ABSTRACT

This study explored applicant attribution-reaction theory (AART) to examine women’s reactions to a selection system. Comparisons in reactions between men and women were evaluated based on intentions to reapply (withdrawal). Participants were given negative feedback about their performance in two conditions. The first condition, feedback was provided in a “threatening” or masculine domain while in the second condition feedback was provided in an “identity safe” or feminine domain. Results indicated little support for threat condition, and demonstrated mixed support for the role of gender on women’s withdrawal. Marginal support was found for differences in attributions between men and women towards their performance. A partial mediator (self-perceptions) and moderators (gender centrality, discrimination beliefs, stereotype threat) were investigated. Gender centrality and stereotype threat were informing variables, and were most relevant for females compared to males. In sum, the salience of gender appeared impact women’s impressions of a selection procedure.

INDEX WORDS: Selection, Women, Attributions, Gender differences, Stereotype threat, Applicant Reactions, Withdrawal
A GENDERED REACTION: THE ROLE OF GENDER AND ATTRIBUTIONS IN WOMEN'S
WITHDRAWAL

by

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DEDICATION

For my mother, whose unconditional love & support pushed me forward in those moments where I was unable to push myself.
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To all those who provided your constructive as well as necessary feedback throughout this process, I am sincerely grateful. I am forever indebted to you all
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Applied research has demonstrated considerable interest in assessing the manner in which potential applicants view the employee selection process. Thus, applicant reactions (AR) literature has been primarily concerned with the “attitudes, affect, or cognitions an individual might have about the hiring process” (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Researchers have demonstrated the importance of reactions by correlating these initial impressions to constructs such as perceptions of fairness (Gilliand, 1993), motivation (Ryan, Ployhart, Greguras, & Schmitt, 1998) job acceptance intentions (Macan, Avedon, Paese, & Smith, 1994), and applicant perceptions of their performance (Chan, 1997; Chan, Schmitt, Deshon, Clause, & Delbridge 1997; Chan, Schmitt, Jennings, Clause, & Delbridge, 1998). Gilliand’s (1993) model proposed that situational factors (e.g. test type) within the employee selection process affect perceptions of fairness and influence the applicant’s level of attraction to an organization. This model signified the importance of using selection tests that are a) perceived as relevant to the actual hiring process and b) capable of producing results and/or outcomes that are perceived as fair. The model also indicated the overall importance of attitudes (e.g. perceived fairness) to the appeal of an organization for an individual. Thus, the basic premise for researching such impressions is to ultimately discover how reactions potentially influence an applicant’s overall perception of an organization (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). With growing diversity in the organizational pool of
applicants, understanding ways in which overall perceptions of organizations are potentially affected by group membership is a critical area for organizational research.

**Signaling and Influential Messages in Hiring**

Diversity researchers have often emphasized the need to be aware of certain selection procedures which can inadvertently make a particular organization appear less attractive to qualified women and minority or stigmatized individuals (Rynes, 1993). In addition, employers acknowledging the benefits of diverse perspectives to their continued growth and productivity are making greater efforts to appeal to women and minorities to join their organizations (Thomas & Wise, 1999). Therefore assessing perceptions of diverse groups to selection processes is seemingly of increasing importance.

Research indicates that certain strategies actually represent organizational signals to underrepresented groups. Signaling theory (Rynes and Boudreau, 1986) suggests that organizational messages during recruitment and selection are actual cues that individuals participating in the process pick up on and respond to. Theory also suggests that these signals have the capacity to both positively and negatively affect organizational outcomes (Rynes and Boudreau, 1986). Moreover, signals that adversely influence minorities or stigmatized individuals are potentially negative outcomes organizations cannot afford to leave unmonitored. More recently, Ragins and Cornwell (2002) introduced the term “chilly climates” to describe situations in which members of minority or stigmatized groups encounter cold organizational environments where they may feel isolated, ignored, or discriminated against. Ragins and Cornwell spoke directly to the experiences of gay individuals who often find themselves in work environments that are not “gay friendly.” Although the experiences of a gay individual in the workplace are unique to being minority at work; these experiences may not be
that dissimilar to those of a female executive manager who finds herself a minority amongst mostly male counterparts; or the African American man who finds himself a token within his work team; or effectually the woman who perceives a threat to her performance in a hiring scenario. Women specifically, in certain situations, may experience their “minority” in ways very similar to other stigmatized groups in society. Organizational messages such as those described by Ragins and Cornwell (2002) or representational cues such as those suggested by signaling theory (Rynes and Boudreau, 1986) are likely to influence reactions within a hiring process. Messages or cues received which are particularly gender salient may elicit a unique reaction from women who experience their minority in an actual hiring process. The salience of gender on reactions is a necessary area of investigation; thus the current study will explore the impact of gender on reactions by examining withdrawal from a selection procedure.

*Gender and Withdrawal as a Reaction*

Applicant decisions to withdraw from hiring processes directly impacts an organization’s ability to obtain qualified talent, which can ultimately affect an organization’s bottom line (Hauskenecht et al., 2004). Further, applicant withdrawal has at least two major implications for organizations. The first addresses the issue of adverse impact. Organizations are responsible for ensuring their selection procedures do not differentially affect withdrawal rates across demographic groups (Ployhart, McFarland, & Ryan, 2002). For example, women choosing to self-select out of a particular selection process could be deemed as adverse impact. The second implication has to do with the evidence that selection procedures impact perceptions of applicants and influence attitudes towards the organization itself (Macan et al., 1994, Schmidt & Gilliland, 1992; Ployhart et. al., 2002). This evidence suggests that employers using certain selection procedures are also accountable for negative attitudes and behaviors among job
incumbents and newcomers. Individuals who have negative reactions to selection processes are very capable of passing on negative information, or even pursuing litigation against the organization involved (Rynes 1993; Ployhart & Harold, 2004). For these major reasons, investigating applicant withdrawal is quite beneficial for organizations. The research has been limited in this area for a couple reasons.

First, unfavorable information regarding an organization’s selection procedures can negatively impact the image as well as the reputation of the organization (Ployhart et. al., 2002). Another less obvious reason is the absence of an explicit psychological theory to research applicant behavior such as withdrawal. However, applicant attribution-reaction theory provides a critical means to assess both how and why such behavior occurs.

**Current Study**

This study examines whether perceptions about a selection process can result in concerns related to talent retention for an organization, especially concerning women. An organization is impacted by the presence as well as the absence of talented individuals in the applicant pool. The absence of talented applicants, including those who have turned away, is a potentially pervasive behavioral outcome with significant implications for organizations (Hauskenchleth, Day, & Thomas, 2004). Even more critical is the extent to which a shrinking applicant pool adversely affects women as viable applicants. Women who encounter signals in an organization’s hiring process that alert them to their minority status may be more likely to withdraw. Therefore, an organization is likely to witness the absence of disproportionately more women given an already narrowly defined pool of applicants.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE & HYPOTHESES OVERVIEW

Recently, Ployhart & Harold (2004) suggested that previous studies, while earnest in their endeavors to address applicant reactions to actual tests and performance information, have yet to examine the full scope of potential differences in applicants’ responses. They suggested assessing applicant reactions requires one to acknowledge the presence of attributions, prior to investigating more distal outcomes (e.g. perceptions of fairness, perceived organizational justice, organizational attractiveness, etc.). More importantly, after recognizing the presence of attributions, it is imperative to also understand their potential influence. Applicant Attribution-Reaction Theory (AART) is a theory designed to investigate how applicant perceptions are formed and additionally why they initiate relevant affective and behavioral outcomes (Ployhart & Harold, 2004). This theory describes group differences in reactions to a selection measure as being due to both the nature of the selection system and individual differences between participants. Although many studies in AR literature have explored attributes such as test attitudes and perceptions of fairness, few have explored the possibility that all of these attributes represent smaller pieces of a much larger construct: the way in which an individual chooses to explain events.

The Role of Attributions in Withdrawal
Research has theoretically discussed the presence of attributions towards performance as occurring in normative stages (Ployhart & Harold, 2004). The causal attributions search occurs in response to an objective event. For example, in response to performance feedback, individuals will attempt to reach a conclusion regarding an attribution or an explanation of their performance. This attribution search most often occurs when there is incongruence between expectations and actual outcomes (e.g. rejection from a hiring process). For example, an incongruence could be represented by an unsuccessful performance on an applicant assessment during a hiring process. The attribution represents a method which to assuage the dissonance obtained from the event (Ployhart & Harold, 2004). The salience of the event is said to trigger an explanation as to why the individual has received dissonant information between expectations of performance and actual performance. Moreover, perceptions are theoretical consequences of attributions; and both perceptions and attributions directly influence behavioral consequences (Ployhart & Harold, 2004). This study will examine the presence of attributions in a selection sequence in efforts to further explain reactions to the sequence. It is expected that attributions will occur in response to our objective event, negative performance feedback and help explain our behavioral outcome, withdrawal.

Ployhart and Ryan (1997) and Ployhart et. al. (2002) found evidence for causal attributions and their role in explaining applicant perceptions towards a selection procedure. Using Weiner’s (1986) model of causal dimensionality, Ployhart et al. investigated attributions on three dimensions locus, stability, and controllability. They suggested that favorable reactions were theoretically attributed to internal, stable, and controllable causes, while the opposite external, unstable, and uncontrollable causes were the reasons for unfavorable reactions. Assessing the disproportionate withdrawal of women and minorities, stability for both men and
women, as in attributions that were considered to be lasting over time proved to be an important theme in participant decisions to withdraw. Women specifically, reported internal reasons (e.g. ability) for their withdrawal more often than men. More importantly participants that made more internal and stable attributions demonstrated a greater inclination to withdraw. This was a phenomenon that occurred more often for women in the hiring process. Ployhart et. al. established evidence for causal attributions in their investigation of withdrawal. In addition, their results suggest that gender is a revealing factor. Similar to former studies it is the expectation of this study that there will be an effect for gender on the outcome variable withdrawal.

The Role of Gender

In theory, applicant reactions are uniquely based on individual experiences and beliefs. Furthermore, current research indicates that such experiences, beliefs, and subsequent perceptions are often heavily influenced by an individual’s gender (Bell, Harrison, & McLaughlin, 2000, Heilman, Battle, Keller, & Lee, 1998, Martins & Parsons, 2007). This could very well be due to the different ways in which socialization occurs for men and women in society. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that men and women, having different experiences as it relates to their identification with their gender, are likely to also make different attributions or explanations of outcomes. Differences in attributions are believed to help further explain existing differences in reactions. Research has investigated reactions in women towards specific organizational strategy.

Kravitz (1995) assessed reactions of women and minorities towards diversity strategies and concluded that diversity strategies weighted solely on group membership or demographic status are often resisted by those meant to benefit from them (a similar sentiment was later noted
by Slaughter, Sinar, & Bachiochi, 2002). For example, women reacted more positively to
diversity policies benefiting women when it was understood that merit played a role as opposed
to when the policy simply preferentially selected women because of their gender (Heilman et al.,
1998). Some women may believe that such aiding policies isolate them as needing additional
help or being less competent compared to men. Attribution theory has been used to explain
women’s disassociation with policies perceived as granting preferential treatment. Disassociating
attributions are made in order to avoid the stigma of being perceived as only having received
such treatment based on gender (Heilman, Block, & Stathatos, 1997; Heilman, Block, & Lucas,
particular diversity management strategy are largely an individual occurrence and are based on
beliefs about the attributes associated with the strategy in general. This suggests that not only
will differences in reactions to diversity initiatives occur due to individual level attributions but
also due to different perceptions of attributions that can be made about the strategy itself.
Simply, women will potentially differ from men and individually differ from other women in
their perceptions of the diversity strategy in use and will likely make attributions regarding the
strategy that are unique to their individual experiences and beliefs.

Martins and Parsons (2007) investigated a similar circumstance that within-group
differences in attitudes and beliefs among women would impact the effect of diversity
management strategies on perceived organizational attractiveness. They examined three
different attitudinal measures: 1) gender identity centrality, or the “consciousness of an
individual belonging to his or her gender group (p. 866),” 2) affirmative action attitudes, and 3)
beliefs in discrimination against women. Their results demonstrated that individual differences
on all three measures swayed reactions to gender diversity management and relevant
organizational attractiveness. Women higher in gender centrality responded more positively to a strategy that emphasized diversity towards women. The reactions of women towards these recruitment strategies differed in terms of previous experiences with discrimination, ideals regarding preferential treatment, individual identification with their gender. This study suggested women’s potential dissociating responses to certain diversity strategies represent differences due to attributions which occur at the individual level and will differ based upon unique perceptions and experiences of each woman. Affirmative action attitudes were not specifically addressed in this study, as it was believed due to the design of our study and nature of our casual event (negative feedback) that gender centrality and beliefs in discrimination against women would be the most relevant variables. It was expected that gender centrality and beliefs in discrimination against women will influence women’s reactions to a selection system.

Another possible influence on women’s reactions is their potential vulnerability in performance due to the salience of their gender. Steele and Aronson (1995) suggested individuals who represent a minority, such as women working in a male-dominated workforce, encounter unique threats to their performance. Circumstances for threat occur when an individual is forced to perform in an arena for which a negative stereotype about the individual’s group applies (Steele, 1997). These unique threats can impede the consciousness of stigmatized individuals and communicate “accusations of stereotypes that specifically devalue one’s group or social identity (p. 277)” (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005). Furthermore, it is their identification with the stereotypic domain and the subsequent concern they experience about being negatively stereotyped within it that causes them to be vulnerable to threat scenarios (Steele, 1997).

Spencer, Steele, and Quinn (1999) tested vulnerability of threat in women’s math performance. They demonstrated that performance on the test could be improved by lowering
stereotype threat and informing women that the test itself produced no gender differences. On the other hand, when the test was described as producing gender differences, women underperformed compared to qualified men on the math test. The salience of gender when performing in a perceived masculine domain caused women to be more vulnerable to stereotype threat, thus affecting their performance. Later Davies, Spencer, and Steele (2005) tested the affect of stereotype threat on women’s aspirations to lead on a leadership task. Participants were shown television commercials in two conditions: neutral-commercial and stereotypic-commercial. Women expressed less interest in leader when they were exposed to the stereotypic-commercials. Subsequently, in a follow up study, the researchers explored whether removing the vulnerability of stereotype threat would restore women’s interest to lead in the leadership task. The presence of identity-safe information elicited more positive results regarding their aspirations to lead. The researchers were able to establish a domain that safe to the social identity of women, and in addition create more favorable responses from women in that environment. Although this study is not particularly interested in evaluating positive leadership aspirations in women, the effect of identity-safe information on women’s responses appears quite profound. Thus for the sake our study, concerning reactions, the presence of threat should elicit less favorable reactions (higher withdrawal), while identity-safe information should restore more positive reactions (less withdrawal).

Interaction of Gender & Attributions on Withdrawal

Beyer (1999) suggested that women make less self-confidence protecting attributions given the occurrence of success or failure in performance. Beyer demonstrated that when given a successful outcome, such as an A on a subject test, women favored effort attributions such as “I paid attention” or “I studied”, while men would attribute such an outcome to their ability.
Conversely for a failure, such as an F on a test, females attributed the cause of their failure to their own ability, where males stated effort attributions such as low interest or lack of studying as the cause. For males, blaming failure in performances on less stable causes (e.g., lack of studying) which can potentially be changed in the future serves to shield their self-confidence. On the other hand, females acting less on behalf to protect their self-confidence attributed their failure to absolute causes or those that may not be susceptible to change in the future. In this study there is evidence to suggest that given an unfavorable outcome, women make attributions of their performance that are internal, stable, and controllable.

Beyer (1999) also assessed the type of attributions made when the test was perceived as masculine in subject matter (e.g., Algebra). A failed performance in a masculine subject matter was attributed to an internal cause, like absence of ability, more by women than men. Confirming the findings of Beyer (1999), women again attributed unfavorable outcomes to internal, stable, and controllable causes. This phenomenon in women is the direct opposite of the self-protecting behavior that occurs in men and has been referred to as behavior that is “self-defeating” (Slusher & Anderson, 1989, p. 12). Based on these findings, it is expected that women, more than men, will make more self-defeating attributions about their performance. Thus, there will be a main effect for both gender on causal attributions, and subsequently gender on withdrawal.

Hypothesis 1: Overall, women will make more internal and stable attributions towards their unsuccessful performance than men; and more women compared to men, will be more likely to withdraw.

On the other hand, it is necessary to evaluate the extent to which attributions towards an applicant’s unsuccessful performance on a selection procedure remain stable even if there is no threat to performance. The degree to which an attribution like ‘ability’ is internally reinforced
may have effects on women as they assess their capacity to perform. Davies et al. (2002) provided women with an identity-safe condition to perform and demonstrated that perceived threat can be eliminated despite performing in a previously threatening domain. In a “safe” environment, where gender is less salient, women will feel less vulnerable and make more adaptive attributions of their performance. Therefore, it is expected that an identity-safe selection environment will remove performance vulnerability in women, eliciting more favorable responses. More explicitly, it is expected that women who encounter a selection environment that feels safe to their social identity will make less internal attributions about their performance. It is expected that women in these situations will be more willing to try again or reapply to the organization in the future. Thus, provided the condition were identity-safe, women will view their nonsuccess as less stable over time. Therefore,

**Hypothesis 2:** There will be an interaction between gender and threat such that women in the threatening condition will make more internal and stable attributions towards their unsuccessful performance and have higher intentions to withdraw than women in the identity-safe condition.

**Moderators**

**Centrality of gender identity.** Prior research has demonstrated that gender-related attitudes and beliefs are important variables that affect issues related to gender in the workplace (Martins & Parsons, 2007). Specifically, women higher in gender centrality reacted more positively to gender-diversity management programs that emphasized outcomes more favorable to women. In addition, previous research has indicated that individuals judge their status and outcomes according to the objective situation and the situation of relevant others (Kawakami & Dion, 1993). Further, self-categorization theory (SCT) informs us that *salience* of group
membership leads to the accentuation of similarities between oneself and one’s in-group when in-group identities are relevant and emphasizes differences between the in-group and out-group when out-group identities are relevant (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Women higher in gender centrality may experience a heightened salience of differences between themselves and members of their out-group (male applicants) when the performance domain is perceived as masculine. For example, if there is a perceived threat to performance, women whose gender is more central to their identity would more likely accentuate the differences between their performance and others’ in terms of their gender.

Oppositely, women higher in gender centrality may have a heightened salience of similarities between themselves and members of their in-group (other female applicants) when the domain is perceived as more neutral or feminine. Women in this condition would tend to accentuate the similarities between themselves and other female performers. Evaluating their performance on a hiring assessment, women who receive unfavorable feedback will likely compare their performance to referent women depending on the salience of their gender identity. It is expected that salience of gender in performance will impact intentions to reapply when the performance feedback is negative, especially amongst women higher in gender centrality. Thus, it is expected that gender centrality will have a moderating role on the relationship between attributions and withdrawal.

Hypothesis 3a: Gender centrality will moderate the relationship between causal attributions and withdrawal and thus women higher in gender centrality will have higher intentions to withdraw.

Beliefs in discrimination against women in the workplace. Martins & Parsons (2007) also explored the role of beliefs that discrimination against women occurs in the workplace. They
demonstrated that individuals differ in the extent to which they agree that discrimination against women occurs in the workplace. Previous research by Konrad & Hartmann (2001) suggested that the belief in discrimination against women in the workplace subsequently impacts attitudes towards affirmative action programs. Women who hold beliefs that there is discrimination against women in the workplace are more likely to support the existence of affirmative action programs and view their presence as warranted (Konrad & Hartmann, 2001). For women who do not believe that discrimination against women exists there is no perceived necessity of such programs. Martins & Parsons (2007) found this is also the case amongst women exposed to diversity management programs. Women with stronger beliefs in discrimination against them in the workplace responded more positively to diversity programs that emphasized the presence of women in top management.

In addition relative deprivation theory (Pettigrew, 1967) suggests that individuals compare unfavorable outcomes and feelings between one’s in-group status and the status of referent others. For example, in the perceived threat condition where gender is more salient, women will likely compare their unfavorable selection outcome to referent men. Women who hold strong discrimination beliefs may attribute their performance as something specific to the organization (e.g. perceived fairness) and have less favorable views towards the hiring organization. It is expected that beliefs in discrimination against women in the workplace will moderate attributions and relative withdrawal intentions.

*Hypothesis 3b: Beliefs in discrimination against women will moderate the relationship between casual attributions and withdrawal, and thus women who have more positive beliefs in discrimination will also have higher intentions to withdraw.*
Stereotype threat. Steele (1997) implicitly emphasizes the pertinence of self-relevance for a negative stereotype to be threatening. The situational influence of negative stereotypes is pervasive enough that the presence of threat triggers internal anxiety and feelings of inferiority (Steele, 1997). In addition, the severity of threat depends highly on the degree to which the stereotype has become a part of the individual’s self-definition. Women who experience a higher sense of threat to their performance may internalize feelings of doubt or inferiority in terms of their ability to perform well in a given arena. This inferiority may manifest itself in women’s attributions of their performance. Additionally, it may impede future evaluations of performance. Thus, it is expected that the stereotype threat will moderate the relationship of attributions and withdrawal.

Hypothesis 3c: Stereotype threat will moderate the relationship between causal attributions and withdrawal, and thus women who demonstrate more vulnerability to threat will have higher intentions to withdraw.

Mediator

The AART Model theoretically discusses the emergence of self-perceptions, or one’s feeling towards his or self-performance as a potential mediator between attributions and whether applicants decide to withdraw from the selection process. Unlike attributions, which represent explanations, perceptions represent attitudinal manifestations of attribution processes. Further, Ployhart & Harold (2004) suggested perceptions of fairness, as well as self-perceptions, theoretically are consequences of attributions. Self-perceptions or how the applicant feels towards their performance will be examined for partial mediation between the causal attributions made and the intentions of the applicant to withdraw. It is expected that women will report more feelings of failure or worrying about future performances and have fewer intentions to reapply
given an unfavorable selection outcome. It is further expected that feelings towards performance amongst women will impact subsequent intentions to withdraw.

_Hypothesis 4: Self-perceptions of performance, especially for women, will partially mediate the relationship between attributions and intentions to withdraw such that more internal attributions for the unsuccessful performance will decrease self-perceptions and increase withdrawal._
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to test perceptions of potential job titles. Thirty-three students enrolled in Psychology courses at a large public southeastern university voluntarily participated in the pilot. The sample consisted of 20 women and 13 men with an average age of 20. They were given course credit upon completion of the survey. Participants were asked to indicate their perceptions of a set of job titles by assessing if the titles appeared more masculine or more feminine. Participants used a 7-point Likert scale to rank titles across the two domains. The goal was to find two titles that elicited the largest contrast in masculine/feminine perceptions. T-tests indicated the largest contrast in perceptions in male versus female job titles for the following positions: Operations Manager and Diversity Manager. These titles were chosen to represent “threatening” and “identity-safe” conditions, respectively, for the main study.

Main Study

Participants were recruited to participate in the main study via an online survey. They were randomly assigned to one of two conditions corresponding to the chosen job listings. A total of 317 participants responded to the email survey, but only 270 actually completed the survey. Of the 270, the sample included 75.2% women and 24.8% men, and had an average age of 20.29. Approximately 78% of participants were White/Caucasian, 9% were Asian, 7% Black/African American, and about 3% indicated Latino/Hispanic and Other. Ninety-four percent of the sample was from the United States. The majority (42%) indicated they were
middle class, where the approximately 33% reported a parental household of income of $100,000-200,000. Lastly, most participants indicated a graduate/professional (74%) as the highest degree they hope to attain.

Procedure

By clicking on the survey link in the email, respondents gave their consent to participate. Participants were asked to imagine they were real applicants seeking full-time employment with a fictitious company, MelCorp Marketing Solutions. Participants were presented a recruitment letter from a Human Resources Director containing information about one of two job openings: Operations Manager or Diversity Manager (Appendix). The recruitment letter manipulated the threat conditions by including information regarding their predecessor in the position to which they were applying. Bergon, Block, and Echtenkamp (2006) used this same method to establish masculine versus feminine job domains. Thus, it was expected that this method will comparatively stimulate high versus low threat conditions. The predecessor information as adopted from the former study read as follows:

Matthew H. Smith was a high-achieving leader. His confidence and intrinsic ability to lead his team efficiently, led to a highly productive work environment. Matthew’s tenacity was vital to his rapid advancement within our organization.

Or

Margaret H. Smith was a very helpful leader. Her compassionate and nurturing ability to lead her team efficiently, led to a highly cohesive work environment. Margaret’s creativity was vital to her rapid advancement within our organization.

Participants were asked to take a few minutes to familiarize themselves with a detailed job description including a list of necessary tasks and the required knowledge, skills, and abilities their intentions to withdraw. Withdrawal was assessed by participants indicating the likelihood they would be 1) willing to reapply to the organization 2) willing to apply for similar positions with other organizations. Participants were debriefed and thanked for their role in the study.
Measures

Task performance. Participants responded to a 7-item open-ended judgment task. Each item contained behavioral situations and asked participants to provide the best method of action. The sample items were fictional in nature and compiled to represent typical work scenarios encountered by an Operations Manager or Diversity Manager. It was expected that the items for the task were broad enough to complement each position. It should be noted here that the items, although fictitious, were not meant to be scored; Instead, they were meant to elicit a reaction from participants based on a hiring situation. Thus, for purpose of this study, an empirically tested judgment task was not deemed necessary. The objective was to assess attributions of performance given the applicant assessment and relative outcome, not to assess actual ability. Participants were to perceive that they actually applied for the job and respond to dummy feedback about their performance.

Threat Manipulation was established with information about the former employee in the position: Matthew H. Smith vs. Margaret H. Smith. This information is provided in the Appendix. The male predecessor corresponded to the Operations Manager position and the female predecessor corresponded to the Diversity Manager. It was expected that using both the predecessor information and job postings would sufficiently manipulate perceived threat versus no perceived threat condition. Negative feedback was adopted from Ployhart & Harold (2004) and was demonstrated in each condition by the following statement:

"Your score on our applicant assessment has obtained you a ranking of 30th out of 100 applicants. Per organization standards, only the top 20 candidates we receive will be selected as potential hires. You have been added to our waitlist and will be notified of future opportunities to apply again. We thank you for your interest."

Causal attributions of failure outcomes. Causal attributions were measured using a modified-version of the measure used by Ployhart et al. (2002). Ployhart et al. (2002) used items
from Russell (1982)’s Causal Dimension Scale. This scale was comprised of nine original items corresponding to the three causal dimensions: locus, stability and controllability. This scale was later revised by McAuley (1992) to describe controllability in terms of two components, external and personal control on 12 items. The revised causal dimension scale II scale was used to assess the dimensions of the causal attributions on four dimensions: locus, external control, stability, and personal control. Tests for reliability revealed Cronbach’s alpha for causal attributions: locus, $\alpha = .762$, external control, $\alpha = .828$, stability, $\alpha = .753$, personal control, $\alpha = .889$.

**Belief in discrimination against women in the workplace.** Discrimination beliefs were measured using the three-item (?) scale adapted by Martins and Parsons (2007) based on the scales of Cameron (2001) and Konrad and Hartmann (2001). A sample item consists of “In general, women experience discrimination in hiring or promotion decisions.” Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale indicating 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree. Tests for reliability revealed Cronbach’s alpha for beliefs in discrimination, $\alpha = .754$.

**Stereotype threat.** Steele and Aronson’s (1995) stereotype threat scale was used. Originally the scale was used to reflect stereotype threat due to race. An adaptation of the scale reflected gender rather than race (Bergeron et al., 2006). Sample items include “The researchers expected me to do poorly on the activity because of my gender” and “Some people feel I have less ability because of my gender”. Participants demonstrated their level of agreement using a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. Tests for reliability revealed Cronbach’s alpha for stereotype threat, $\alpha = .740$.

**Gender centrality.** Gender identity centrality was measured using a four-item, 6-point Likert scale as used by Martins & Parsons (2007). Their gender identity centrality measure was an adaptation of scale used by Cameron (2001) and Cameron and Lalonde (2001).
A sample item is “I often think about the fact that I am a (wo)man.” Participants responded to items using a scale of 1 to 6 where 1 indicates “Strongly Disagree” and 6 indicates “Strongly Agree”. Tests for reliability revealed Cronbach’s alpha for gender centrality, α=.627.

**Self perceptions of performance.** Self-perceptions were assessed by gathering information pertaining to the participant’s feelings towards their performance. Self-perceptions were measured using the Beyer (1999) method. Researchers asked their participants to identify the emotion they experienced after receiving information about their performance. In the current study there were no relative successes, thus this study only adopted the portion of the measure that addressed potential negative emotions. Seven negative emotions were experienced given an unsuccessful outcome such as “I am disappointed in myself”, “I am ashamed of myself, “I am angry at myself”, and “I feel like a failure.” Participants were asked to identify which feeling most closely described what they experienced after discovering their ranking on the selection procedure. Tests for reliability revealed Cronbach’s alpha for self-perceptions, α=.921.

**Withdrawal.** Withdrawal in AR literature is most associated with individuals choosing opt out of a selection procedure. In this study, withdrawal of an applicant was measured as a final reaction to the selection task. The scale mean of two items adopted from Ployhart et al. (2002) measured the likelihood participants would reapply for the same job with the present organization and the likelihood that would apply for a similar job within another organization. The items appeared as follows: “How likely is it that you would reapply for a position in our organization in the future?” and “How likely is it that you would reapply for similar position with another organization?” The second item was asked to assess the extent to which the effect is perceived as something unique to the hiring organization. Each question was measured on a 7-
point Likert scale indicating 1 (*Very unlikely*) to 7 (*Very likely*). Tests for reliability revealed Cronbach’s alpha for *withdrawal*, $\alpha=.782$.

*Demographics*. Demographics included the following: *sex*, *age*, *year in school*, *racial/ethnic background*, *citizenship*, *social class*, *family household income*, and *highest degree hoped to attain*.

*Manipulation check*. A manipulation check was conducted to ensure that participants are appropriately responding to stimuli. The participants were asked to indicate the position to which they applied by asking whether information regarding an Operations Manager or Diversity Manager was presented. Participants were also asked the name and gender of the predecessor in the position. For example, in the high perceived threat condition, it was expected that participants will more often select the option “Male” and “Matthew H. Smith.” Useful information was expected if individuals correctly identify whether or not their predecessor was male or female.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Manipulation checks as mentioned were conducted to evaluate if participants in both threatening and identity-safe conditions appropriately indicated the gender of the predecessor. Cross-tabs analyses were conducted to assess the balance of the design. These results are indicated in Table 1. Cross tabs also indicated that of the 270 participants to complete the survey, only 191, correctly indicated the predecessor’s gender in their respective conditions. It was expected that only these participants may have experienced the threat manipulation. However, proportionately comparing men to women, it would seem that a fair amount of men and women did not attend to the threat manipulation. This was considered to be an informing piece regarding the strength of the stimuli, versus the actual reactions of participants. As such, results were conducted on both sets of data, those who attended (N = 191) and those who did not (N = 270). Though some emphasis was placed on the results of those who attended, it was believed that information such as the consistencies or discrepancies between data sets would produce some additional understanding of existing phenomena.

Means, standard deviations, correlations among all scale variables can be found in Table 2. This is reported on those participants who correctly attended to predecessor information. Means, standard deviations, and correlations for all participants are presented in Table 4.

Two 2(Gender) x 2(Operations Manager vs. Diversity Manager) between subjects analysis of variances (ANOVAs) were conducted on the outcome variable withdrawal. Results obtained from participants who responded to stimuli can be found in Table 3 and are reported
here. Main effects analyses was conducted to test the overall model hypotheses. These results indicated a lack of significance effect for gender on withdrawal (F (3, 185) = .050, p ≥ .05), suggesting there was no main effect for gender, and that men and women were not significantly different in their levels of withdrawal. Mean differences for this set of data indicated that men and women appeared to fair similarly in their decisions to or not to reapply. This finding was opposite to that obtained from analyses of all participants. Main effects analyses also revealed no significant effect for threat condition (threatening vs. identity-safe) (F (3, 185) = 1.701, p ≥ .05).

Thus, there was no main effect for condition on withdrawal, which initially indicated that despite the threat conditions, both men and women did not significantly differ in their intentions to withdraw from the selection procedure. This also partially demonstrated a lack of support for gender x threat interaction (Hypothesis 2), suggesting that men and women’s different levels of withdrawal were not due to the threat manipulation. Further, the interaction of gender by threat condition was not significant where (F (3, 185) = .000, p ≥ .05). It appeared that threat condition, overall in both sets of analyses had little influence on respondents’ decisions to withdraw.

Furthermore, as several individuals did not attend to this material it would seem that threat condition itself did little to reveal information about existing phenomena. This is one of the reasons analyses were also conducted on all participants.

Results obtained from analyses of all participants indicated a significant effect for gender on withdrawal (F (3, 260) = 4. 186, p ≤ .05). Results from this set of analyses are displayed in Table 5. Women were less likely to reapply to the organization, and to a similar position with another organization. Analysis of mean differences revealed that compared to men, women were more likely to withdraw across both threatening and identity-safe conditions. This finding was a bit complicated to reconcile with the fact that a fair portion of women did correctly identify
gender-position of the predecessor. It is suggested that this presents a flaw attributed to the manipulation, rather than attributed to actual reactions. Further, it was suggested that reactions, still offered some information about differences in perceptions of negative performance feedback between men and women, despite threat condition, which was non-significant, \( p \geq .05 \).

Main effects analyses were conducted to evaluate significant differences in attributions between men and women (Hypothesis 1). Multiple univariate tests were conducted using multivariate analyses. In addition, to adjust results for Type 1 inflation, a Bonferroni correction was made by dividing alpha .05 by the number of univariate tests. An adjusted alpha was reported at \( p = .0125 \). Results from these analyses are reported in Tables 6 and 7. Analyses were conducted for group membership (gender) on all four causal attribution dimensions (locus, external control, stability, and personal control) across threat conditions. A separate analysis revealed no significant effect for threat condition on any of the four attribution dimensions, \( p \geq .05 \). However analyses did reveal marginal significance for gender on the dimension external control \( (F(3, 89) = 5.091, p = .027) \) in the masculine condition. Though this is only suggested as marginal significance, it appeared to be somewhat consistent with data result from all participants. Univariate analyses of all participants across conditions also revealed marginal significance in the masculine or threatening condition, for external control \( (F(1, 123) = 5.126, p = .025) \) and stability \( (F(1, 123) = 4.689, p = .032) \). Analyses of all participants also revealed marginal significance for stability, in the identity-safe condition \( (F(1, 137) = 5.167, p = .025) \). It was predicted that women would significantly make more internal attributions about their performance, especially in the threatening condition (Hypothesis 1). It was also predicted that attributions would be restored for women, thus less internal and less stable in the identity-safe condition (Hypothesis 2). Though there was some marginal evidence to suggest that women
made more external rather than internal attributions, and that stability for women appeared to an occurring theme for women across conditions despite predictions, this evidence was only marginal. Thus there still remained little support for both hypotheses 1 and 2.

Further analyses on those participants who correctly recalled predecessor gender information indicated lack of support for Hypotheses 3 and 4. Multiple regressions revealed attributions did not significantly affect withdrawal, \((F (4, 184) = 1.513, p \geq .05)\). Though locus as a single dimension of casual attributions did appear to significantly influence withdrawal, \(R^2 = .024, p = .030\), analysis revealed a lack of significance for the direct path between causal attributions and withdrawal. This path was also not found when assessing all participants. For the sake of the proposed model, this gave little plausibility for the presence of moderation and mediation. According to Baron and Kenny (1986) with regards to mediation, there are four steps necessary for mediation: 1) there must be an overall treatment effect on the outcome variable that is significant, 2) there must be a treatment effect on the mediator that is significant, 3) the effect of the mediator on the outcome variable controlling for the treatment effect is significant, and lastly 4) the residual direct effect of the treatment variable on the outcome variable should be smaller than the overall treatment effect in step 1. There was not significant evidence for the mediator causal attributions on withdrawal. Thus, actual tests for partial mediation (Hypothesis 4) were not conducted. In addition, due to the lack of significance of our treatment effect (causal attributions on withdrawal), it was also not expected to find evidence for moderation (Hypothesis 3). It could be that in some rare case, data contained opposing effects for men and women across conditions. This as expected was not the case.

However, as Baron and Kenny (1986) represented a more conservative method, sets of simple regressions were conducted to tests for indirect effects between variables. First,
regressions were conducted to tests proposed moderators on all dimensions of causal attributions for those who responded to stimuli. Discrimination beliefs did not significantly influence causal attributions for all four attribution dimensions: locus, external, stability, and personal control. Stereotype threat also appeared to significantly affect personal control attributions, ($R^2 = .022, p = .041$). Women who demonstrated higher levels of stereotype threat, made significantly more attributions that demonstrated less feelings of personal control regarding their outcome in the threatening condition. In addition, gender centrality appeared to significantly affect stability attributions for women ($R^2 = .024, p = .032$). In the identity-safe condition, it appeared that women who were higher in gender centrality also made more stable attributions about their unsuccessful performance. This finding regarding gender centrality and stability attributions in the identity-safe condition was consistent with the results obtained from analyses of all participants, which also indicated a significant influence of gender centrality on stability ($R^2 = .231, p = .017$), where women in the identity-safe condition who were higher in gender centrality made more stable attributions.

Next, the dependent variable, withdrawal, was regressed on potential moderators: gender centrality, discrimination beliefs, and stereotype threat. None of these variables appeared to significantly predict withdrawal, all $p \geq .05$. Analysis of all participants suggested that discrimination beliefs appeared to be significantly related to withdrawal for women $R^2 = .054, p = .025$. Women in the threatening condition specifically had lower beliefs in discrimination compared to men. This was opposite to expectations. It was predicted women overall would demonstrate higher beliefs in discrimination against women.

Additionally, proposed mediator, self-perceptions was regressed on casual attributions. Attributions on all dimensions for men and women did not significantly impact self-perceptions
of performance, \(p \geq .05\). This was also a consistent case when assessing all participants versus those who recalled the gender of their job incumbent. Next, withdrawal was regressed on self-perceptions. Self-perceptions did not significantly influence withdrawal for men or women across both threat conditions, \(p \geq .05\). Men and women appeared to respond similarly across conditions to our threat manipulation with regards to their level of withdrawal. This was consistent across sets of analyses.

Lastly, self-perceptions, gender centrality, discrimination beliefs, and susceptibility to threat were all regressed on gender and threat condition. Threat condition did not appear to significantly influence perceptions, \(p = .484\) or gender centrality \(p = .182\), discrimination beliefs \(p = .174\), or stereotype threat \(p = .287\). Gender, however, did appear to have a significant effect on proposed moderators. Regression analyses for gender on gender centrality revealed a significant \(R^2 = .051, p = .001\), where women were higher in gender centrality compared to men. There was also a significant effect for gender on discrimination beliefs, \(R^2 = .030, p = .015\), which indicated that women reported less positive beliefs in discrimination against women compared to men. It was expected that women would show more positive beliefs in discrimination than men. However, this appeared not to be the case. And finally, there was also a significant effect for gender on stereotype threat, \(R^2 = .062, p = .001\), which revealed overall men were less threatened across conditions. It was expected that women would show an affect for stereotype threat more so than men, as it is women who tend to be more vulnerable to performance threat (Steele & Aronson, 1997). The effect for stereotype threat as well as gender centrality was consistent with results obtained from all participants. Women overall reported higher levels of gender centrality, \(R^2 = .059, p = .000\), and men were also less threatened than women, \(R^2 = .042, p = .001\).
Correlations, for exploratory purposes also revealed a significant relationship between racial identity and gender centrality. Racial identity was positively correlated ($r = .217, p = .003$) with gender centrality, where individuals higher in racial identity were also higher in gender centrality.
Table 1: Cross-tabulations for subject Gender x Threat Condition for study design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender:</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(All Respondents)(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threatening:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% (within Gender)</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
<td>47.3%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity-safe:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% (within Gender)</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% (within Gender)</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Responded to Predecessor Gender) \(^b\)

| Condition:               |      |        |       |
| Threatening:             |      |        |       |
| Count                    | 27   | 65     | 92    |
| % (within Gender)        | 52.9%| 46.4%  | 48.2% |
| Identity-safe:           |      |        |       |
| Count                    | 24   | 75     | 99    |
| % (within Gender)        | 47.1%| 53.6%  | 51.8% |
| Total                    | 51   | 140    | 191   |
| % (within Gender)        | 100.0%| 100.0%| 100.0%|

\(^a\)N = 270
\(^b\)N = 191

Note: the variable threat condition pertains to the threatening (masculine) vs. identity-safe (feminine) manipulation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>1. Gender</td>
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<td>0.44</td>
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<td>.058</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Locus</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>-.045</td>
<td>.110</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. External</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>.142</td>
<td>-.083</td>
<td>-.428**</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Stability</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>1.86</td>
<td>.152*</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.276**</td>
<td>.153*</td>
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<td>6. Personal</td>
<td>4.06</td>
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<td>-.003</td>
<td>.652**</td>
<td>.465**</td>
<td>.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Gender Centrality</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>.227**</td>
<td>.097</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.095</td>
<td>.156*</td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Discrim. Beliefs</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>-.176*</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>-.054</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Threat</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.249*</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.102</td>
<td>-.119</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Perceptions</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>-.022</td>
<td>-.051</td>
<td>-.085</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>-.011</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.045</td>
<td>.181</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Withdrawal</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>-.110</td>
<td>-.158*</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>-.016</td>
<td>-.100</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td>-.080</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.108</td>
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</tr>
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*p < .05 ** p < .01, N = 191

Means for gender and threat condition represent dummy coded variables; where for gender: males = 0, females = 1; and for threat condition 0 = threatening (masculine) and 1 = identity-safe (feminine)

Note: withdrawal means were calculated using likelihood to reapply measures, lower values indicate higher withdrawal
Table 3: 2 x 2 Gender x Threat Condition Analysis of Variance on Dependent Variable
Withdrawal on all threat attending participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>M²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Power</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>5.610</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.870</td>
<td>.766</td>
<td>.515</td>
<td>.212</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2478.132</td>
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<td>2478.132</td>
<td>1014.663</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>.121</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.824</td>
<td>.056</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threat Condition</td>
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<td>4.154</td>
<td>1.701</td>
<td>.194</td>
<td>.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender x Threat</td>
<td>1.44x10^-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.44x10^-5</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.998</td>
<td>.050</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>451.829</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>2.442</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3631.250</td>
<td>189</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>457.439</td>
<td>188</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05 ** p < .01

Note: the variable threat condition pertains to the threatening vs. identity-safe manipulation
Table 4: Means and standard deviations for men and women in both threat conditions on all variables for all participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Threat Condition</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.017</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Locus</td>
<td>4.38</td>
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<td>.096</td>
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<td>4. External</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.161**</td>
<td>-.083</td>
<td>-.391**</td>
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<td>5. Stability</td>
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<td>.191**</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.297**</td>
<td>.168**</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Personal</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>-.079</td>
<td>-.025</td>
<td>.656**</td>
<td>.452**</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Gender Centrality</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.244**</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>-.048</td>
<td>.112</td>
<td>.176**</td>
<td>-.072</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Discrim. Beliefs</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>-.113</td>
<td>-.082</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>-.118</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Threat</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.206**</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>-.047</td>
<td>.028</td>
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<td>.091</td>
<td>-.123*</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Perceptions</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>-.008</td>
<td>-.039</td>
<td>-.113</td>
<td>-.019</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.251</td>
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<td>1.55</td>
<td>-.128*</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>-.093</td>
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<td>-.061</td>
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<td>-.027</td>
<td>.091</td>
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</table>

*p < .05 ** p < .01, N = 270

Means for gender and threat condition represent dummy coded variables; where for gender: males = 0, females = 1; and for threat condition 0 = threatening (masculine) and 1 = identity-safe (feminine)

Note: withdrawal means were calculated using likelihood to reapply measures, lower values indicate higher withdrawal
Table 5: 2 x 2 Gender x Threat Condition Analysis of Variance on Dependent Variable Withdrawal on all participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>M²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>12.237</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.079</td>
<td>1.703</td>
<td>.167</td>
<td>.443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>3436.613</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3436.613</td>
<td>1434.628</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>10.029</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.029</td>
<td>4.186*</td>
<td>.042*</td>
<td>.531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat Condition</td>
<td>.968</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.968</td>
<td>.404</td>
<td>.525</td>
<td>.097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender x Threat</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.824</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>622.823</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>2.395</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4967.750</td>
<td>264</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>635.050</td>
<td>263</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05  ** p < .01

Note: the variable threat condition pertains to the threatening vs. identity-safe manipulation
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

This study examined the role of gender and associated beliefs on women’s attributions and potential withdrawal in the selection process. As noted, results indicated some areas of inconsistency in existing phenomena. On the one hand, referencing the set of participants that correctly responded to the gender of the job incumbent, women did not exhibit any higher intentions to withdraw from the selection procedure than men. It appeared that women responded similar to men in their decisions. However, on the other hand, an analysis of all participants suggested the opposite, that there were indeed differences between men and women on withdrawal. To be noted in either circumstance, threat condition appeared to reveal little about what decisions were made by the participants. Further, the threat manipulation, which was not significant in either set of analyses, was also missed by a number of participants. Such an occurrence begs certain questions regarding our manipulation. The first concerns the strength of the threat manipulation. The second, to what then could be said of those who did not attend and what factor actually influenced their intentions to withdraw, especially for women. For women, their response may simply represent a reaction to the negative performance feedback, rather than the threat manipulation. It is possible that the feedback alone caused women to be more vulnerable to performance threat. Results in both sets of analyses did indicate a gender effect for stereotype threat, suggesting women were indeed more susceptible to threat. Research suggests performing in certain domains causes unique threats to stigmatized individuals (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Women in this study responding to negative performance feedback
and identifying more with their gender, perhaps experienced this type of threat, and it ultimately manifested in their final decisions. This also makes sense due to the fact results from both analyses indicated women identified more with their gender than men.

Comparable results between samples of respondents indicated only marginal support for women demonstrating more external (causes outside of themselves) attributions than men. This result seems counter to Beyer (1999), though not Ployhart et al. (2002) where women attributed unsuccessful performances or failures to internal causes (e.g. ability). One possibility for the lack of support could be that being waitlisted was not perceived as an actual failure, which has again to do with the strength of manipulation. Another, women overall also reported lower beliefs in discrimination against women than men, which was not expected. It could very well be that our selection process lacked some realism, thus women did not internalize their performance, nor did they express concerns about discrimination, so threatening information did not appear to be self-relevant (Steele, 1997). In addition, literature suggests that women will disassociate themselves from certain beliefs in order to avoid stigma (Heilman, et al., 1992, 1997). This finding seems to coincide with the results of this study.

It also appeared that women demonstrated more stable attributions about their performance. Though there was only marginal evidence to support this result, this seems to be both consistent and inconsistent with previous findings. Consistent with research women who provide causes representing circumstances which are stable over time, potentially indicates a sense of self-doubt or defeat (Beyer, 1999; Slusher & Anderson, 1998). However, results also suggested that identity-safe information did not elicit more favorable attributions from women (Davies et al., 2005). The lack of significant support for fostering more favorable attributions could be due to the fact that identity-safe information or an identity-safe environment while
useful for monitoring the exposure of threat may have little effect on attributions, especially when gender is salient. For instance, there could be certain occasions where the influence of gender, despite relevant information, remains impervious. This was partially supported by our results which indicated that women overall were higher in gender centrality compared to men. Therefore, it could be that attributions such as those specifically pertinent to individual identity or social groups are not easily manipulated to the extent that personal identification with particular groups (e.g. race and gender, etc.) is also not easily manipulated. Research on identities such as racial ethnicity and gender depicts social identity as a major influence on individual perceptions and attitudes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1985). Subsequently, exploratory results indicated a positive correlation between race and gender centrality. This relationship provides some basis for the social identity argument as well as grounds for needed future research.

Further, though there was not sufficient evidence to support the existence of the proposed model, there was some evidence to support that gender, and/or the salience of gender, effectually impacted women’s impression of a selection procedure. In our analysis of all participants, more women than men chose to withdraw from our selection procedure. This finding was pretty compelling, considering the sample was a little more than 75% female. This result was not replicated in the analysis of participants who attended to threat stimuli. However, it was also demonstrated that threat stimuli lacked some strength and failed to reveal significant information regarding withdrawal or attributions. The implication here is that the manipulation of threat should be explored in future study. More importantly, it appeared that women, though not completely outlined and captured by our model, had a “gendered” reaction to our selection
procedure. This serves to reason that for women, experiences related to gender have a presence in selection.

Limitations

Although our study does offer some revealing insight, it does so with some limitations. First, the threat manipulation of job listing and predecessor information may not have been strong enough to truly elicit a reaction that would support the proposed model. Results indicated that a number of participants failed to correctly indicate the predecessor’s gender. In addition for those that did attend to threat stimuli, it appeared to have less influence than expected. Though job titles were assessed for their perceived masculinity versus femininity, investigating perceptions of predecessor information and job descriptions would have perhaps strengthened our manipulation of threat condition. Future studies should explore other potential ways that may be more effective in manipulating performance threat. Second, using a different type of selection task may have added more realism to the study. The selection task, though intended to represent a typical hiring assessment, may not have came across as typical for participants, especially as participants were students rather than actual applicants. Controls to assess the perceived realism of the selection should be explored in future research. Examining perceptions of the hiring process prior to actual study may have provided useful information about the perceived realism of the selection process. Finally, it could be that the model design was limited in terms of the inclusion and exclusion of certain variables. For instance this study only focused on responses to negative performance feedback, responses to another feedback condition such as success would account for additional responses not achieved by our model. Future studies should also explore other variables as potential correlates and antecedents (e.g. personality, goal orientation, motivation, culture, etc.). Some research has explored the aspect of personality variables of
conscientiousness and neuroticism on applicant perceptions (Ostberg, Truxillo, & Bauer, 2001). Research could further examine the influence of these variables on other outcomes such as organizational attractiveness, job choice, or litigation pursuits.

**Implications, Contribution, and Conclusions**

Using attribution reaction theory to evaluate applicant reactions offers several implications. The major implication is the propensity to assess why certain behaviors occur for applicants in response to organizational recruiting and hiring practices. Although somewhat of a challenging endeavor, this seems to be the only way in which appropriate interventions can be developed. By developing necessary interventions and monitoring appropriate signals, organizations can attend to the “unintended side effects” (e.g. the disproportionate withdrawal of women and minorities) of their recruitment and hiring strategies. As a result, organizations can hope to more thoroughly manage the diversity of individuals’ experiences and beliefs, the very things most individuals carry with them into a selection scenario.

This study despite some limitations offers a few key contributions to current literature. First, the experimental design of our study marks some potential strength. It is an attempt to simulate a selection procedure from assessment to job result. Although withdrawal remains a variable that is often hard to not only observe but also to validly measure, this study takes an initial step. Future research should continue to assess variables such as withdrawal in order to aid the development of potential interventions that can be used by hiring organizations (Ployhart et al, 2002). Second, it attempts to further the understanding of women’s interpretation of messages received in the hiring process, and subsequently adds to what is currently understood about signaling theory (Rynes & Bourdreau, 1986). This information can be used to assess the presence of potentially threatening messages whether intentional or unintentional that exists in the
selection process. Third, this study suggests that identification with certain social groups (e.g. gender) influences the interpretation of messages, such that social identity tends to impact overall impressions of an organization and its hiring methods. For that matter, gender specifically, appears to be an informative variable to our understanding of reactions. And this study represents one of the few to attempt to explore it conceptually.

Lastly, this study also provides some evidence for the existence of attributions in selection. Furthermore, that men and women may potentially differ in terms of attributions. Thus the study lends itself to provide stronger evidence for a psychologically based theory such as the AART model (Ployhart & Harold, 2004). Future studies should continue to explore this theory, the presence of attributions, and other implications therein.
REFERENCES


implications. Symposium conducted at the meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, San Diego, CA.


APPENDIX: Recruitment Letter from HR Director

Dear applicant,

We are very excited to know that you are considering joining the Melcorp Marketing Solutions community. MelCorp Marketing Solutions has a long and rich history of hiring employees who are motivated to provide the best service to our esteemed clients.

Our Company is one that seeks the competitive edge of establishing a diverse workforce. We believe in and value the benefits and expertise of individuals of all backgrounds. Innovation for us incorporates the experiences of a multitude of perspectives.

It is our goal to achieve a workforce that is dynamic and full of talented and high-ability employees. We are currently seeking to fill the position of one of our most praised employees who has recently been promoted. Their contributions have had an invaluable impact on the growth and productivity of our company. Here is a bit of information about our former Operations Manager or Diversity Manager:

(Threat Manipulation: Predecessor Information)

Matthew H. Smith was a high-achieving leader. His confidence and intrinsic ability to lead his team efficiently, led to a highly productive work environment. Matthew’s tenacity was vital to his rapid advancement within our organization.

Or

Margaret H. Smith was a very helpful leader. Her compassionate and nurturing ability to lead her team efficiently, led to a highly cohesive work environment. Margaret’s creativity was vital to her rapid advancement within our organization.

As you can see, our employees represent the best of who we are as a company. We sincerely look forward to your participation in our application process. It is our pleasure to accommodate you in any way we can through this process. We wish you the best of luck!

Best Regards,

A. M. Hunter
Director of Personnel & HR Services
MelCorp Marketing Solutions Inc