

Recruiters' Use of Friendship in Résumé Assessment: When Qualification Does Not Always Make the Cut

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An experiment was conducted with upper level undergraduate business students to investigate the mechanism by which recruiters use friendship with the job applicant in initial résumé screening. Using actual résumés, this study showed that the recruiters' friendship with the job applicants interacted with applicants' qualifications in influencing recruiters' screening decisions such that friendship aided those considered less qualified for the job in résumé assessment more so than those considered qualified for the job. Further, it was found that the influence of friendship on initial screening decisions (i.e., interview offer) was fully mediated by résumé assessment. The importance of understanding résumé assessment from the standpoint of recruiters as well as job seekers was discussed.

Social capital refers to, “friends, colleagues, and more general contacts through whom you receive opportunities to use your financial and human capital” (Burt, 1992, p. 9). In recent years, social capital has gained increasing popularity among organizational researchers as a means for organizations and individuals alike to achieve a competitive advantage.

At the individual level, social capital has been shown to be associated with both job search (Granovetter, 1973, 1995) and career success (Burt, 1992, 1997; Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). At the organizational level, social capital has been shown to create intellectual capital (Hargadon & Sutton, 1997; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), improve cross-functional team effectiveness (Rosenthal, 1996) and relationships with suppliers (Baker, 1990; Uzzi, 1997), and reduce turnover rates (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993). Despite the growing recognition that social capital can help organizations maximize their human capital to achieve and sustain competitive advantage (Burt, 1992), there has been little research examining the possible influence of social capital on employee selection.

Although many definitions of social capital have been reported in the literature, I adopted Burt's (1992) definition of social capital mentioned previously. This definition focuses on the external ties an individual maintains with people outside their organization, rather than internal ties within their organization. In other words, social capital equates to external ties that act as resources, helping individuals and organizations alike gain a competitive advantage. This definition excludes such other definitions of social capital that include internal ties (e.g., strength of group cohesion) which focus on the internal structure or ties among individuals within the group or definitions of social capital that are neutral in focus (i.e., neither internal nor

external) varying with perspective and/or level of analysis (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).

The Role of Human Capital in Résumé Screening

Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) an individual possesses (Coleman, 1988). Human capital has been shown to be a valid predictor of job performance across job domains. In light of this well established finding, the goal in personnel selection is to maximize the extent to which selection instruments measure the KSAs required to perform the job. It has been the central focus of Human Resource (HR) recruiters and managers for years in evaluating the person-job (P-J) fit of applicants (e.g., Edwards, 1991). However, whereas applicants' KSAs has been shown to be the primary focus in evaluating applicants' P-J fit and person-organization (P-O) fit (Schneider, 1987; Kristof-Brown, 2000), recruiters were reported to rely on values and personality traits of the applicants in evaluating P-O fit.

It is this author's argument that social capital conceptualized as external ties between the HR recruiter and the job applicant may play a role in the P-O fit evaluation process as well. First, external ties between job seekers and HR recruiters are likely to help the recruiters arrive at the P-O fit perception faster due to the recruiter's access to knowledge of the applicant's personality and value. Second, such an external tie will be more likely a non-redundant contact (Burt, 1992), rather than a redundant one (as is in promoting someone from within the company, in which case the promoted person is a redundant contact within the recruiter's network). This non-redundant contact is additive social capital to the HR recruiters' network, hence contributes to the organization's competitive advantage.

This Research

The résumé is probably the most widely used tool for pre-employment screening. It is not surprising to see that résumé screening is typically the initial step in filling both entry-level (Hutchinson, 1984) and managerial-level positions (Gatewood & Field, 2001). Despite the ubiquitous résumé use in recruitment and selection, little research has been done to uncover the relationship between résumé content and decisions leading to interview and job offers. Some studies have examined the above linkage in terms of applicant's human capital (e.g., education, cognitive ability, personality, job experience) as reflected on the résumé that are deemed important for job performance (Brown & Campion, 1994; Cole, Field, & Giles, 2003). Other studies incorporated social capital, conceptualized as a friendship tie between the applicant and the recruiter, as an additional influencing factor beyond résumé content influencing subsequent screening decisions (Sue-Chan & Dasborough, 2003; Nguyen, Allen, & Godkin, 2003).

However, several questions still remain unanswered. First, in previous research, laboratory-created résumé profiles rather than actual résumés were used. Extant research shows that résumé screening based on profiles leads to inflated person-job fit judgment among recruiters and henceforth is limited in the extent that

it generalizes to actual résumé screening (Fritzsche & Brannick, 2002). Second, the question of why friendship ties influenced recruiters' screening decisions was not examined in previous research. Therefore, the mechanism with which social capital influences screening decisions was not adequately assessed. For example, it is reasonable to expect that social capital might influence recruiters' screening decisions through more favorable résumé assessment, which in turn leads to a higher likelihood of making a subsequent interview offer or job offer. The answer to this question cannot be gleaned in those two previous studies.

In this study, I wanted to replicate and extend the study by Nguyen et al. (2003) in the following ways. First, I would like to replicate their two main findings that (a) social capital influences screening decisions beyond human capital (i.e., applicant's qualification), and (b) women recruiters give qualified applicants who are friends higher interview ratings and job recommendations than do men recruiters, yet they give unqualified applicants who are friends lower ratings and job recommendations than do men recruiters.

There are at least three reasons why studying recruiter's use of friendship, a form of social capital, in relation to résumé screening is important. First, the recruiter's ability to do his/her job might be enhanced by his/her friendship to the job applicant. This capital might reflect in the HR recruiter's increased success at getting the friend to apply for the job as well as access to unique information about the job applicant that proves useful in making screening decisions. Second, the recruiter's use of this social capital might benefit the organization in terms of maximizing the fit between the job applicant and the organization (Dindoff, 2000), hence increasing organizational commitment and reducing subsequent turnover. In fact, a meta-analysis reported that the relationship between person-organization fit (P-O fit) and intent to turnover was significant ($r = -.18$) and that P-O fit and organizational commitment were related ($r = .28$; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Third, previous research shows that the most frequently rated applicant attributes during the job interview are personality, values, and social skills (Huffcutt, Conway, Roth, & Stone, 2001; Kristoff-Brown, 2000). The recruiter's knowledge of the job applicant(s) through friendship presumably gives him/her the advantage of making that assessment from the resume alone, and thereby could potentially help save the organization from investing in subsequently more expensive selection hurdles such as an on-site interview. In sum, it is the extent to which the HR recruiter utilizes this social capital in making sound résumé screening decisions that contributes to the organization's competitive advantage.

In this research, I proposed the following hypotheses. First, I'd like to replicate the findings of previous research concerning (a) the recruiters who were faced with the decision of whether to extend an interview offer and/or job offer, were influenced by social capital, i.e., friendship tie with the job applicant; and (b) the gender difference in the utilization of friendship in résumé screening. The following hypotheses emerge:

Hypothesis 1: Recruiters will more likely make an interview offer and or job offer to a qualified applicant whom they know personally than a qualified applicant whom they don't.

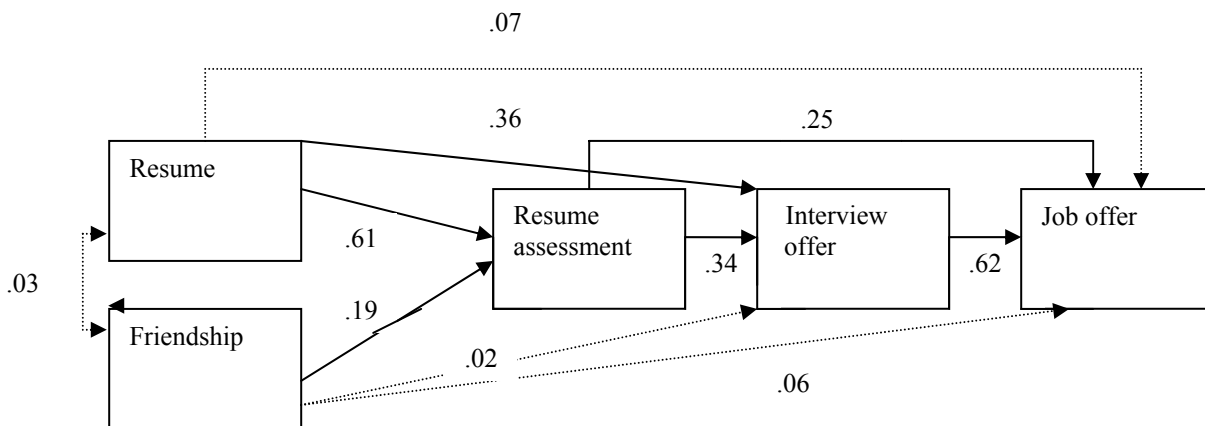
Hypothesis 2: The effect of friendship on screening decisions will be more prominent among female recruiters than male recruiters.

As discussed earlier, résumés are used as the initial step in applicant screening in a multi-step selection process. Although it is commonly accepted that applicants’ human capital or objective credentials (e.g., GPA, education, training, work experience) were the most important factor having direct influence in screening decisions (e.g., Kristof-Brown, 2000), social capital in the form of friendship with the job applicant has the same influence, albeit to a lesser extent (Sue-Chan & Dasborough, 2003; Nguyen et al., 2003). However, we suggest that social capital works through favorable subjective résumé assessment to explain the increased likelihood of making an interview offer to applicants whom the recruiters know as friends and are qualified. Although it sounds intuitive, no studies have yet addressed this question. Based on the above discussion, I propose the following:

Hypothesis 3: Recruiters will give more favorable résumé assessment to applicants whom they know personally than those they don’t.

Hypothesis 4: Recruiters’ use of friendship in making screening decisions is mediated by subjective résumé content assessment.

Figure 1
Hypothesized Model of the Influence of Friendship on Resume Assessment



Note: All the path coefficients are standardized. Dotted lines reflect non-significant paths.

Lastly, as discussed earlier, recruiters' use of friendship in résumé assessment might lead to better screening decisions. In fact, earlier research on friendship within top management teams (e.g, Francis, 1995) showed that friendship had a direct positive effect on group decision quality and satisfaction where satisfaction is defined as agreement with the decision and commitment to the decision. To extrapolate on that finding, I expect that friendship will have the same effect on individual decision-making. It is the quality of decision and higher level of satisfaction with the decision that enhance the recruiters' contribution of social capital to the organization's competitive advantage. Therefore, the following hypothesis emerged:

Hypothesis 5: Screening decisions in which social capital is taken into account will yield more satisfaction than those in which such a factor is lacking.

Method

A total of 203 upper level undergraduate business students participated in the study in exchange for partial course credit. Of these, 107 (52.7%) were men and 96 (47.3%) were women. Their average age was 23.44 with a standard deviation of 4.82. In terms of ethnic background, 134 (66%) reported to be White, 30 (14.8%) African American/Black, 23 (11.3%) Asian, 14 (6.9%) Hispanic/Latino, and 2 (1%) did not specify their ethnic background.

Because the job examined in this research was a manager of customer service representatives, it was critically important that participants had relevant job experience to strengthen external validity. In this sample, a majority of participants (86%) had customer service job experience and 77% had at least one year of customer service job experience. Eighty-nine (43%) of the participants reported having from 6 months to more than 3 years of managerial experience in which reviewing résumés résumé was considered part of their jobs.

Manipulations

Social Capital

In this study, I used the HR manager's friendship ties to the job applicant as the relevant social capital. HR recruiters may favor applicants with friendship ties under the expectation that they will be acquiring valued allies and mutually beneficial relationships. Viewed in this light, HR recruiters' friendship ties may be perceived as potential contributions to a firm's competitive advantage. The HR manager's friendship tie with the job applicant was manipulated using one of two hypothetical information scenarios presented in the vignette that indicated whether the applicant was the best friend in high school with the HR manager.

Human Capital

I used the proxy of applicant qualification (KSAs) to represent human capital. Applicant qualification was manipulated using one of two different resume cues: relevant education and training, and relevant work experience that made the

applicant appear to be either poorly or highly qualified for the job of Customer Service Representative Supervisor. Relevant education and training deemed to be important for this job (based on an analysis of 10 randomly selected job postings available at the university career center) include having the relevant undergraduate major (Management versus English) and overall undergraduate GPA (3.2 versus 2.5). Relevant work experience includes 3 years full-time work experience in customer service versus 3 years part-time work experience in clerical duties with limited interaction with customers.

Résumé

Two actual résumés of recent graduates applying for management positions were selected for use in this study from a sample of résumés available at the university career center. The résumé résumés were selected based on their match with the manipulated criteria described above. To ensure confidentiality, all identifying information was eliminated from the actual résumés.

Design and Procedure

A 2x2x2 between-subjects factorial design was used. The three between-subjects factors were sex of the recruiter (male versus female), friendship with the job applicant (yes versus no), and applicant's qualification (qualified versus not qualified). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions based on four hypothetical scenarios. Each participant was presented with a scenario requiring him or her to assume that he or she was a Human Resource manager responsible for employee selection. The experiment materials included a vignette describing the company background and the situation for the hiring decision, one actual resume, a job description of the position needed to be filled, and a demographic questionnaire. Shown below is the scenario in which the HR manager is described as having a friendship tie with the job candidate considered to be not qualified for the job.

You are a Human Resource Manager at a local company in Southeast Texas. You have been with the company for 5 years and gained significant credibility. Many people have applied for jobs at your company given its steady financial performance and low turnover over the past few years. As you screen through the stack of resumes for a Customer Service Representative Supervisor position, you learn that one of the applicants is your best friend from high school. His/her resume is attached for your review.

Dependent Measures

Résumé Assessment

After reading the scenario, participants were asked to review the job description and the job applicant's résumé. One item was used to measure the subject's assessment of the applicant's résumé. Participants were asked to judge the overall qualification of the applicant for the job using a 5-point scale (1 = very unqualified; 5 = very qualified).

Screening Decisions

One item was used to measure the likelihood of the applicant being offered a subsequent interview and one item was used to measure the likelihood of that the applicant would receive a job offer. Participants were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale (1 = very unlikely; 5 = very likely) their decision regarding the likelihood of offering an interview and job offer to the applicant.

Screening Decision Satisfaction

One item was created to measure the extent to which the recruiter was satisfied with the screening decision (1 = very dissatisfied, 5 = very satisfied).

Demographic Form

Typical demographic data were also collected to control for any potential variance in the hypothesized relationships that might be accounted for by demographic variables such as gender, age, ethnic background, job experience, and managerial experience.

Results

Manipulation Check

Two items were created to determine whether participants comprehended the manipulation. These items were administered at the end of the experiment. One item asked whether the applicant depicted in the résumé they evaluated was viewed as being qualified for the job. Results showed that participants were able to differentiate between the résumé deemed highly qualified for the job and the one not qualified for the job, $t(189) = 10.61, p < .001$. One item asked the participants whether the recruiter was friends with the applicant. Again, results showed that participants successfully recognized the job applicant was a friend indicating the manipulations worked as expected, $t(189) = 5.27, p < .001$. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among variables in the study. Table 2 shows the multivariate test results via a generalized linear model.

Hypothesis 1 refers to the possible interaction between friendship and the applicant's qualifications. As shown in Table 2, the interaction effect between friendship and the applicant's qualifications was significant, $F(2, 183) = 3.73, p < .05$. However, the direction of the effect was opposite to our expectation. The mean rating for the interview offer for unqualified applicants with friendship ties with the recruiter was higher than the mean rating for the interview offer for those lacking such ties ($M = 3.02$ vs. $M = 2.38, p < .05$). For the qualified applicants, the mean rating for the interview offer did not vary as a result of any friendship ties ($M = 4.08$ vs. $M = 4.26, p > .05$).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations among variables in the study (N = 203)

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Sex (0=male, 1=female)	.47	.50	-													
2. Age	23.44	4.82	.01	-												
3. White	-	-	-.05	-.01	-											
4. Black	-	-	.16	.15	-.58	-										
5. Asian	-	-	-.06	-.11	-.50	-.15	-									
6. Hispanic	-	-	-.10	-.05	-.38	-.11	-.10	-								
7. Job experience	4.40	2.09	.02	.06	.04	-.06	.03	-.02	-							
8. Managerial experience*	.56	.74	-.13	.19	.05	-.03	-.02	-.02	.21	-						
9. Length of managerial experience*	4.02	1.36	-.08	.32	-.01	.04	.09	-.07	.14	.10	-					
10. Human capital (KSA)	.48	.50	.05	.07	-.14	.02	.16	.09	-.07	.01	-.09	-				
11. Subjective resume assessment	3.43	1.12	.10	.02	-.14	.04	.10	.07	-.08	.03	-.08	.61	-			
12. Friendship (yes v. no)	.50	.50	-.01	.02	.09	-.03	-.05	-.04	-.02	.03	.13	.03	.21	-		
13. Interview offer	3.40	1.30	-.05	.00	-.04	.04	.08	-.04	-.03	.09	-.04	.57	.56	.10	-	
14. Job offer	3.00	1.15	-.03	-.07	.12	.05	.18	-.05	-.05	.08	-.05	.55	.60	.05	.76	-
15. Screening decision satisfaction	3.39	1.25	.07	-.10	-.05	-.00	.05	.07	-.08	.02	-.13	.53	.71	.07	.62	.69

Note: Human capital (KSA) was coded as 1 = qualified, 0 = not qualified.

N = 89.

Correlations equal to or greater than .14 are significant at $p < .05$ (two-tailed)

Correlations equal to or greater than .18 are significant at $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

Table 2
General Linear Model Multivariate Test Results for Interview and Job Offer

Variables	Wilk's λ	F	df	p value	Eta squared
Gender	.998	.143	2, 183	.867	.002
Age	.984	1.488	2, 183	.228	.016
White	.995	.452	2, 183	.637	.005
Black	.997		2, 183	.759	.003
Asian	.999	.277	2, 183	.886	.001
Hispanic	.994	.121	2, 183	.551	.006
Customer Service experience	.999	.598	2, 183	.935	.001
Managerial experience	.985	.067	2, 183	.253	.015
Friendship vs. no friendship	.993	1.385	2, 183	.535	.007
Qualified vs. not qualified	.629	.627	2, 183	.000	.371
Friendship * Qualification	.961	54.00	2, 183	.026	.039
Gender * Friendship	.990	0	2, 183	.386	.010
Gender * Qualification	.993	3.734	2, 183	.522	.007
Gender * Friendship * Qualification	.999	.956	2, 183	.882	.001
		.652			
		.126			

Figure 2 shows a graphic illustration of this interaction effect. In other words, we replicated Nguyen et al.'s study (2003) finding in that we found social capital influenced resume screening. However, whereas Nguyen and colleagues showed social capital aiding qualified applicants and hurting unqualified applicants, we found that social capital aided those applicants who otherwise would have been considered unqualified for the job. Hypothesis 1 thus received mixed support.

Hypothesis 2 refers to the possible interaction effect between the gender of recruiters and friendship. As shown in Table 2, this interaction effect was not significant, $F(2, 183) = 0.96$. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported. Hypothesis 3 states that recruiters will give more favorably evaluate the résumés of applicants whom they know personally than those whom they don't. As shown in Table 1, friendship was positively and significantly related to subjective résumé assessment ($r = .21, p < .01$). This provides preliminary support for Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4 states that recruiters' use of friendship in making screening decisions is mediated by subjective résumé assessment. To test Hypotheses 3 and 4, a series of path analyses were conducted to test our hypothesized model as depicted in Figure 1. A covariance matrix was entered into LISREL version 8.30 (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1999). To assess the overall model fit, we used four popular goodness-of-fit statistics – the chi-square statistic, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Fan, Thompson, & Wang, 1999). Models that have GFI and AGFI values close to .95 are considered indicative of a good fit, and a RMSEA value of .08 is considered acceptable (Fan et al., 1999).

Whereas a good fit only indicates that the model is consistent with the data and does not mean that the model is correct, or even the best model, we tested alternative

models nested within the hypothesized model as part of the analyses (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984). The comparison between each competing model and the hypothesized model was assessed using chi-square difference test. Four models were fitted to test the overall hypothesized model. The first model contained three observed variables, i.e., friendship, resume assessment, and interview offer. Friendship was hypothesized to cause more favorable résumé assessment, which in turn causes a higher potential for an interview offer. In this model, the indirect path from friendship to interview offer was constrained to be zero. The second model was similar to Model 1, except that the path from friendship to interview offer was relaxed and estimated. If the fit of Model 2 did not significantly improve over that of model 1, there will be support for full mediation of resume assessment on the friendship and interview offer relationship (James & Brett, 1984; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002).

Table 3 shows the fit statistics of competing models described above. As shown in Table 3, Model 2 was a saturated model, so its fit was perfect. Yet, inspection of the Table3 shows that its fit did not significantly improve beyond that of Model 1. Specifically, adding the indirect path from friendship to interview offer results in losing one degree of freedom with a chi-square difference of .42, not significant at $p < .05$ level. Further, the path itself was not statistically significant ($\gamma = -.02, p > .05$). Thus, we decided to retain Model 1. Full mediation based on James and Brett's (1984) recommended test for mediation effect was supported. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported. Further, the path from friendship to resume assessment was positive and significant, supporting Hypothesis 3 ($\gamma = .19, p < .05$).

Two more Models were fitted to test the overall hypothesized model as depicted in Figure 1. Model 3 contained five observed variables, i.e., applicant's résumé, friendship, résumé assessment, interview offer, and job offer. In this model, résumé assessment was hypothesized to be caused by both the applicants' résumé and the applicants' friendship with the recruiter. This résumé assessment was hypothesized to, in turn cause a subsequent interview offer which in turn would cause a job offer. All indirect paths were freely estimated in this model. Model 4 was similar to Model 3, but the non-significant paths were constrained to zero. As shown in Table 3, Model 3 was a saturated model, and thus, its fit was perfect. However, three indirect paths were not statistically significant. They were: from résumé to job offer ($\gamma = .07$); friendship to interview offer ($\gamma = .02$), and friendship to job offer ($\gamma = -.06$). Because of this, the fit of Model 3 did not significantly improve beyond the fit of Model 4, a more constrained model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.25, \Delta df = 3, p > .05$). The overall hypothesized model was thus generally supported.

Hypothesis 5 states that screening decisions in which social capital is taken into account will yield more satisfaction than those in which such a factor is lacking. As shown in Table 1, the correlation between subjective résumé assessment and screening decision satisfaction was positive and significant ($r = .71, p < .01$). The correlation between objective résumé content (i.e., applicant's human capital and screening decision satisfaction) was also positive and significant ($r = .53, p < .01$). A test of two related correlations (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) was conducted and as a result, the two correlations were significantly different from each other ($t = 4.04, df = 200, p < .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Figure 2
Interaction Effect of Friendship and Qualification on Interview Offer

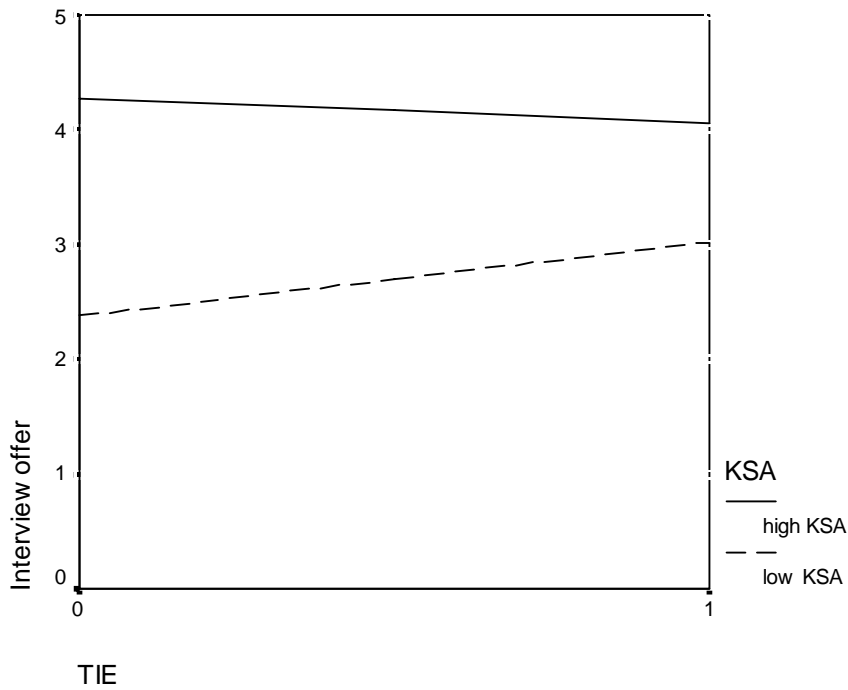


Table 3
Fit statistics of competing models

	<i>df</i>	χ^2	$\Delta\chi^2$	Sig.	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA
Model 1	1	.42	-	-	1.0	.99	.00
Model 2	0	.00	.42	>.05	-	-	.00
Model 3	0	.00	-	-	-	-	.00
Model 4	3	4.25	4.25	>.05	.99	.96	.046

Note: *df* = degree of freedom; χ^2 = chi-square value; $\Delta\chi^2$ = chi-square change; GFI = Goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.

Model 1: Friendship → Resume assessment → Interview offer. Friendship → Interview offer path constrained to zero.
 Model 2: Similar to Model 1 but the friendship – interview offer path freely estimated.

Model 3: Friendship and Resume → Resume assessment → Interview offer → Job offer. All indirect paths estimated.

Model 4: Similar to Model 4 but the indirect paths from Resume to Job offer, Friendship to Interview Offer, and Friendship to Job offer were constrained to zero.

Model 4 was the best fitted model

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined whether HR recruiters' friendship ties with job applicants influenced subsequent screening decisions and the mechanism by which such friendship operates in decision making. The study replicated and extended previous research in four important ways. First, I found that recruiters did incorporate friendship, a form of social capital, into screening decisions. However, the influence of friendship was channeled through favorable résumé assessment, which led to increased likelihood of making an interview offer. Whereas previous research assumed a direct relationship between friendship tie and interview offer, such an effect in this study was not found.

The evidence that friendship aided applicants who otherwise would have been judged as not qualified in getting a more favorable résumé assessment was intriguing. A possible explanation for this finding is that less-qualified applicants or applicants with lower person-job (P-J) fit may have been judged as having a better person-organization (P-O) fit. Indeed, research on P-O fit confirmed that recruiters relied on applicants' values and personality as indicators of P-O fit, rather than applicants' education, training, and work experience (Kristof-Brown, 2000). In this study, recruiters may have used friendship in helping them judge an applicant's P-O fit. Given the evidence of P-O fit being more important than P-J fit in reducing turnover (Verquer et al., 2003), recruiters' use of friendship in making screening decisions is beneficial to the organization. This study's finding also corroborated with earlier research showing that recruiters varied widely in their assessment of high GPAs and job fit (McKinney, Carlson, & Mecham, 2003). Specifically, McKinney and colleagues found that high GPAs listed on resumes did not always guarantee a job interview. In other words, recruiters used a host of information rather than solely using GPA in making screening decisions.

Secondly, the finding that recruiters' use of friendship in making screening decisions led to higher levels of satisfaction with the decision was consistent with previous research examining the influence of friendship within top management team decision making (Francis, 1995). It provided the sorely needed evidence linking recruiters' use of social capital to an organization's competitive advantage.

Third, the finding that friendship has no direct effect on interview offer, but an indirect effect through favorable résumé assessment shows that friendship might be a complex construct that warrants more research attention.

Fourth, this study, coupled with earlier research reporting recruiters' ability to reliably assess applicants' resume information in terms of cognitive ability and personality traits predictive of job performance (Brown & Campion, 1994; Cole et al., 2003), has practical implications for organizations as well. It appears worthwhile for organizations to encourage recruiters to develop their network of colleagues and friends given this study's results. Speaking differently, according to Burt (1992), recruiters' friendship with the job applicant represents a non-redundant or disconnected contact. Non-redundant contacts provide more valuable sources of information to the recruiters than redundant contacts. Hence, the potential value non-redundant contacts yield is additive, rather than overlapping in network benefits. To jobseekers, this study shows that they should invest time and effort in networking to better capitalize their qualifications. On the other hand, this study showed that high qualification in terms of human capital variables, such as high GPAs, may not always guarantee the applicant an initial job

interview without networking. The old saying of “who you know is more important than what you know” seems to resonate well with this study’s findings.

Despite the use of actual résumés, this study does not approximate actual résumé screening in two ways. First, the use of students as recruiters, despite the fact that nearly half of them had experience screening résumés on the job, limits the extent to which the results will generalize to an organizational setting. Second, the student recruiters experienced no consequences for their résumé assessment. Given these limitations, what recruiters *will* do on the job is not yet as prescriptive as one would like to see based on this study’s results.

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Author's Notes

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