to ensure that

participants read the blog, the manipulation still may not have been salient enough. The change of a single page on the website may not have been substantial enough to influence reactions to the site, which are an affective and evaluative attitude toward the whole website.

Attraction to the organization was found to be positively influenced by perceived similarity with the leader. This is consistent with previous research by Devendorf and Highhouse (2008), which found that job seekers prefer organizations when they perceive the employees to be similar to them. Additionally, perceptions of the leader may have influenced their perceptions of fit with the organization. Subjective person-organization fit has been found to be positively related to attraction to the organization in web-based recruitment settings (e.g., Pfieffelmann, Wagner, & Libkuman, 2010).

Broadly, participant perceptions of the leader were more favorable when the content of the blog was consistent with their ILT but the relation varied when considering the comparable personality trait. Specifically, increases in ratings of charismatic ILT characteristics were associated with increased ratings of leader preference when viewing a site with the corresponding blog post. Participant extraversion was not, however, related to perceptions of the leader. In the sensitive blog condition, more positive ratings of sensitive ILT characteristics were associated with greater preference for the leader. Similarly, greater levels of agreeableness were associated with more positive perceptions of the leader. Given these results, the information presented about a leader on an organization's website should be taken into careful consideration as job seekers form impressions of the leader based on how well the leader fits their ILT. Further,

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organizations may be able to attract individuals who are compatible with the current leadership, which may result in better outcomes such as improved leader-member exchanges.

The current study provides support for the position that ILTs are important for understanding ratings of leader preference, and furthermore, that these effects can be found simply by reading a blog on a website. This not only affirms that individuals prefer leaders who display the characteristics that are consistent with their prototypical leader, but also suggests that these effects may be relevant in a recruitment context and, specifically, applicant attraction to the organization. Additionally, this provides some support that the blog messages exhibited the traits they were intended to exhibit. Also, the findings contribute to the literature on ILTs, supporting this recognition-based approach and the important outcomes resulting from these cognitive structures.

When comparing the relation between personality traits and leader preference, overall, the corresponding traits were not more strongly related to leader preference than the other personality traits. In the charismatic and sensitive conditions, agreeableness was most strongly correlated with leader preference. Considering each approach, the ILTs appear to be more effective in this recruitment context than the personality traits. Specifically, participants' preference for the leader seems to be driven by the degree to which the leader is consistent with their ILT, rather than the personality factors of extraversion and agreeableness.

Consistent with previous research concerning the similarity-attraction effect, in the sensitive blog condition, affective reactions (i.e., preference for the leader) were

found to be a mediator of the similarity-attraction relation. Specifically, the effect of sensitive ILT ratings on attraction to the organization was fully mediated by leader preference. Additionally, when considering the corresponding personality trait of agreeableness, leader preference was found to fully mediate the relation between agreeableness and attraction to the organization. These mediated relations were not found in the charismatic blog condition.

In general, the strength of the results differed for the two blog conditions, such that the sensitive blog condition better produced the expected results. It is possible that the degree to which the blog posts reflected the dominant characteristics of the leadership style differed, such that the sensitive blog post may have better exhibited the relevant characteristics than the charismatic message. Alternatively, the context of the communication (e.g., recruitment website compared to communication to current employees) may impact the importance of sensitivity and charisma. The mode of communication (i.e., written versus oral) may also impact perceived charisma and sensitivity. Specifically, delivery may be a particularly important factor for perceived charisma (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999). Previous research examining both delivery and content has found significant main effects for both variables, such that strong or expressive delivery as well as visionary content produced greater perceptions of charisma (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Johnson & Dipboye, 2008). Lastly, the difference between the blog conditions may be a function of gender differences. Previous research has found that women report being more emotionally sensitive than men (e.g., Bloise & Johnson,

2007). In the present study, the majority of participants were female, which may have had an impact on the results.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present study may be limited due to its use of undergraduate students as participants. According to Pew Internet and American Life (2002), 61% of the 18-29 year olds surveyed had used the internet to look for a job in contrast to 42% of 30-49 year olds and 27% of people 50-64 years old. While the age group of the participants is appropriate for web-based recruitment research, only some were searching for employment at the time of the study. Additionally, a small portion of participants had not previously used organization websites for employment purposes (e.g., applying for a job, searching for opportunities, gathering information). As such, the participants' behavior may not have been consistent with actual job seeker behavior. Future research should examine the effect of blogs among individuals who are actively looking for employment.

In addition, the use of a fictitious organization is a potential limitation. The website was, however, designed with the consideration of other hospital system websites. Moreover, participants were only directly informed that the organization did not exist as part of debriefing, after they had completed all of the tasks. It is possible that the lack of identifying information (e.g., location) on the site and the somewhat limited amount of information may have provided some indication that the organization and site were bogus. Further, the task itself was contrived. As such, it is possible that participants did not attend to the information as they would when actually searching for a job. As previously noted, future research should examine these variables among job seekers.

While the present study did not find support for the impact of a blog on reactions to the site, the manipulation did produce other important outcomes. Thus, future research should consider investigating actual CEO blogs.

Practical Implications and Conclusion

Previous research has established that good aesthetics are important for organizational recruitment websites (e.g., Dineen et al., 2007) but determining what content is important has received less attention. This study adds to the web-based recruitment literature by investigating a previously neglected component of organization websites, corporate blogs. Although corporate blogs are relatively common, research examining the impact they may have is lacking.

By exploring a blog's message content, the present study found mixed support for the impact of message congruence with ILT and personality traits. The study did find however, that the corresponding ILTs (i.e., charisma and sensitivity) significantly influenced preference for the leader in the two blog conditions. Additionally, the corresponding personality traits were found to influence preference for the leader. The impact of agreeableness on leader preference was significant, though the impact of extraversion on leader preference was approaching significance ($p = .07$). Ratings of leader preference significantly affected attraction to the organization in each blog condition as well. As such, this suggests that organizations should consider what information is being provided about or by the leader of the organization. For example, a blog could communicate organizational values and such information may help discourage individuals with a poor fit from applying. However, overemphasizing particular leader

traits may limit the diversity of applicants, as those with differing leader prototypes may self-select out due to disliking the leader.

In sum, the present study has provided an empirical examination of CEO blogs and message content in a recruitment context. Additionally, support was found for the importance of preference for the leader and the similarity-attraction effect in recruitment and attraction to the organization.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Script

In this study you will be asked to browse an organization's website as if you were looking for a job. Before browsing the site, you will fill out a couple surveys. Then you will have time to navigate the website. After which, you will answer some additional questions.

Please open the shortcut labeled 'Part 1.' Complete these two pages of questions. Select 'Submit' when you reach the last page and please wait on the page that it directs you to.

(after completing the initial surveys) Now please close that browser window. Next, please select your gender on the screen that appears. You will automatically be taken to the website. Go through the website as if you were looking for a job, the site's content has been limited to information that may be of interest when looking for a job. Read and consider all of the information about the organization available on the site, including general organization information as well as more specific information, such as the people that work there. You will be asked to recall some of this information later.

(after browsing the site) Close the browser that you're currently using. Please open the shortcut labeled 'Part 2.'Complete these questions keeping the website and organization you just read about in mind. Select 'Submit' when you reach the last page and please wait on the page that it directs you to.

Now that you have completed the study, we want to let you know that the organization whose website you viewed is fictitious. We did not disclose this to you during the study because it could have changed your impression of the organization and the website. Because we did conceal information from you at the beginning of this study, you now have the option to have us destroy the information we just collected or you can allow us to keep your information and use it for research purposes. Please remember that some of your classmates may also be signed up for this study. If they knew the organization is fictitious that could negatively affect the results of this study, thereby wasting your time and ours, so please do not share this information.

Thank you, again! You will receive credit through the HPR site for participating.

Demographic Information

Gender:
☐Male   ☐Female

What is your current age?

What is your current major at Clemson?

In what semester do you expect to graduate?

Have you ever applied for a job online?
☐Yes   ☐No

Have you ever applied for a job online?
☐Yes   ☐No

Have you ever visited an organization's website to look for employment opportunities?
☐Yes   ☐No

Have you ever visited an organization's website to gather information about an organization for employment purposes (e.g., prepare for an interview, etc)?
☐Yes   ☐No

Are you…
☐Currently employed full-time
☐Currently employed part-time
☐Not currently employed

Are you…
☐Currently searching for full-time employment
☐Currently searching for part-time employment
☐Will be searching for full-time employment in the next 6 months
☐Will be searching for part-time employment in the next 6 months
☐Not looking for employment now or in the near future

Appendix C

Website Manipulations

I. Charismatic Post:

We will set our own course!

Many of you are probably wondering how we are going to deal with the recent economic downturn. Yes, times are hard and there is a lot of uncertainty as to what the future might hold. As a result, some organizations have taken a defensive posture, have withdrawn any initiatives to improve, and are letting the fiscal and political storms dictate how they will proceed in the future. We will not do that. We will not let the waves of recession to push us in a direction we do not want to go.

We will set our own course!

The first step is for us to think in terms of acting rather than reacting. We will not be an organization that passively monitors the horizon for the next big storm. We will identify where we want to go as an organization, and then we will chart a path for us to get there. The journey towards our destination will likely be a difficult one, but it will be attainable as long as we are all committed to the same goal.

We will set our own course!

In short, there is an incredible opportunity available to us. While others will remain adrift, we will set sail with a purpose. We can take advantage of their passivity by exploring some unchartered waters without any competition. We will be able to stake out and define our future completely on our own terms. As we begin to formulate the details of this plan, as well as our strategies for action, it will be crucial to incorporate the knowledge of everyone at [organization name]. We need you to become involved in the development of this plan.

We will set our own course!

II. Sensitive Post:

To ensure that everyone is kept informed on where [organization name] is headed in the coming years, within the next week I will be releasing our strategic plan for the future. At this time, however, I would like to thank everyone for their contributions to the development of this plan. This simply could not have occurred without all of your help. I know that everyone is dealing the pinch associated with the recent economic downturn, and that it is frightening to see many of our friends and neighbors losing their jobs and their employment benefits. But in the midst of all of this economic uncertainty, you have stepped up and provided numerous valuable ideas and thoughtful contributions on how we can improve what we do, and as a result, I think we have developed a strategic plan that will enhance your job security for years to come.

I clearly remember the last time [organization name] experienced this level of economic stress back in 1996; as many of you know, I was a manager in [blank] department at that time. And because I can recall the level of stress and nervousness that I experienced back then, it makes me very appreciative of your continued level of

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commitment. I know that this company would not have achieved its current level of success without the exceptional level of effort demonstrated by each one of you; thus, I am looking forward to unveiling a plan that I feel will recognize those efforts and stabilize [organization name] for many years to come.

　　　Thank you again!

III. Quarterly Report:

Memorial Hospital System conducts quarterly as well as annual reviews of our performance and progress. Our performance is measured on four key indicators: people, service to patients, quality care, and finance. These indicators, which are directly linked to our mission and vision, highlight the key accomplishments of Memorial.

Recent Quarterly Report
Memorial Hospital System has met its target for each of four performance indicators in this quarter. Memorial is also on target to meet the goals for the current fiscal year. The four performance indicators are:

- People: Employee survey suggests employees' are satisfied with their work and committed to Memorial. Additionally, they are satisfied with the opportunities Memorial provides, including promotions, training, and educational assistance. A satisfied and committed workforce is fundamental to attaining our goals across all indicators.
- Service to patients: Patient surveys, including inpatient, outpatient, and emergency services, suggests patients are satisfied with the care they receive. The surveys also indicate that patients are likely to return to Memorial for any future medical needs.
- Quality care: Achieved an acceptable hand hygiene compliance rating. Nearly 100% of patients are discharged at their expected length of stay.
- Finance: Operating margin has been consistent, allowing Memorial to continue a balanced operating budget. Initiatives to maintain costs for supplies have been effective. Externally funded research is consistent with expectations.

These indicators should continue to guide employees as to how to best sustain Memorial's mission and vision.

Past quarterly and annual reports are available upon request.

Appendix D

Big Five Personality Traits Survey

(IPIP, n.d.)

Rate on a scale from 1 to 5 how well the statement describes you, with 1 = not at all true
and 5 = completely true.

Neuroticism
I often feel blue.
I dislike myself.
I am often down in the dumps.
I have frequent mood swings.
I panic easily.
I am filled with doubts about things.
I feel threatened easily.
I get stressed out easily.

Extraversion
I feel comfortable around people.
I make friends easily.
I am skilled in handling social situations.
I am the life of the party.
I know how to captivate people.
I start conversations.
I talk to a lot of different people at parties.
I don't mind being the center of attention.

Openness to Experience
I believe in the importance of art.
I have a vivid imagination.
I tend to vote for liberal political
     candidates.
I carry the conversation to a higher level.
I enjoy hearing new ideas.
I enjoy thinking about things.
I can say things beautifully.
I enjoy wild flights of fantasy.

Agreeableness
I have a good word for everyone.
I believe that others have good intentions.
I respect others.
I accept people as they are.
I make people feel at ease.
I am concerned about others.
I trust what people say.
I sympathize with others' feelings.

Conscientiousness
I am always prepared.
I pay attention to details.
I get chores done right away.
I carry out my plans.
I make plans and stick to them.
I complete tasks successfully.
I do things according to plan.
I am exacting in my work.

Appendix E

Implicit Leadership Theory Survey

(Offerman, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994)

To what extent is this trait characteristic of a leader…
(1 = not at all characteristic, 10 = extremely characteristic)

Sensitivity
Sympathetic
Sensitive
Compassionate
Understanding
Sincere
Warm
Forgiving
Helpful

Dedication
Dedicated
Motivated
Hard-working
Goal-oriented

Tyranny
Domineering
Pushy
Dominant
Manipulative
Power-hungry
Conceited
Loud
Selfish
Obnoxious
Demanding

Attractiveness
Well-groomed
Attractive
Well-dressed
Classy

Charisma
Energetic
Charismatic
Inspiring
Enthusiastic
Dynamic

Intelligence
Intellectual
Educated
Intelligent
Wise
Knowledgeable
Clever

Strength
Strong
Bold

Masculinity
Male
Masculine

Appendix F

Information Recall Measure

1. What industry is the organization a part of?
    a. Automotive
    b. Health care
    c. Real estate
2. What is the name of the organization?
    a. Mountain View Utilities
    b. Memorial Hospital System
    c. Death Valley Dermatology
3. Were available job positions on the site?
    a. Yes
    b. No

For the two conditions with a blog post:
4. Was there a blog on the site?
    a. Yes
    b. No
5. What was the topic of the blog post?
    a. the organization's future
    b. new building construction
    c. the weather
6. Who wrote the blog post?
    a. a PR representative
    b. an intern
    c. the CEO

For the condition with no blog:
4. Which one of these is a performance indicator used by the organization?
    a. People
    b. Sales
    c. Environmental impact

Appendix G

Perceived Similarity Survey

(Turban & Jones, 1988)

	To little or no extent				To a great extent
This leader and I are similar in outlook, perspective, values, and work habits.	1	2	3	4	5
This leader and I see things in much the same way.	1	2	3	4	5
This leader and I are alike in a number of areas.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix H

Leader Preference Survey

(Ehrhart & Klein, 2001)

Please answer the following questions about the leader of the organization whose web site you just viewed. For all questions 1 = To little or no extent, 5 = To a great extent.

	To little or no extent				To a great extent
I would work at a high level of performance under the CEO of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
I would enjoy working with the CEO of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
I would get along with the CEO of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
I would admire the CEO of this organization.	1	2	3	4	5
I would find the CEO's work style compatible with my own.	1	2	3	4	5
I find the CEO to be similar to my ideal leader.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix I

Reaction to the Website

(Biehal et al., 1992; Sicilia et al., 2005)

Please respond to the following items based on the website you just viewed.

I thought this website was…

Bad   Good
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Boring   Interesting
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Uncreative   Creative
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Unlikable   Likeable
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Uninformative   Informative
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Unpleasant   Pleasant
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Unfavorable   Favorable
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Unattractive   Attractive
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Useless   Useful
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Appendix J

Attraction to the Organization Survey

(Highhouse et al., 2003)

Please answer the following questions about the organization whose web site you just viewed. For all questions 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
1. For me, this company would be a good place to work.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I would not be interested in this company except as a last resort.	1	2	3	4	5
3. This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am interested in learning more about this company.	1	2	3	4	5
5. A job at this company is very appealing to me.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I would accept a job offer from this company.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer.	1	2	3	4	5
8. If this company invited me for a job interview, I would go.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I would recommend this company to a friend looking for a job.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Employees are probably proud to say they work at this company.	1	2	3	4	5
12. This is a reputable company to work for.	1	2	3	4	5
13. This company probably has a reputation as being an excellent employer.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I would find this company a prestigious place to work.	1	2	3	4	5
15. There are probably many who would like to work at this company.	1	2	3	4	5

Table 1

Demographic Variables by Condition

	Condition		
	Charismatic Blog	Sensitive Blog	No Blog – Control
N	56	53	55
Gender (% female)	87.5%	88.7%	80.0%
Mean Age (in years)	19.5	19.4	19.4
Applied for job online	55.4%	60.4%	54.5%
Visited an organization's website for opportunities	75.0%	90.6%	80.0%
Visited an organization's website for information	64.3%	83.0%	69.1%
Employed full or part-time	37.5%	28.3%	34.5%
Searching for employment now or in near future	78.6%	88.7%	72.7%

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Scale Reliabilities, and Correlations Among Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	19.45	1.68	--								
2. Charismatic ILT	8.15	1.12	-.04	(.80)							
3. Sensitive ILT	7.54	1.15	-.07	.36**	(.85)						
4. Extraversion	3.57	0.63	.19*	.20*	.08	(.85)					
5. Agreeableness	4.00	0.45	.00	.33**	.34**	.38**	(.77)				
6. Perceived Similarity	3.76	0.61	.05	.22**	.20*	.26**	.26**	(.82)			
7. Preference for CEO	4.00	0.65	-.04	.24**	.18*	.20*	.33**	.66**	(.92)		
8. Reaction to the website	4.95	1.10	-.04	.18*	.13	.03	.16*	.48**	.60**	(.94)	
9. Attraction to the organization	3.92	0.72	-.02	.15	.15*	.00	.19*	.46**	.67**	.73**	(.95)

Note. N = 164. Parentheses contain scale reliabilities (Cronbach's Alpha) where appropriate.

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

Table 3

Charismatic Blog: Comparing Correlation between Leader Preference and Charisma to Leader Preference and other ILT Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Preference for CEO	3.92	0.60	--								
2. Charisma	8.37	0.89	.30*	--							
3. Sensitivity	7.77	1.02	-.02	.40**	--						
4. Tyranny	3.90	1.37	.09	-.08	-.02	--					
5. Attractiveness	6.54	2.06	.05	.28	.42**	.48**	--				
6. Intelligence	8.60	1.07	.20	.47**	.43**	.23	.54**	--			
7. Strength	8.26	1.40	.16	.47**	.28*	.31*	.49**	.68**	--		
8. Masculinity	3.28	2.21	.14	-.01	.22	.28	.30*	.28*	.31*	--	
9. Dedication	9.42	0.68	.30*	.48**	.33*	-.07	.09	.66**	.48**	.11	--
Z test			--	--	2.18*	1.06	1.55	0.76	1.04	0.84	0

Note. n = 56.

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

Table 4

Sensitive Blog: Comparing Correlation between Leader Preference and Sensitivity to Leader Preference and other ILT Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Preference for CEO	4.13	0.59	--								
2. Charisma	8.23	1.10	.04	--							
3. Sensitivity	7.45	1.10	.39**	.18	--						
4. Tyranny	3.95	1.07	-.13	.04	-.15	--					
5. Attractiveness	5.82	1.87	-.27	.11	.14	.34*	--				
6. Intelligence	8.34	1.12	.22	.64**	.32*	.04	.07	--			
7. Strength	8.04	1.21	-.01	.69**	.07	.11	.13	.68**	--		
8. Masculinity	2.97	2.11	-.27	.12	-.19	.31*	.40**	.19	.50**	--	
9. Dedication	9.33	0.91	.35*	.48**	.10	-.02	-.10	.64**	.14	-.08	--
Z test			--	2.02*	--	2.56**	3.83**	1.07	2.17*	3.23**	0.22

Note. n = 53.

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

55

Table 5

Charismatic Blog: Comparing Correlation between Leader Preference and Extraversion to Leader Preference and other Personality Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Preference for CEO	3.93	0.60	--					
2. Extraversion	3.51	0.61	.24	--				
3. Agreeableness	4.00	0.41	.43**	.48**	--			
4. Conscientiousness	3.94	0.50	.33*	.16	.16	--		
5. Openness to Experience	3.50	0.56	.23	.50**	.61**	-.04	--	
6. Neuroticism	2.16	0.66	-.10	-.33*	-.08	-.18	-.09	--
Z test			--	--	-1.46	-0.56	0.09	1.57

Note. n = 56.

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

56

Table 6

Sensitive Blog: Comparing Correlation between Leader Preference and Agreeableness to Leader Preference and other Personality Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Preference for CEO	4.13	0.59	--					
2. Extraversion	3.60	0.64	.25	--				
3. Agreeableness	4.05	0.46	.32*	.33*	--			
4. Conscientiousness	3.91	0.61	.21	.22	.38**	--		
5. Openness to Experience	3.51	0.51	.09	.39**	.32*	.13	--	
6. Neuroticism	2.19	0.74	-.18	-.47**	-.10	-.03	-.10	--
Z test			--	0.49	--	0.73	1.44	2.51*

Note. *n* = 53.

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

57

Charisma ILT → Attraction to the Organization

$c = .064, p = .58$

Leader Preference

$a = .201,$
$p = .026$

$b = .837,$
$p < .001$

Charismatic ILT

Attraction to the Organization

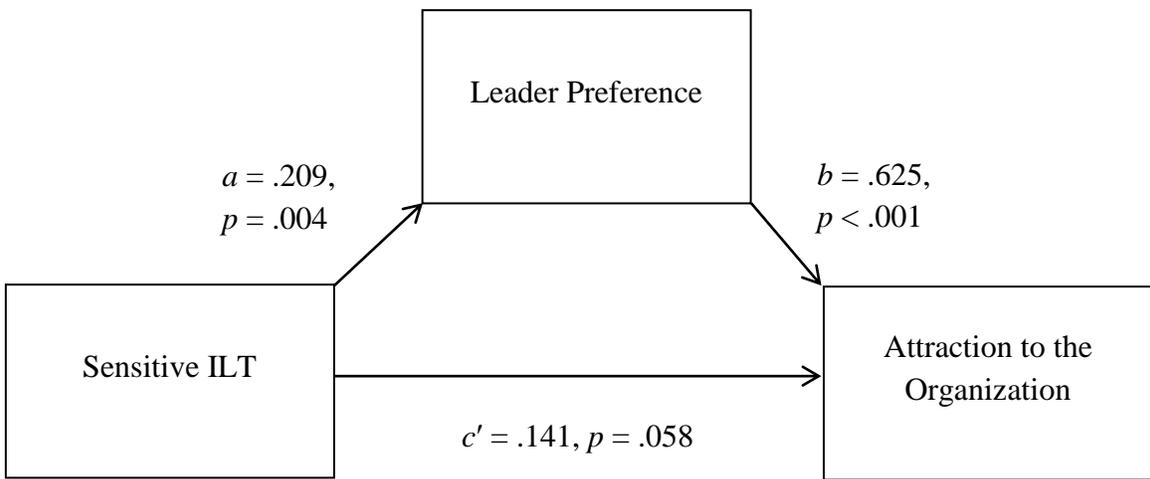$c' = -.104, p = .284$
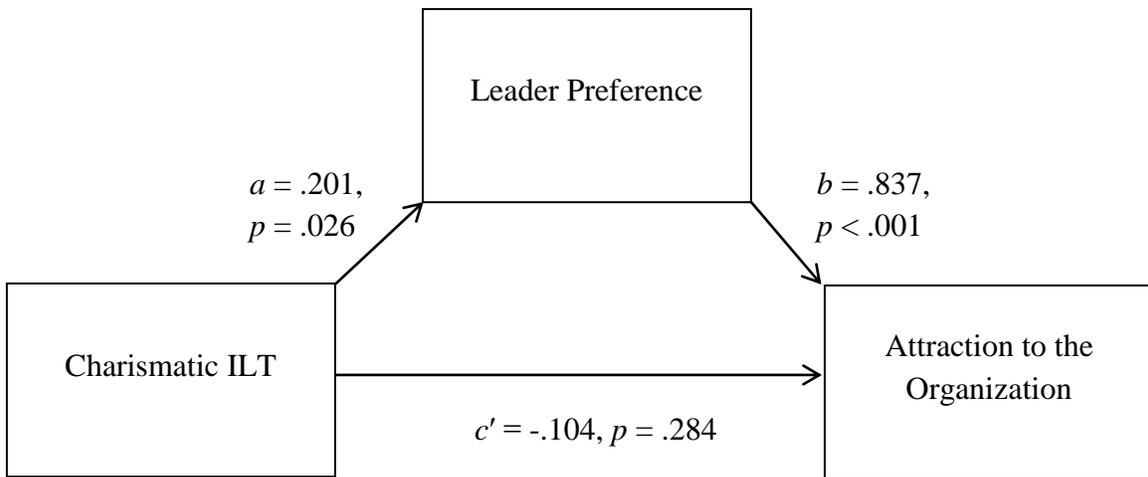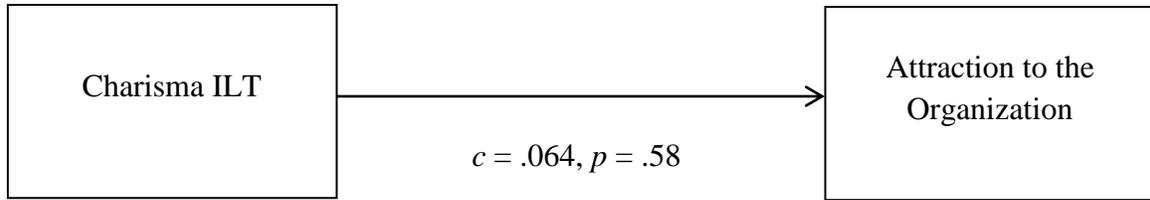
Figure 1. Charisma ILT Mediation Model

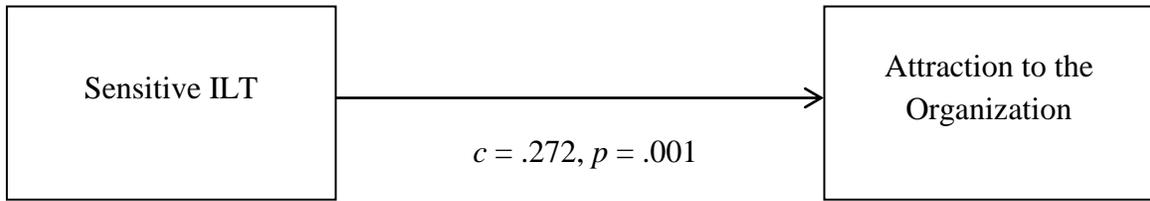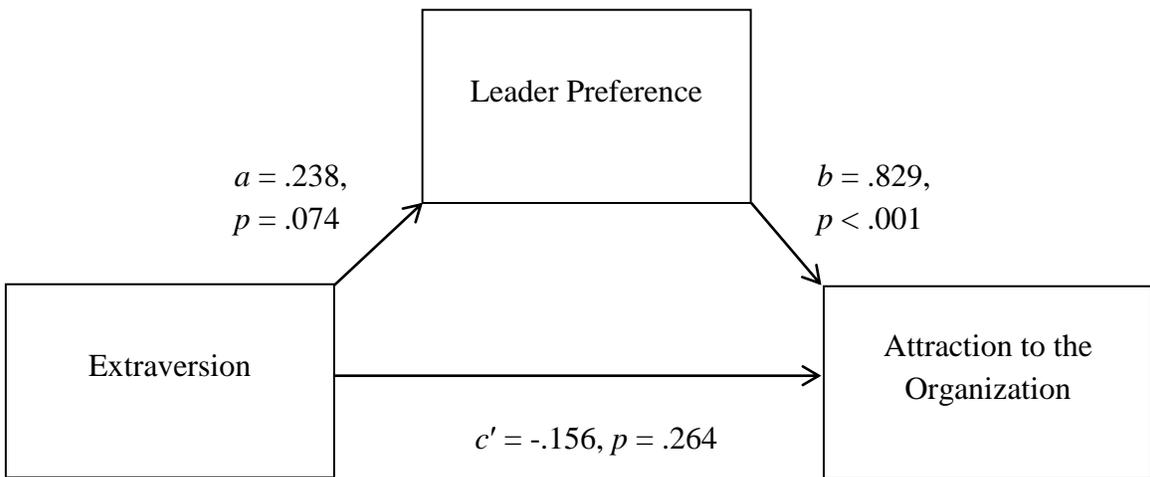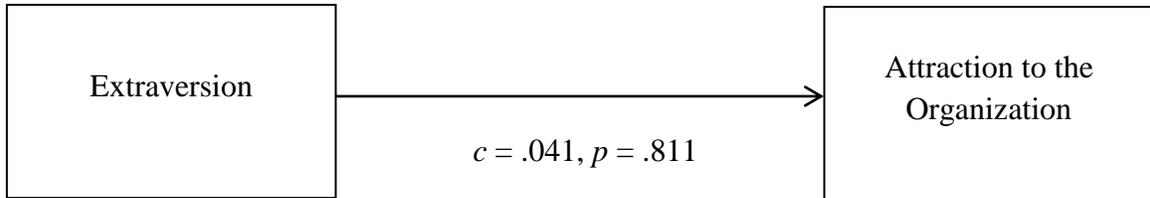*Figure 2.* Sensitive ILT Mediation Model
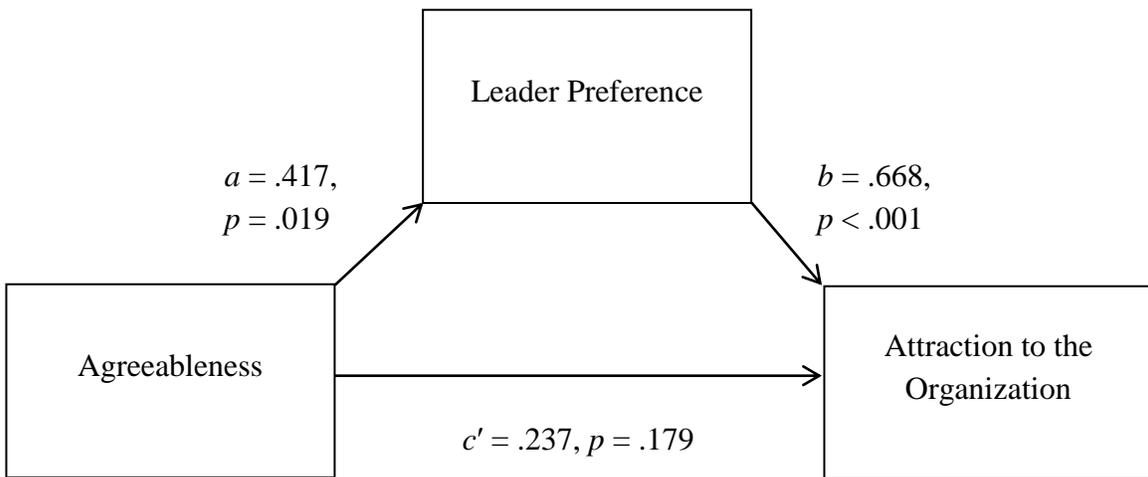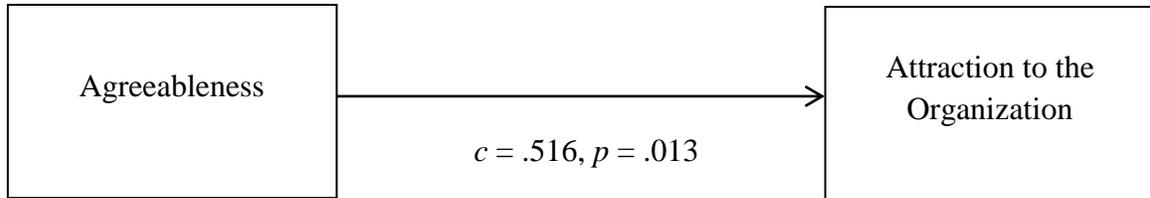
Figure 3. Extraversion Mediation Model

Figure 4. Agreeableness Mediation Model

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