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Abstract of thesis entitled 'The effects of gender,  
educational background, and leisure activities on  
initial screening decision'

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The objectives of this study are to: 1) identify the possible factors which may contribute to the impression formation process at the pre-interview phase, and 2) examine how the identified factors, if any, affect the pre-interview impression that the recruiters form at the pre-interview phase. This study was divided into two parts. In the pilot study, two listings of personality related leisure activities were obtained. Such information was then used to compose part of the instrument for use in the experiment in the main study. This experiment utilized a 2 x 2 x 2 design with gender, educational background, and leisure activities being the dependent variables. A packet of 8 fictitious applications were reviewed by 30 human resource specialists. Having reviewed the applications, the subjects were asked to evaluate each of the applicants. The results were then analyzed using ANOVA models. It was found that gender as a main effect did not affect the applicants' perceived quality ratings. On the other hand, the other two hypothesized



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main effects, educational background, and hobbies/interests were proven to have influence on the pre-interview impression. The interaction effects uncovered indicated that, though, on average, gender of the applicants do not contribute to the differences in ratings, when educational background and hobbies/interests are also considered, gender of the applicants do give a different impression to the recruiters. Exploratory in nature, this study has yielded results that can serve as the basis for further investigation in the local population.

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## 1. Introduction

Interview research has been around for a long time. Eder and Ferris (1989) did a historical review on interview-related literature. According to them, from 1949 to 1988, nine comprehensive reviews of interview literature for their respective times were previously done. While a historical account of what happened decades ago is not be appropriate for this thesis, the literature review section only includes studies that are most relevant to the purpose of the present study. Nevertheless, there is one point that is worth mentioning. In the 1920s, researchers focused on the issue of how to interview. Up till the recent decades, researchers have begun to think about validity generalization, interview structures, and meta-analytic studies. The focus of research in this area have taken a few turns in development. In the book, Employment Interview: Theory, Research, and Practice (Eder and Ferris, 1989), the authors attempted to put together an integrated framework of interview research for the recent years.

In fact, this integrated framework as proposed by Eder, Kacmar and Ferris (1989) is the starting point of this thesis. According to this model, the pre-interview impression is one of the initial pieces of

information that interviewers have. Such impression is expected to influence the final outcome of the interview. In this thesis, an attempt is made to gain an understanding of how pre-interview impression is formed. The target population of the subjects are all human resources professionals in Hong Kong. Therefore, it is hoped that the final results should be good for the local hiring environment.

### 1.1 Summary of the Thesis

Considering employment interview as a process, the integrated framework of interview research postulates that pre-interview impression is one of the pieces of information that recruiters use in deriving the process outcome - the final decision. In line with this chain of thoughts, Dipboye and others have been working on the self-fulfilling prophecy model in an effort to capture the essentials of how such impression actually affect the interview process. With this concept as the theoretical backbone, this study represents an attempt to gain an understanding of what might contribute to the formation of pre-interview impression for the local hiring environment.

An experiment utilizing repeated measures design was conducted. The variables being investigated were

gender, educational background, and leisure activities. A sample of 30 human resources professionals was selected to participate in this study. Each of these respondents reviewed a packet of job applications with manipulated information on the three proposed variables. After reviewing the applications, the subjects were asked to fill out an evaluation form, which consisted of six questions representing the six dependent variables -- qualification match, interpersonal skills, leadership skills, motivation, affect, and decision to offer interview -- being studied, for each application. The data obtained was then analyzed using ANOVA models.

Overall, it was found that ratings on all six dependent variables between male and female did not differ significantly. In other words, gender of the applicants did not appear to affect the ratings they received. For educational background, results obtained confirmed that business majors generally received better ratings on all dependent variables except for motivation. Similarly, ratings on all but one of the variables, qualification match, between the two leisure interests inferred personality traits were found to significantly differ. Precisely, except for qualification match, extroverts generally received better ratings on all other variables. For the

hypothesized interaction effects between gender and hobbies, results on five out of six dependent variables indicated that the relationships between gender and hobbies for extroverts were not the same as that for introverts. Additional analysis yielded interesting results that, for four of the five simple main effects examined, the two way interaction effects were mainly contributed by the rating differences between extroverts and introverts for male non business majors.

The results gathered from this experiment tell us that applicants with different characteristics as represented by the information on the proposed variables received significantly different ratings on various perceived qualities. Such results provided hunches as to what may contribute to the formation of impression at the early stage of the interview process. In order to confirm the observations obtained in this study, replications are needed.

## 1.2 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is composed of six sections -- literature review, purpose and objectives, hypotheses, methodology, results, and discussion and conclusion. The literature review section begins with a brief discussion of an integrated framework of interview

research. Subsequently, the self-fulfilling prophecy model is explained with supportive empirical evidence. Having built the theoretical foundation for this study, the last section of literature review deals with the variables that are being included in the study.

After reviewing the literature, the main theme of this thesis research is iterated in the form of purposes and objectives. Such purposes and objectives are then elaborated as specific hypotheses in the subsequent section.

The instrument used in this experiment is introduced in the methodology section. Also included in this section is the detailed procedures and their justifications for all three phases of the experiment.

The obtained results are provided with illustrative tables in the last section of this thesis. Finally, the thesis is wrapped up by a discussion and conclusions section which includes interpretations of the results, limitations of the study, and research opportunities in the future.

## 2. Literature Review

Interview is one of the most widely used methods for personnel selection, despite the fact that this method of selection is generally believed to be a poor predictor of job performance in terms of reliability and validity (Reilly & Chao, 1982; Arvey and Campion, 1982; Pulakos and Schmitt, 1995). There are many techniques available for interviewing. Interviews can be structured, semi-structured, unstructured, and/or situation specific. Regardless of the interview settings, many factors contribute to the ultimate results of interviews. Research results indicated that early impression is a key factor in interviewers' decision making (Cascio, 1987). Specifically, it was found that interviewers usually form their early impression about the job applicants in the first four minutes of the interviews. Furthermore, it is believed that factors such as effects of interview structure, effect of interviewers' experience, expectancies, effects of personal factors, such as appearance and attire, race and age of both the interviewer and the applicants can have significant impact on the decision making process (Cascio, 1987).



## 2.1 The Self-fulfilling Prophecy Model

Eder et al. (1989) provided an integrated framework of recent employment interview research (figure 1). With the applicants' and the interviewers' characteristics as the initial input, the process begins with the interviewers reviewing the paper credentials of the applicant. It is believed that such pre-interview impression would influence the interviewers' information processing that take place at and/or after the interview. Such information processing stage is also affected by the interview context and purpose, and preplanning of the interview which included job analysis and the interviewers' questioning strategies. On the applicants' side, the characteristics of the applicants contribute to the applicants' strategies at the interview. The applicants' interviewing strategies would dictate how the applicants perform at the interview. The interview itself is a dynamic process in which the applicant and the interviewer interact. How the applicants perform at the interview can influence the interviewers' information processing and impression formation at and/or after the interview. Meanwhile, the stage of interviewers' information processing and impression formation at the interview can also have impact on the interviewing process dynamics. It is a two way

process. Finally, the results of the information processing and impression formation stage effects to the validity of interview outcome.

#### 2.1.1 Pre-interview Impression

Since the focus of this study is on the pre-interview impression stage of the framework discussed in the previous paragraph, a detailed discussion of every element in the model is not included. Hence, the attention of this part of the literature review is focused on the pre-interview stage.

Compatible with the integrated model of the entire interviewing process model which was proposed by Eder and Ferris (1989), the model of the self-fulfilling prophecy in the interview (figure 2), discussed by Dipboye (1982); Dipboye and Macan (1988), and Phillips and Dipboye (1989) explained the impact of pre-interview impression on various stages in the interview process. This model is applicable for situations at which the evaluators would have access to the paper credentials of the job applicants at the beginning of the selection process. It is assumed that the qualified applicants, as determined by the evaluators, would then be invited for an interview. This channel of employment recruitment is very popular in many

places including Hong Kong. As for this study, the attention is focused on the interview process along this channel of recruitment. Therefore, the model of the self-fulfilling prophecy is appropriate for this study.

#### 2.1.2 An Overview of the Model

In this model, the entire interview process is divided into three phases - pre-interview phase, interview phase, and the post-interview phase. At the pre-interview phase, evaluation takes place when the evaluator review the job applicants' paper credentials. Therefore, the perceived job requirements and the information about the interviewee are the input that the interviewer used in the pre-interview phase. At this stage, the evaluators would come up with some kind of preliminary judgments on the applicants according to the available information. If an applicant is determined to be a probable candidate for the job, she/he would be invited for an interview. At the interview, the self-fulfilling prophecy postulates that the interviewer's conduct of the interview would affect the interviewee's perception of the interviewer's opinions on her or his qualifications which, in turn, would influence the interviewee's performance during the interview. On the interviewer's side, the

interviewee's performance during the interview would be the basis for evaluation. Such evaluation is composed of two parts - interviewer's perception of the interviewee's performance in the interview, and the interviewer's interpretation of the interviewee's performance in the interview. As a dynamic process, the interview process evolves continuously. The interpretation that the evaluator has would constantly affect the interviewer's conduct of the interview.

Having learned the information about an applicant in the interview, the interviewer would begin to evaluate the applicant at the post-interview phase. With the interpretation that the interviewer derived from the interview, the evaluator would give a final assessment of the qualities of job applicant. At the end, the final decision for a job offer or additional interviewing offer is made.

One basic premise of this theory is on the impact of pre-interview impression on final outcome of employment interview. As shown in figure 2, the pre-interview impression influences the interviewer's conduct of the interview. Meanwhile, such impression also moderates the interviewer's information process during the interview. From the available literature,

Dipboye (1982) managed to render some insight on this theory.

First, when the evaluator forms positive impression of an applicant after evaluating the paper credentials, the final outcome of the interview tends to be better. Second, the relationship between pre-interview impression and post-interview evaluation are mediated by various behavioral and cognitive events. Behaviorally, if the pre-interview evaluation of an applicant is good, the evaluator will likely to display more signs of approval at the interview. On the other hand, has the pre-interview evaluation been considered poor, the evaluator will show more signs of disapproval during the interview. In turn, the interviewees would incline to confirm the interviewers' impression because of the interviewers' perception on the interviewee. Cognitively, after the interview, the evaluator seems to recall and interpret interview results which is consistent with the pre-interview impression. Third, though the circumstances and events in which the theory postulates is possible, there are exceptions. Simply put, the moderating factors include organizational policies, standards, and procedures for selecting applicants. Also, the interviewers would need to be certain and committed to the pre-interview evaluation. On the interviewees' side, they should be uncertain of

how they would do in the interviews. The above are the moderating factors that Dipboye identified from the available literature.

### 2.1.3 Empirical Studies

The impact of pre-interview impression on the interviewing processes have been studied by various researchers. Dipboye, Fontenelle, and Garner (1984) studied the consequences of preliminary review of paper credentials of job applicants before interviews. The purpose of the project was to investigate the effects of previewing paper credentials on gathering and recall of applicants' information and the reliability and accuracy of their assessments. Specifically, the authors selected 25 students on campus to interview two phony job applicants. 12 of the students conducted face-to-face interview with the two applicants. The other 13 subjects were given paper credentials of the applicants before conducting face-to-face interview. Overall, results indicated that previewing applications had little impact on the conduct of the interviews. The authors' explanation was that the insignificant results might be due to the differences in interviewing styles among the subjects. Regarding information gathering, results indicated that the interviewers, who previewed paper credentials before the actual

interview, tended to be able to recall more non-application information about the applicants at the post interview phase. However, such previewing did not help the interviewers to retrieve and process information for decision making purposes.

The results for this study do not fully support the self-fulfilling prophecy. In particular, the authors highlighted a few problematic areas in which future research of this kind can improve. In order to fully examine the impact of previewing paper credentials on information gathering of the interviewer, the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee during the interview should be studied. Additionally, application preview can also be of different types. In practice, different companies may have different procedures to screen job applications. By the same token, different reviewers may interpret the information on the paper credentials differently. In light of this, it may be appropriate to insert more controls on the previewing stage and the information processing stage of the experiments. Also, the generalizability of research results of this kind should also be considered. In experimental environment, respondents may not perform in the same fashion as practitioners do in organizational settings. Broader samples of interviewers, interviewees, and jobs

should be used to replicate experiments of this kind. Basically, the relationships between pre-interview impression and conduct of interview and information gathering at the post interview phase as proposed in the self-fulfilling prophecy were not well supported according to the results obtained. The authors concluded that the problems were mainly methodological in nature. The interviewers, the interviewees, and the experiment itself might contain too many variables that were not factored in the experiment. Finally, the generalizability of experimental results may need to be improved in the future.

Macan and Dipboye (1988) explored the impact of pre-interview impression using similar method as Dipboye et al. (1984) did. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of interviewers' initial impressions and their decision task on the questions they formulate to assess applicants for a given position. First of all, 26 interviewers with previous recruiting experience looked at the paper credentials of three applicants. Subsequently, the interviewers were asked to generate questions that were to be asked in the interview. Such questions were then given to student subjects to answer and rate.



Relevant to the present study, the results showed that negative pre-interview impression derived from paper credentials would impact the conduct of the interview. In particular, the questions generated after previewing paper credentials vindicated that. However, such pre-interview impression did not lead to verbal confirmations. The results of this study provided support for an important link in the process model. At the pre-interview phase the impression formed after screening paper credentials influence the conduct of the interview.

Phillips and Dipboye (1989) conducted a study to investigate the impact of pre-interview impression on the interviewing process. Thirty-four interviewers and 164 applicants from the industry were invited to participate in the study. They went through a series of procedures that was supposed to mimic the actual procedures of the interviewing procedures. Precisely, paper credentials of the applicants were screened by the interviewers as a mean to select the appropriate candidates for interviews. After the interview, successful applicants would undertake a simulated work test. The main purpose of the study was to examine the relationships of various phases of the interviewing process as postulated in the self-fulfilling prophecy model. Of special importance to this thesis research

study is the direct effect of pre-interview impression on the subsequent steps in the process model.

Generally, research results were supportive of the relationships as described in the process model. Pre-interview impression was found to be related to the conduct of the interview for both the interviewer and the interviewee. Also, pre-interview impression was predictive of the interview outcomes. Even though the strengths of such relationships were determined to be small, the significance of the statistical tests warrant further investigation.

Knowing that pre-interview impression can have significant impact on various stages of the selection process as depicted in the process model, Macan and Dipboye (1990) investigated the possible mediators and moderators of such relationships. One hundred and twenty recruiters were invited to participate in the study. Altogether, they provided data on 235 interviews. First of all, the recruiters reviewed the paper credentials of the job applicants. Upon completion of the reviewing procedure, the recruiters rated the applicants. Afterwards, the applicants were interviewed. Finally, the recruiters gave ratings on the performance of the applicants at the interview. On the applicants' side, they were asked to assess the

company, the job, and the recruiters after going through the entire process.

Consistent with previous research work in this area, pre-interview impression was found to be related to the interview outcome. However, the results did not support the possible mediators and moderators for the relationships depicted in the process model. In addition, results did not support the notion that pre-interview impression affects the conduct of the interview. The authors reasoned that, because of the time constraint, the interviewers were not completely free to show different behavioral pattern on different applicants. The job itself was also another problem. It was determined that the position to be filled was more important than the interviewer regarding recruitment outcome since all the applicants were engineering and science majors. At the time, the market condition for science students might explain the behavior of the applicants. As a result, the authors concluded that, instead of only using experimental study, field study with different sample groups in different settings of this kind can improve the generalizability of the results.

From the research results discussed in preceding paragraphs, it has been shown that pre-interview

impression can have significant impact on various steps of the process model. For example, pre-interview impression is predictive of the interview outcome as postulated in the self-fulfilling prophecy model. Dipboye, Fontenelle, and Garner (1984) indicated that the interaction between the interviewers and the interviewees should be studied in order to fully examine the impact of pre-interview impression. However, in the study conducted by Macan and Dipboye (1990), results failed to support the proposed processes through which the mediators and moderators interact with pre-interview impression and interview outcome. Apparently the actual relationship between pre-interview impression and the eventual outcome may be more complex than what the process model has postulated.

All the empirical studies described above used experimental approach as the main research methodology. Such approach calls for observing the behavioral pattern of the subjects during the experiment. In this regard, critics have expressed concerns with the generalizability of research results that are derived from artificial research settings. Opponents of lab research in this area claim that subjects that are placed in artificial environment may not perform in the same manner as people do in real life situations

(Cleveland, 1991). Nonetheless, this method is chosen for this study. A brief review of the rationale of using experimental method in this study is included in Appendix 1.

## 2.2 Contributing Factors of the Pre-interview Impression Formation

The preceding sections have included information on the effect of pre-interview impression on the interviewing process. With pre-interview impression as the main theme of the present study, this section deals with the sources of information upon which the pre-interview impression is formed.

### 2.2.1 Biographical Information

Actually, the concept of using biographical information in personnel selection does not restrict to the initial stage of the hiring process. It is believed to be a good predictor of performance in personnel selection research (Russell, Mattson, Devlin, and Atwater, 1990). Cascio (1987) mentioned a few possible dimensions that can be used to classify data items as biographical in nature, for example, verifiable versus unverifiable, historical versus futuristic, just to name a couple. Russell et al.

(1990) indicated that available research studies seldom described how the biographical items utilized in various projects were derived. Their point of view agreed with Landy and Shankster's (1994) notion on biographical information research that existing knowledge in this area requires more work on construct and theory to support the empirical evidence available. Landy and Shankster, (1994) also suggested that Mael's (1991) ten parameters of biographical information can be used to further the knowledge in this area. Nevertheless, the following discussion explains how biographical information can be used in personnel selection.

Russell (1990) used a system of interviews, peer ratings, and consensus discussions to select top level corporate managers. Biographical information was gathered mainly in structured interviews. During the interviews, pre-designed questions were followed by more in-depth follow up questions to make sure that the information gathered was as complete as possible. One of the main purposes of the project was to assess the appropriateness of using biographical information to predict job performance. The author concluded that the results rendered preliminary support for the validity of using biographical information in personnel selection.

However using biographical information as a tool to select the "right" person(s) is not flawless. Kluger, Reilly, and Russell (1991) examined the response bias in collecting biographical information. According to them, research results in this regard have been mixed. That is, researchers, such as Cascio (1975), and Keating, Patterson and Stone (1950) found only small response bias in their research; whereas, others, such as Goldstein (1971), and Weiss and Dawis (1960), reported significant response bias in their project. In light of this Kluger et al. (1991) investigated the response bias of using self-reported biodata in personnel selection. It was found that under the experimental conditions, people did tend to fake their responses under different situations. To mitigate such problem, the authors suggested that warning before the respondents participate may reduce the response bias.

Though it is believed that biographical information is related to job performance, exactly how the recruiters use biographical items to make decision is not clearly understood. Brown and Campion (1994) examined how recruiters perceive and use biographical information in resume screening. They argued that previous research on biographical information did not clearly relate biographical items with the attributes

upon which the recruiters evaluate job applicants. A multiple-part study on recruiters' perception and use of biographical information in resume screening was conducted. The thesis of the study was to show that biographical information was perceived to reflect the applicants' ability and other attributes including language ability, mathematics ability, physical ability, interpersonal skills, motivation, leadership skills.

In the pilot study, the purpose was to gain insight on the nature of the recruiting process. The subjects were all professional recruiters. The result from the first study was a list of biodata items that were being used most frequently by recruiters in the industry. In addition, data on the attributes that were most frequently used to evaluate job applicants was also collected.

In the second part of the study, phony resumes were reviewed by professional recruiters utilizing a 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 design. The variables being controlled were derived from the results of the pilot study. These are sales versus accounting job, language ability, mathematics ability, and interpersonal skills. All the recruiters were asked to rate each applicant according to three scales: (1) interest in



interviewing each candidate, (2) overall suitability of each candidate for the job, and (3) rank order regarding their suitability for the job. Results showed that attractiveness of resumes to the recruiters depended on the position needed to be filled. For example, resumes that indicated high language ability were more attractive for sales job; whereas, resumes that showed high mathematics ability were more attractive for accounting job. Similarly, applicants with high interpersonal skills were more preferred for sales job. In case of accounting position, the opposite was true.

Finally, in study three, the recruiters were interviewed to collect information on their process of decision making. Results from study three indicated that recruiters considered the resume screening process realistic. Most importantly, such follow-up procedures indicated that the decision processes that recruiters used were according to what was expected.

Overall, the results from this study indicated that recruiters use biographical information to make inferences on the applicants' ability and other attributes. Furthermore, it was found that the inferences that the recruiters made were affected by the position to be filled. The critical point is that

the connection between biographical items and the inferences that the recruiters make has been established. Through the use biographical information, recruiters judged the applicants in terms of a number of ability and other attributes. Instead of merely relating biographical information to job performance in the context of personnel selection, this study represented an attempt to describe the process through which the recruiters utilize biographical information.

This section has included explanation of usage and downside of using biographical information in personnel selection. One interesting point to reiterate is that different researchers have included different items in biographical information related studies.

Additionally, Brown and Campion (1994) has pointed out the needs to relate biographical information with the inferences that recruiters make in personnel selection. In practical terms, information that reflects job applicant's employability may be available to the recruiters even as early as when the resume arrives at the recruiters' hand. Such information may be biographical in nature. This may reflect an applicant's personality, and/or various ability, at least through the eyes of the recruiters. In order to gain an understanding of the selection decision

process, the next section will explain how information on personality can be used to evaluate job applicants.

### 2.2.2 Personality

Personality research has a long tradition. Over the years, researchers have devoted much effort in developing constructs to measure personality for application purposes. For example, some of the early work in personality measurement include: the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) by Hathaway and McKinley (1943); the 16-PF by Cattell and Stice (1957); and, the Guilford Zimmerman Temperament Survey by Guilford, Zimmerman, and Guilford (1976) (Hogan, 1991). Tests were developed with specific purposes. To a certain extent, these tests seem to work reasonably well in applications.

However, the validity of using personality tests for industrial use have been questioned by researchers such as Ghiselli and Barthol (1953). Guion and Gottier (1965) conducted a review on the validity of using personality tests in personnel selection. The conclusion was that there were no evidence to support the generalizable validity of using personality tests as a tool for personnel selection. This idea, coupled with others, such as Schmitt, Gooding, Noe, and Kirsch

(1984) resulted in a statement about the invalidity of using personality test in personnel selection.

However, this area is regaining attention in the recent years.

Barrick and Mount (1991) argued that previous works on assessing the validity of personality measures in the context of personnel selection were not done using a well-accepted taxonomy of personality traits. In the past fifteen years or so a number of studies on personality traits have been conducted by psychologists. It now appears that a taxonomy that consists of five factors - extroversion/introversion, friendliness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience/intellect (Digman, 1990) has become very well-received. This taxonomy of personality is frequently referred to as the big five model. Hogan (1986) developed a test, called the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI) to predict job performance in practical environment. This instrument was designed based on the big five model evolved from years of research in personality psychology. Barrick and Mount (1991) conducted a meta-analysis using results from 117 studies of using personality tests on personnel selection. The sample was categorized into five major occupational groups. Job proficiency, training proficiency, and personnel data were used as the

criterion types. The main variable of interest was the validity coefficient. The results indicated that there were differential relations between the personality traits, occupations and performance criteria.

When all the criterion types are included, extroversion was found to be a valid predictor in two occupational groups - managers and sales. When individuals were considered to be open to experience and extrovert, they tended to perform better in training sessions. With regard to Emotional Stability, most correlations were low. Likewise, Agreeableness is a poor predictor of job performance, even in occupational groups such as sales. Another significant finding of this study was the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance. This attribute was determined to be a consistent predictor of job performance in all occupational groups. Overall the research results suggested that the big five model of personality traits appeared to be a useful framework for explaining individual differences in personnel selection research.

Following Barrick and Mount's work, Tett et al. (1991) conducted another meta-analysis to address the issue of validity of using personality tests to select employees. Their main concern was the quantitative

method used in previous studies. They contended that complexity of research in this area offered opportunity for further investigation. Consequently, the main purposes of Tett's project were: (a) to provide a current, unbiased estimate of the overall predictability of job performance from measures of personality, (b) to investigate the role of several study characteristics in moderating personality-performance relations, and (c) to compare average personality validities across several general content areas based on studies adopting a confirmatory research strategy. Research results supported Barrick and Mount's findings that personality traits can be used as a valid measure in predicting job performance. In addition, they believed that using confirmatory research strategies with personality oriented job analysis are the best approach to utilize the full potential of personality trait constructs. In short personality traits are acceptable tools for understanding job applicants but its application should be coupled with thorough job analysis.

Despite the latest evidence on the usefulness of personality tests in personnel selection literature, the issue of using such tool in practice is not completely resolved. Schmitt and Ryan (1993) conducted a study to point out the need to exercise great care in

applying personality tests in employees selection. Basically, the big five model is well received. Yet, disagreements on the theory among researchers do exist. This area deserves more effort from scholars for various reasons. For instance, Smith and Kihlstrom (1987) suggested that the big five model, if being used for personnel selection, is situation and person specific. Social desirability is another issue to address. Respondents may choose to present such characters that are perceived to be more socially desirable by faking their responses (Schmitt and Ryan, 1993). Finally, they concluded that, in terms of predicting job outcomes in personnel selection, the big five model may not have the appropriate level of specificity. In other words, the model may be too broad for overall performance prediction.

### 2.2.3 Leisure Interests

It is well received that leisure activities have significant impact on a person's satisfaction, well-being and health (Melamed, Meir, and Samson, 1995). The connection between personality and patterns of leisure activities have been established (Taylor et al., 1979). Actually, according to Melamed, Meir, and Samson, the fact that leisure activities reflect a person's personality is an assumption that many

researchers make in doing leisure activities related research. They conducted a study to investigate the benefits of persons engaging in leisure activities that are congruent with their personalities. Holland's (1973) typology of personality types were utilized in the study. These personality types are: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Specifically, the sample group included individuals that belonged to three of the above personality groups. The objective of the study was to "explore the generalization of the beneficial effect of congruent leisure activities to well-being indicators including work satisfaction, self-esteem, burnout, somatic complaint, and anxiety." In addition, the study was designed to "test the compensatory role of such leisure activities in the face of vocational incongruence and/or skills underutilization, and on the other hand, their possible contribution to persons employed in congruent occupations with the opportunity to utilize their skills at work." Results showed that personality-leisure congruence had significant effect on a person's well being. In turn this effect had implication on a person's mental health and quality of life. A compensatory effect was found for those people who did not have personality-leisure congruence. Simply put, people with poorest work fit, as evidence in various well being indicators such as work



satisfaction, tended to benefit from the personality-leisure congruence the most. It was believed that leisure activities can help them to ease their mental tension. In case of those individuals with high scores on the well being indicators, personality-leisure congruence was related to lower burnout rate.

The renewed interest in personality research in personnel selection has offered room for research in this area. Despite all the critics, personality traits are believed to have significance in personnel selection. Holland (1973) has made the connection between the six personality types - realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional - with work environment and vocational choice. As stated before pattern of leisure activities can be viewed as an expression of personality. For example, realistic persons tend to choose realistic leisure activities such as playing sports (Melamed, Meir and Samson, 1995). However, no studies, involving the relationship of the big five model and leisure activities, was found in the literature search. Holland's personality types mainly deal with vocational choices. In the field of personnel selection, the big five model appears to be the prominent concept. While the dimensions of the big five model are well received, it would be interesting to see if such dimensions can

be used to explain the impact of leisure activities on personnel selection. In this sense, leisure activities may be used as a predictor in personnel selection similar to personality traits. Hobbies and activities are sometimes included as biographical information but, yet, no research studies devoted specifically to leisure activities as a variable was found in the personnel selection literature.

### 2.3 Summary

Interviewing is the most popular method of personnel selection. Company usually would not feel comfortable hiring anyone without meeting the person. However, research results indicated that the validity and reliability of this method tends to be low. Researchers such as Dipboye and Macan have been trying to study the interviewing process according to the self-fulfilling prophecy model of interview in order to gain an understanding of what goes on during the interview. Though the interview process model is still at its early stage of development (Macan and Dipboye, 1990), the impact of pre-interview impression on various stages in the interview process as postulated in the model is empirically supported. In other words, it has been shown that pre-interview impression does have impact on various stages of the process.

All of the empirical studies on pre-interview impression and resume screening found in this study used experiment as, at least, part of the research methodology. Critics have indicated the pitfalls of using such method for research of this kind. Nonetheless, this method of research is considered appropriate for the purpose of this study. As a result, this study uses the same method as the other ones did in the preceding literature review sections.

Now that the main theme for the study and the appropriate method to be used have been identified. The next step would be to deal with the actual variables to be tested. These variables are assumed to be the sources of the pre-interview impression formation. From the available literature, the majority of the resume screening studies would include gender and educational background as part of the variables. For hiring research, research results on the effect of gender on interview outcome are mixed. Some found that recruiters generally would have preference on male or female applicants while the other did not. Nevertheless gender is included as one of the variables to be tested. Intuitively, when a recruiter wants to hire someone, she/he would like to know the educational background of the applicant, at least for the kind of

position used in this study. Therefore, educational background is also included as one of the variables.

Biographical information and personality have been used as predictors in personnel selection for quite some years. There are evidences which support their validity. However, one interesting point about biographical information is that there are many definitions of biographical information available. Findings from biographical information research give us an idea of what employers like to know about job applicants when they make hiring decisions. However, the connection between biographical items and how such items are used in the decision making process is not well established.

The relationship between personality and leisure activities has been previously studied. However, for personnel selection purposes, no theory which relates personality and leisure activities is available. It has been an assumption that leisure activities reflect a person's personality. If this is the case, a job applicant's leisure activities pattern would tell us what the job applicant is like. Leisure activities are sometimes included as part of the biographical items in biodata research. Brown and Campion (1994) has pointed out that it is important to have a better understanding

on how recruiters use biographical information. Following this logic, it is important to identify the relationships between leisure activities and the inferences which recruiters make when screening resumes. Further, while leisure activities can be regarded as biographical in nature, and that it is believed to reflect a person's personality, it appears that it is appropriate to categorize leisure activities in terms of personality traits as part of the biographical information that recruiters use for selection purposes.

With the big five personality traits being the prime focus of this study, the next question is which personality trait should be included? When more than one of the personality traits are considered together, situations could become quite complex due to the possible interactions among the personality traits. As shown in Barrick and Mount's (1991) meta-analysis, extroversion-introversion was found to be a valid predictor of job performance. As a start, this would be a good personality trait to include for the proposed study. Therefore, extroversion-introversion-related leisure activities pattern is included as one of the variable to be tested.

### 3. Purposes and Objectives

Characterized by its vibrant work force, Hong Kong is well-known for its economic success in the recent decades. In a recent article, Ng (1997) discussed the impact of the 1997 reversion of sovereignty on the local work force. He covered the economical and political environment under which the labor force has maintained a key role in the society as a whole before and after the reversion. Coupled with the latest development in business management, such as the trendy strategy of improving competitive position through downsizing, the pressure being put on the human infrastructure in Hong Kong is evident. Among everything else, the events that have been taking place in the local political arena are part of the forces that are urging the Hong Kong labor market to transform. In conclusion, Ng asserted that, in order for Hong Kong to keep abreast of the competitive edge in the international business community, we must strive to improve our human infrastructure and performance.

In fact, Ng's opinion on Hong Kong's need for effective human resources management is hardly an isolated notion. The Business and Professionals Federation of Hong Kong (1993) conducted a project

called the Hong Kong 21. The main purpose of the project was to offer recommendations to the Government regarding the future economic development in Hong Kong. According to their report, one of the five critical success factors for Hong Kong in the future is to maintain "a forward-looking human resources strategy and infrastructure plans. . ." in order to foster sound relationships between Hong Kong and China and the international community.

From a managerial perspective, the work force of an organization could be a critical success factor. In this regard, before organizations can focus their attention on managing the work force, they have to be able to find the right ones to join their companies.

As one of the important elements in human resources management, personnel selection is chosen to be studied. In a recent survey conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management (Tang, 1995), results indicated that 91% of the companies in Hong Kong use English newspaper as at least one of the methods of recruitment (table 1). On the same sample, 99.1% and 89.1% of the companies use interview and application form as at least one of the tools of selection. In other words, it is fair to assume that the majority of the organizations in Hong Kong choose

the right people for the right jobs by putting hiring ads in English newspaper. In this vein, the firms may make their hiring decisions, based at least partly on the evaluation of application forms and/or interview performance.

Some of the issues regarding interview as a selection method have been covered in the literature review section. From a practitioner's point of view, the problem of using interview as a selection tool is it's lack of validity and reliability despite the fact that vast majority of the organization in Hong Kong are using this tool for selection purposes. In order to refine such selection technique, a pertinent first step would be to take a look at what goes on during the interview. Previous work on employment interview provides the framework to analyze the interview process. While no information for the local population is available, the attention is focused on the initial stage of the interview process. According to the self-fulfilling prophecy model, pre-interview impression can be related to post-interview evaluation and, eventually, the interview outcome. In this regard, it is believed that, in some sense, the decision making process begins as early as when the recruiters review the paper credentials of the applicants. Therefore, beginning at the pre-interview phase, the purpose of



this study is to find out how to improve the effectiveness of employment interview as a selection technique for the local hiring environment.

Specifically, before figuring out what needs to be done to improve the effectiveness of interview, according to the self-fulfilling prophecy model, the actual pre-interview impression phase should be understood. Therefore, the objectives this study is to:

- 1) Identify the possible factors which may contribute to the impression formation process at the pre-interview phase, and
- 2) examine how the identified factors, if any, affect the pre-interview impression that the recruiters form at the pre-interview phase.

#### 4. Hypotheses

The rationale for this thesis research has been articulated. Precise content of the variables to be tested has also been explained. In order to test the relationships between the proposed variables and the pre-interview screening decision, the following hypotheses for their respective variables are generated:

H1: Male applicants receive better ratings than female applicants do.

H2: Business majors receive better ratings than non-business majors do.

H3: Extroverts receive better ratings than introverts do.

Finally, gender may complicate the issue of hobbies/interests. Male and female applicants may not display similar leisure activities pattern. From a recruiter's point of view, applicants of different gender may be expected to possess different personality. Therefore, the following hypotheses are generated.

H4: Hobbies/interests inferred personality trait affects the initial screening decision of male and female differently.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Pilot Study: The Improved Nominal Group Technique (INGT)

#### 5.1.1 The Sample

With limited information on the attributes of hobbies/interests from the literature search, the objective of this exercise is to come up with a list of activities that could be included in the instrument as an indication of an applicant's personality. Since all the fictitious job applicants for the main study are fresh graduates, using undergraduate students on campus is appropriate. A group of nine students, with 4 males and 5 females, from the Occupational Psychology class on campus was chosen as the sample for the exercise. According to Fox (1989), a sample of 8 to 10 people should be appropriate for this type of exercise. All of the students are in their final year of the degree program with average age of around 21. Their age level and exposure to the industry are comparable to that of the fictitious job applicants.

### 5.1.2 The Procedures

One week prior to the meeting date, a handout which included the definition of extroversion-introversion, description of the exercise and the question for discussion, that is, the extroversion-introversion related hobbies/interests, is distributed to the students. The actual information that the students received are included in appendix 2.

Two days before the meeting, initial responses to the discussion questions from seven out of nine students were collected. Such responses were then integrated into one listing. During this process, part of the wording that the students used was modified for better comprehensibleness.

Just before the meeting, the other two response sheets were collected. Such responses were then added to the listing which was previously compiled. At the meeting, the aggregate listing of extroversion-introversion activities/hobbies was gone through with all the students for clarification. Subsequently, new response sheets were distributed to the students for additional inputs. These new items were added to the listing to be reviewed by everyone again. The process was repeated until no one has any additional input.

Overall, excluding the preliminary round, that is, the initial response sheets collected before the meeting, three iterations were needed before no one could come up with any additional items.

#### 5.1.3 The Findings

The students came up with 33 items for extroversion and 37 items for introversion. Having finished that, the final listings were distributed to the students to assign rank to every items. The meeting lasted for about one hour and fifteen minutes. The rankings for both extroversion and introversion related activities/hobbies were added together. This total rank scores were used as the key for sorting. Finally, two lists of hobbies/activities sorted by summed rank scores were derived.

#### 5.1.4 Goodness of Data

In this exercise, all the students had equal opportunities to present their inputs, and, that no one single suggestion was excluded in the process. These items represent the consensus opinions of the selected student group. However, such results are only subjective opinions of a group of nine student.

To test the results, a panel of five post-graduate students are invited for data testing. The modified version of the statistic kappa ( $\kappa$ ) (Fleiss, 1971) was used as a measure of interrater reliability among the five judges. This method for assessing the reliability of the data is relevant for this part of the study because the listed items were derived according to the participants' observations and perceptions (Sekaran, 1992).

First of all, the top fifteen items from the two ranked listings were selected for testing. The two lists of items were integrated and alphabetized. Information on the concept of extroversion-introversion as a personality trait were given to the five post-graduate students. They were advised to think about the concept using only the information presented to them because different person might have different perceptions on this topic. For consistency sake, the information that the Occupational Psychology student group received was the same as that the post-graduate student group did. After that, the five students were asked to check on either the extroversion or the introversion column for each item on the integrated listing.

The method that Fleiss (1971) developed was then applied to the interrater data. The obtained  $\kappa$  and standard error of  $\kappa$  was 0.61 and 0.06, respectively. Therefore the standard normal variate of 10.32 supports the conclusion that, overall, the level of agreement among the five raters were significantly greater than that of merely by chance. For both categories -- extroversion and introversion -- the corresponding results showed a pattern of choice. In other words, the raters did not just randomly choose one or the other. Although this is not enough to establish a precise relationship between the personality traits being studied and any one item from the activities/hobbies listing, inferences can be made. When the raters were given with only two choices -- extroversion and introversion, each one of the activities/hobbies on the list was somehow related to one of the two ends on the extroversion-introversion continuum.

## 5.2 The Pretest

### 5.2.1 The Sample

In order to evaluate the aptness of the original instrument, a pretest was conducted to obtain preliminary results. The population from which the



sample was drawn is identical to that for the main study.

#### 5.2.2 The Procedures

First of all, 225 letters were sent. Within four weeks, 27 responses came back. Subsequently, these respondents were contacted. With their agreement, the application packets with detailed explanations and instructions were sent. Out of this batch, eight respondents were willing to review the packet. However, only six completed packets were returned. For the six respondents, four of them were male; and, two of them were female. All of them holds human resource-related positions at the managerial level. Their tenure in the field of human resources ranges from 2 to 20 years.

All six of the companies that the respondents worked for are from different countries of origins. The industries, that the companies are in, included information technologies (hardware and software), management consulting, elevators, and electronic appliances. The companies have local work force ranging from 10 to 1000.

After the respondents had finished reviewing the packet, they were contacted for follow-up questions. The turn around times were between one to four weeks. While some of the respondents had very busy schedules, three interviews were done on the phone; and, the others were conducted in person at their companies. The duration of the interviews ranged from 15 to 30 minutes. To check on the data, a brief verbal conclusion was offered to each one of them after the interview so as to ascertain that the data in hand correctly revealed the respondent's opinion.

### 5.2.3 Dependent Measures

From the available literature, Brown and Campion (1994) came up with six general attributes that recruiters would look for when hiring. In the instrument, five of these six items were chosen to be the dependent variables for this study with an assumption that these variables are independent. The six attributes that were used in Brown and Campion's study (1994) were language, mathematics, physical, interpersonal, leadership, and motivation. Physical ability was dropped because it was not a relevant quality that a management trainee needs to possess. Therefore, five attributes were reflected in the

evaluation forms as the dependent measures. All five questions were asked using 5 point Likert scale.

#### 5.2.4 Independent Measures

The independent variables were gender, educational background, and hobbies/interests. Information on each of these variables were shown in the application forms in two levels. Half of the applicants were male and half were female. For educational background, the applicants were either business majors or other social sciences majors. All of the fictitious applications included two activities in the form to represent their hobbies/interests. Half of the applicants have activities chosen from the extroversion related activity list derived in the pilot study. The rest of the applicants included activities from the introversion related list.

#### 5.2.5 The Findings: Revisions on the Original Instrument

With regard to the instructions in the packet, all of the respondents found that the instructions were clear and straight forward for the purpose of this exercise. However, one of them felt that more information relating the culture and normal hiring

practice on the fictitious company would be desirable. Yet, another respondent believed that the overall objective of the exercise should be more clearly stated. Including this in the instruction sheets was believed to be able to enhance judgment quality of the evaluator.

The concern of including information on normal hiring practice and company culture makes intuitive sense. Every company has its own approach to do things. This is true for various management practices including human resources. In fact, the respondent who raised the issue of company information indicated that the company that he works for places strong emphasis on cultural match. Generally, they like to hire people who can blend in. In this vein, part of the job of the human resource department in that company is to match the right people for the right job in the right department. However, including this information in the packet would weaken the control of the experiment. In essence doing so would mean inserting another variable for the study. In order to match, the recruiter(s) need to know the company and the applicants well. If company culture is included in the background information, detailed personal profiles will have to be included in the applications. But, in practical terms, the respondent who raised this issue pointed out that

the company relies heavily on the interviews through which specific questions would be addressed to determine the compatibility of an applicant. In simple terms, they like to find someone who can work with others in the hiring department and the company but much of the screening process in this regard is done at the interview. Therefore, including more background information about the company probably would not help a great deal at the initial stage of the screening process.

As for the one who talked about the objective of the exercise, he believed that knowing the precise objective of the exercise can improve the quality of judgment as the applications were reviewed. In his case, it appeared that the scenario in the instruction sheets was not completely understood. To streamline the flow of information input, the procedures originally included in the cover letter was moved to the beginning part of the "Notes for the Recruiters". It is hoped that the respondents would find the scenario more comprehensible.

For the application forms, five of the six respondents believed that the applications generally lacked detailed explanations on various items. While all of the respondents considered educational

background an important quality of the applicant, their attitudes towards the major subject of an applicant were mixed. For example, as a professional recruiter for 5 years, one of the respondents has developed a set of ideas on the general quality of students from some departments in the Universities in Hong Kong. He explained that, according to his experience, some engineering students function very well as managers. However, he asserted that, for a management trainee position, he would probably turn down an applicant with a major in Fine Art! In short, he does not believe that an applicant's major subject alone is a very good indicator on hirability. In other words, business studies are not the only major subject that he would consider to be a good match for the position to be filled. Nevertheless, he does have preferences. Factoring in all of his ideas on major subjects and position match to the instrument would not be appropriate because it merely represents his own preferences. In this regard, different participants would probably have their own ideas on qualification match. As long as the participants have preferences, putting this variable in the instrument would be appropriate to test if, overall, the hypothesized effect exists. Another educational background related issue that was not included in the original instrument but came up during the interviews was scholastic

performance. Three of the respondents believed that, for fresh graduates, grades in University can help to determine the quality of an applicant. Another two respondents added that, in reality, when supply is not plentiful, it may not be practical to evaluate job applicants using this as an indicator as it might result in too few potential candidates. While demand and supply of the job market is not the issue of interest in this study, it appears that adding this as a variable in the instrument would not be appropriate.

The next item on the application forms is the relevant experience. Originally, part-time experience on the applications were intended to be part of the distracting information. Therefore, all applicants have some form of part-time work experience that are not directly related to the position to be filled. During the interviews, three respondents talked about the inadequacy of the work experience section of the application forms. They all agreed that details of the actual work involved on the job can help them to do job requirements and experience match. If detailed experience was included in the applications, it would become one of the key variables in the decision making process because the respondents can actually check on the actual experience the applicants have or do not have. However, using the proposed methodology to

quantify work experience may not be very efficient. For every two category item added, the number of application forms in the packet has to be doubled. Therefore, when various work experiences are added to the instrument, the number of applications the respondents need to review would exceed 8 by a wide margin. In addition, reviewing work experience involves more than a simple yes-and-no question. Some of the things recruiters may consider include the length of such experience, the company in which such experience is gained, and the comparability of such experience and the current job requirements. Consequently, the experience section of the application would remain unchanged.

With regard to hobbies/interest of the applicants, four of the six respondents believe that information of this kind can help the recruiters in the decision making process. Two of the respondents agreed that hobbies and interests can be used as an indicator of an applicant's character. Similarly, motivation and problem solving skills are among some of the things that these two respondents believe to be able to see from applicants' hobbies/interest. Finally, one of the respondents liked to see how job applicants presented themselves on things that were not related to school or work in order to get a better feel for what kind of



person an applicant was. Overall, they all agreed that more details in this section were needed. Details refer to various things such as nature of activities, positions held in school activities, and accomplishments. Even though it seemed reasonable to modify the hobbies/interest section, there was a potential problem for such revision. Changing the items on this section would contaminate the hobbies/interests information obtained from the pilot study. To remain consistent, information in this section would not be revised.

Onto the evaluation forms, first of all, four out of the six completed packets had the manipulation check information either completely or partially left out. During the interviews, some of the respondents indicated that it was too troublesome to reproduce the same information as seen on the applications forms. To this end, the manipulation check procedures was revised to enhance the number of valid responses.

All six subjects agreed that language and mathematics ability cannot be judged from the information available. Even though, according to Brown and Campion (1994), these two kinds of qualities were determined to be what employers mostly wanted from an applicant, these questions were not believed to be

reasonable under the circumstances in this studies. The subjects believed that judgment on a person's language and mathematics ability can only be made after the interview. As a result, the decision was straight forward that these two questions were dropped.

Generally, the subjects believed that qualification match was an important indicator of an applicant's hirability. However, in an effort to minimize the number of applications in the packet, only two levels were created for each of the independent variable. In this regard, the focus became whether or not being a business major is essential for the position. Being one of the most frequently used variables in hiring research (Olian, 1986), educational background as a variable remained unchanged.

For the next three questions in the evaluation form, the pre-test subjects had mixed opinions. While some believed that the available information in the applications did not provide sufficient ground for evaluation, others did not. The following paragraphs highlighted some of the thoughts of the pre-test subjects.

Interpersonal skills, motivation, and leadership are considered similar in nature. Three of the

respondents believed that interpersonal skills, motivation, and leadership skills can be judged by the applicants' hobbies/interests. The others had mixed opinions. One of them believed that business majors generally have better leadership skills because of the training that the applicants get in business curriculum. However, he asserted that motivation and interpersonal skills must be observed during the interview. The other respondents thought that the available information in the applications were not adequate to answer these three questions.

Nevertheless, under the circumstances, preliminary assessment can be made by considering the applicants' hobbies/interests. Overall, these opinions suggest that, even if the information in the applications may not lead to consensus opinions on the applicants' interpersonal skills, motivation, and leadership skills, at least hobbies/interests of the applicants' may somehow influence the outcome of these three questions. With impression formation being the prime focus of the study, it is possible that such impression regarding the applicants' interpersonal skills, motivation, and leadership skills can be affected by the information in the applications. Therefore, these three questions would remain unchanged.

Although the respondents in general thought that the information in the applications were a little too simple for evaluation purpose, all of them believed that the questions on affect and decision to offer interview were reasonable. After all, having learned the facts about the applicants, one should have some ideas of how much she/he likes the applicants for the job.

All the items in the original packet have been explained. From the information gathered, some common themes can be identified. None of the respondents mentioned anything about the effect of gender and residency. Olian (1986) indicated that past results in staffing research did not provide unified solution to the issue of gender. Significant effect of gender can only be found in some of the studies. Meanwhile, the interaction effect between gender and hobbies/interests has been hypothesized. It is important to see if the main effect of gender alone would make any differences on the ratings. In light of this, the main effect of gender is kept.

The subjects' main concern appeared to be on the educational background and various personal qualities of the applicants. The ideas on other personal qualities are more complex. The subjects wanted to

know more about what the applicants are like as a person. From the original design, information on the applicants' hobbies/interests was assumed to reflect an applicant's personality. It appeared that the variable educational background and hobbies/interests would give the respondents at least part of information needed to fill out the evaluation form. As explained, gender should be kept because of the hypothesized interaction effect. After integrating all the input from the pre-test subjects, the original instrument was revised. The final version of the instrument which was used in the main study is shown in appendix 3

### 5.3 Main Study

#### 5.3.1 The Sample

A judgment sample is chosen for the experiment. The sampling attention is focused on human resource personnel at the managerial level. Targeting on human resource people at this level can ensure that the subjects were reasonably experienced. From the classified advertisement sections in the South China Morning Post, Hong Kong Standard, Career Times, and Recruit, the companies with human resource departments were contacted in writing. Specifically, the letters were addressed to the managers.

Using the method of statistical power analysis discussed by Cohen (1977), the sample size for all main and interaction effects for a 2 x 2 x 2 repeated measures design was determined to be 33.

### 5.3.2 The Procedures

The procedures used to obtain the sample in the main study was identical to that in the pretest. The only difference was that 674 letters were sent instead of 225. Within 4 weeks 72 responses came back. With the respondents' agreement, the revised packets were sent to them. After waited for ten weeks, only 24 completed packets were returned. In light of the low response rate, reminding letters were sent to the subjects who had not responded to the original invitation letters. Three weeks later, 19 more subjects contacted us. Altogether, before the cut-off date, 35 packets were returned. Overall, the turn around time was between two weeks to three and a half month. Using the original targeted sample of 674 as the base, the overall response rate is  $35 \div 674 = 5\%$ . The response rate for the main study appears to be better than that for the pre-test. Such low response rate is determined to be due to the complexity of the task involved for the subjects. Even though 92 people

showed initial interest to participate. After they had seen the packet, only 35 of them were returned.

### 5.3.3 Manipulation Checks

In order to find out if the subjects were aware of the manipulated information in the packet, the subjects were contacted for a brief telephone interview. Essentially, the questions were focused on the three independent variables. The manipulation check routine is included in appendix 4.

Three of the returned packets had missing data. After talking to all of the participants, two of them were not aware of the fact that the applicants included both male and female students. Therefore these two responses were extracted also. Altogether, 5 of the 35 returned packets had to be excluded for data analysis.

## 6. Results

The number of responses included in the data set was 30. SPSS for windows (v 6.0) was used for data analysis. Regarding the setup of the data set, the ratings on all the six dependent variables for every subject were coded as different variables. Such method is appropriate for analyzing within subject design using the MANOVA procedure in SPSS (Norusis, 1994).

When conducting the analysis, the familywise error rate was controlled at 5% ( $\alpha = .05$ ). Altogether, 24 hypotheses were to be tested. For studies which involve multiple statistical tests, Stevens (1992) outlined the procedures to compute the overall error rate. Overall  $\alpha \leq 1 - (1 - \alpha')^k$ , where  $k$  is the total number of statistical tests to be done. Using this formula, the  $\alpha$  level for individual hypothesis is adjusted to .002.

First of all, the main effects -- gender, educational background, and hobbies/interests -- were tested. Subsequently, the hypothesized interaction effects between gender and hobbies/interests on the six dependent variables were examined both graphically and numerically. Finally, a series of additional



procedures were performed to further investigate the source of the significant interactions.

## 6.1 Main Effects

### 6.1.1 Hypothesis One

At a glance, the mean ratings (table 1) between male and female across all six dependent variables appears to be comparable. The  $F$  statistics and their respective  $p$ -values indicate that there are no differences in perceived qualities between male and female applicants. Such results provide the basis to accept the null for hypothesis 1.

Originally, hypotheses 1 was written to test the main effects of gender on the perceived qualities of the applicants as represented by the six dependent variables. To this end, the conclusion is that gender of the applicants did not affect the initial screening decisions. In other words, in our sample, the recruiters did not show significant bias on assigning ratings to male or female applicants without considering other variables.

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insert table 1 about here  
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#### 6.1.2 Hypothesis Two

The statistical results obtained for the main effects of educational background display a pattern that is entirely different from that observed for the main effects of gender. Table 2 contains the ANOVA results of educational background as the main effects for all six dependent variables. Except for motivation, the  $F$  and  $p$ -values for the rest of the variables indicate that the mean ratings that the business majors and non-business majors received are not the same. Especially for qualification match, it is clear that the business majors are in distinct advantage that their mean ratings are 2.16 higher than that for non business majors. For interpersonal skills, leadership, affect, and decision to offer interview, the non business majors' mean ratings are fairly close to the neutral score. On the other hand the scores on interpersonal skills, leadership, affect, and decision to offer interview that the business majors received are significantly higher at 3.51, 3.22, 4.95, and 3.66.

Intuitively, the business majors should receive better scores on qualification match. After all, this is one of the requirements stated in the instrument. However, the relationship between academic majors and interpersonal skills and leadership are less direct. Holding other things constant, the subjects in our sample believed that business majors, in general, have better interpersonal skills and leadership. Similarly, the subjects tended to show that they like business majors more than they do for non business majors. For the dependent measures discussed thus far, the business majors generally received better ratings. It is logical that, on the last question, that is, the question on decision to offer interview, the business majors would also receive better scores. For educational background as a main effect, the business majors are generally preferred. The strength of relationships as indicated by  $\eta^2$  for all the significant results ranges from .492 to .928. In other words, the strength of those relationships are generally very strong.

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insert table 2 about here  
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### 6.1.3 Hypothesis Three

As for the main effects of hobbies/interests inferred personality trait, the obtained results show a pattern that is similar to that for the main effects of education background. Out of the six variables, significant differences in ratings between extroverts and introverts were found in five of them. Results in table 3 demonstrated that for the hypothesis 3, the null is accepted as evident in the  $F$  and  $p$ -values. The effect sizes of the relationships ranges from .657 to .827. Such figures indicate that the extent to which the hypothesized phenomenon exist is very large. For interpersonal skills, leadership, motivation, affect, and decision to offer interview, the mean ratings that perceived extroverts received are almost one point higher than that the perceived introverts received. In this regard, the extroverts are preferred.

If the hobbies/interests included in the application reflects the degree of extroversion/introversion of the applicants, the perceived extroverts are believed to have better interpersonal skills, leadership, and motivation. From the recruiters point of view, the extroverts are more likable. Also, the extroverts generally receive better scores on the decision to offer interview question. By

definition (Eysenck, 1965) extroverts are supposed to be more oriented towards the outside world; whereas, introverts are believed to be more oriented towards their inside world. Extroverts are more outgoing. They tend to enjoy doing things with others. This definition was used in the explanatory notes in pilot study. Therefore, the items on the activity list generated in pilot study should reflect such personality trait, assuming personality is related to hobbies/interests in the process of impression formation when recruiters evaluate job applicants. This being the case, the extroverts should have more opportunities to interrelate with others as perceived by the recruiters. In this regard, the higher interpersonal skills ratings for extroverted applicants are reasonable.

By the same token, if leadership is the ability to direct others to accomplish goals, being extroverted also provides explanation for their higher leadership scores. With better interpersonal skills, extroverts should be better at relating to others. As better communicators, they may be more effective in directing others. In this sense, the extroverts could be regarded as better leaders.

Regarding motivation, results obtained showed that the extroverts were believed to have higher motivation. Motivation was defined as level of energy (Brown and Campion, 1994). In other words, the extroverts were believed to have higher level of energy. Going back to the definition, extroverts should be outgoing. Also, they enjoy doing things with others. Is it reasonable to think that they are more energetic? Using the Brown and Campion's (1994) definition of motivation, the answer could be a yes.

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insert table 3 about here  
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## 6.2 Interactions: Hypothesis Four

It was hypothesized that the relationships between the dependent variables and hobbies/interests inferred personality traits are not the same for male and female. Results as shown in table 4 indicated that the null for hypothesis 4 is rejected. For all the statistical tests performed on the interactions, the respective effect sizes ranges from .330 to .598. Such effect sizes indicated that the hypothesized relationships are strong. The conclusion is that the relationships between hobbies/interests inferred

personality traits and all the dependent measures are not the same for male and female.

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insert table 4 about here  
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In figure 3, the interaction effect between gender and hobbies/interests on qualification match is graphically presented. It is clear that there is a cross over interaction effect. For male, extroverts tend to have better qualification match scores than introverts do; whereas, for female, introverts tend to have better qualification match scores than extroverts do.

Recalling the results obtained for gender as the main effects, no significant results were found. When considering hobbies/interests and gender together, the interaction effect reveals the fact that, in terms of qualification match, the mean ratings male applicants received are not the same as that female applicants received. In this sense, the original conclusions on gender have to be qualified. Specifically, for male, extroverts received better ratings; whereas, for female, introverts received better ratings.

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insert figure 3 about here  
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The interaction graphs for gender and hobbies/interests inferred personality trait on interpersonal skills, leadership, motivation, affect, and decision to offer interview show similar pattern. Specifically, all five graphs indicate a cross over interaction with the male line showing larger slopes than the female line. An example of the interaction between hobbies/interests inferred personality trait and gender is shown in figure 4. For both male and female applicants, the extroverts received better ratings than introverts did. The cross over interactions indicate that, in terms of the ratings on the five dependent measures, the sensitivity to change in hobbies/interests are not the same for male and female. Without considering educational background, female applicants are less sensitive to change in hobbies/interests inferred personality traits. In other words, the change in ratings on interpersonal skills, leadership, motivation, affect, and decision to offer interview between extroverts and introverts are significantly higher for male applicants as they are for female applicants.



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insert figure 4 about here  
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Again, going back to the results on gender as a main effect, the interaction effects uncovered here placed limitations on the conclusion previously drawn. Evidently, the results obtained for hypotheses 1 do not provide a complete picture of the effect of gender on the dependent variables. When hobbies/interests inferred personality trait is specified, gender of the applicants do make a difference on ratings received. This is true for all six dependent variables. In case of qualification match, specifying hobbies/interests inferred personality trait actually yields opposite results.

### 6.3 Additional Analysis

As hypothesized, the interaction effects between gender and hobbies/interests inferred personality trait for all six dependent variables do exist. In addition, from the results obtained in the data analysis, one interesting point surfaced. For five out of the six dependent variables, the F values, p values and their respective  $\eta^2$  for the three way interactions indicate

the existence of significantly strong relationships among all the factors in the models (table 5).

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insert table 5 about here  
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If the three way interaction is significant, it implies that studying only the simple interactions and main effects may not be able to review the complete picture of the relationships among the factors in the model. To this end, the question becomes how such effect should be studied. As stated above, all of the uncovered three way interactions were significant with large effect sizes. Such effect was present in five of the six models. In this vein, the pattern of relationships did not indicate high chances of spurious results. Since the original hypotheses were written to explore the relationships between gender and hobbies/interests, using this as the starting point for further analysis should be appropriate. In other words, the three way interactions should be studied by introducing a third variable to the existing two way interactions - gender x hobbies. Precisely, the gender x hobbies interactions should be broken down according to the levels of the educational background factor. Thus, the gender x hobbies interactions should be

studied with business and non business majors being the third factor.

To begin the additional procedures, the relationships of gender x hobbies for business majors and gender x hobbies for non business majors for five of the six dependent variables were explored. If a two way interaction was significant, the simple main effects would subsequently be studied. The interpretation of the results for each dependent variable are discussed in the following paragraphs.

#### 6.3.1 Qualification Match

For this variable, Gender x Hobbies for non business majors was determined to be significant with F value of 28.69 and p value of 0.000. The simple main effect examined for this two way interaction was the effect of hobbies on both male and female non business majors. Only the effect of Hobbies on female non business majors was found to be significant. The F value was 27.75 with p value of 0.000. In short the Gender x Hobbies interaction was mainly contributed by the effect of Hobbies on female non business majors. Specifically, introverts received higher ratings.

### 6.3.2 Interpersonal Skills

For this dependent variable, only the Gender x Hobbies for non business majors was shown to be significant at  $p \leq 0.000$  level. The  $F$  value was 50.73. Hobbies effect for male non business majors was the only simple main effect that was found to be significant. It had an  $F$  value of 141.59 with  $p$  value of 0.000. For the male non business majors, extroverts generally received better ratings on interpersonal skills.

### 6.3.3 Leadership

Similar to the other two dependent variables, Gender x Hobbies interaction was broken down into two interactions - Gender x Hobbies for business majors and Gender x Hobbies for non business majors. The later was determined to be significant at  $p \leq 0.000$  level. The  $F$  value obtained was 32.19. Next, the simple effect of hobbies on male non business majors and female non business majors were explored. In this case, only hobbies for male non business majors was found to be significant. Obtained  $F$  value was 60.76 with  $p$  value of 0.000.

#### 6.3.4 Affect

Same procedures for examining the interaction effects were applied to the dependent variable Affect. The results indicated that only the interaction Gender x Hobbies for non business majors was determined to be significant. The  $F$  value and  $p$  value were 30.25 and 0.000. Subsequently, the two simple main effects were explored. It was found that only hobbies for male non business majors was significant with  $F$  value and  $p$  value of 32.85 and 0.000.

#### 6.3.5 Decision to Offer Interview

Finally, the interaction effect between gender and hobbies was further explored by introducing educational background as a third factor. Gender x Hobbies for non business major was determined to be significant with  $F$  value and  $p$  value of 44.64 and 0.000. Regarding the simple main effect for this interaction, it was determined that hobbies for male non business majors was significant with  $F$  value and  $p$  value of 63.59 and 0.000.

## 7. Discussions and Conclusions

The first objective of this thesis research has been achieved. Following the assumption that the differences in mean ratings from the different groups of subjects represent the impression that the recruiters have on the applicants, the obtained results have shown that gender, educational background, and hobbies/interests of the applicants do contribute to the formation of pre-interview impression. Even though gender as a main effect was not found to affect the ratings that the applicants belonging to the gender groups received, the interaction effects and the results obtained from the additional procedures qualified the conclusion previously drawn regarding gender. In experimental design, interaction effects can have significant impact on the interpretation of the results. Basically, the idea is that, "interaction effects lead to a qualification on the estimate one makes of the differences attributable to different treatments; when interaction effects exist, the best estimates one can make of a difference attributable to one factor depends on the particular level of the other factor(s)" (Hays, 1988). As shown in the previous section, the results indicated that the three-way interactions for all but one of the variables were significant. When interaction effects are present, all

factors should be considered together in order to get a complete picture of the results. Consequently, additional procedures were performed. Without surprises, such procedures revealed some of the facts that looking at the main effects alone could not uncover. And the final conclusion was that gender did contribute to the pre-interview impression formation.

The second objective of this study has also been achieved. It has been shown that, while holding other factors constant, business majors are generally preferred. Overall, the extroverts are also perceived to be better in terms of the quality ratings.

As stated in the interaction effect section, the results from the additional procedures complicated the interpretation of the results obtained from the first three hypothesized effects. Specifically, for female non-business majors, introverts were having slight advantages on qualification match. In the cases of interpersonal skills, leadership skills, affect, and decision to offer interview, extroverts received higher ratings when the applicants were male non-business majors. Although the main effect gender was found to be insignificant, the interaction effects indicated that, in the presence of other factor, male and female

applicants would give the recruiters different impression.

An interesting point about the interaction effects is that, male and female applicants, somehow, did receive different treatment in the evaluation process. Looking at the gender of the applicants alone, no significant differences were found. However, in the presence of other variables, the pattern of choice emerged. For qualification match, extroverted male received better scores; whereas, introverted female received better scores. A closer look at this interaction revealed a pattern that when the applicant is a female without a non business degree, the introverts received better scores. For interpersonal skills, leadership, affect and decision to offer interviews, the interaction effects tell us that male was more sensitive to changes in hobbies/interests inferred personality. For male applicants, extroverts appear to be advantageous. On the other hand, such personality trait did not appear to be as critical as it was for female applicants. In other words, the results indicate that gender of the applicants actually made a difference in the process of evaluation. It appeared that the differences were mainly contributed by the non business majors applicants. In simple terms, if you do not have a business degree, and if you



are a female, you need to be an introvert to have better qualification match. For interpersonal skills, leadership, affect, and decision to offer interview, if you do not have a business degree, and if you are a male, you need to be extroverted to have better scores.

The observed phenomenon provided some interesting insight in the interviewing process. While the overall ratings of male applicants were comparable to that of female applicants, their expected characteristics at a given score level for various dependent variables were not the same. If the overall mean ratings of the two gender groups are determined to be the same, yet, when taking into consideration the other two independent variables, differences emerge, does it represent the blind-self or hidden-self in the subjects? In other words, does it mean that they think they consider male and female applicants to be the same but, in fact, they do not? Or, does it mean that they want people to believe they consider male and female applicants to be the same but, in fact, they do not? The notion of equal opportunity employment is gaining more and more attention in the recent years. The idea of this movement is to give people with different characteristics to have equal opportunities in the work place. If people in different gender group with similar characteristics are not considered to possess

the same quality, can true equal opportunity employment be achieved? Ironically, all the participants are human resource specialists. These experts are the ones who can have significant influence on the final hiring decisions in their companies.

### 7.1 Implications

Going back to the theoretical basis of this study, the results obtained have implications at various levels. At the moment when recruiters reviewed job applications, they only had limited information to make reject or offering interview decision. The main theme at this stage is the pre-interview impression. To this end, this study serves the purpose of identifying, at least in part, the sources of information which affect the initial screening decision making process.

The fact that, the sources of information for impression formation can be identified, warrants further investigations of the interviewing process model. Specifically, this study has laid the ground work to study the impact of such impression formation on various stages in the interviewing process as described in the self-fulfilling prophecy model for the local environment. According to the model (Figure 2), further studies on interviewer's conduct of the

interview, interviewer's perception of the interviewee's performance in the interview, and the interviewer's interpretation of the interviewee's performance in the interview can provide the details of how pre-interview impression affect the interview outcome.

In the pilot study, an attempt was made to categorize leisure activities in terms of personality trait for use in resume screening research. The activity lists generated in the pilot study were shown to be reliable across all the evaluators. The logic of doing this is similar to that in the study conducted by Brown and Campion (1994). They tried to categorize biographical information in terms of abilities and attribute measures in an effort to find out how recruiters utilized biographical information to make inferences when screening resumes for accounting and sales jobs. In this thesis research, the main focus is on studying the pre-interview impression formation in the interviewing process. The problem with biographical information is that there are quite a few definitions available. Though it is believed to be a good source of information on job applicants, how exactly this source of information affects the recruiters' evaluation is not known. The results obtained has implications on the possibility of

categorizing leisure activities in terms of personality traits. Doing so may allow the recruiters to have a clearer picture of the impression formation process which is essential if improvements on employment interviews are to be made.

For personnel selection research in general, researchers have been working on examining the reliability and validity of different selection techniques. In evaluating selection techniques such as employment interview, performance is the key issue. Employers like to hire employees who function well. The goodness of interview as a selection technique has been frequently questioned (Campion and Arvey, 1989). Nonetheless, it is the most widely used technique. If the self-fulfilling prophecy model accurately portrays the micro-analytics of the interview process, the results obtained in this study might explain the shortcomings of interview as a selection technique, provided that the results obtained in this study can be further substantiated.

From the practitioners' position, analyzing the interview process can help them to understand what really goes on before, during, and after the entire interviewing process. In this regard, this study has provided some preliminary information on the potential

problems of employment interview as a selection technique. If the assumption on interview research, that is, "subjective procedures should be held to the same psychometric standards as paper-and-pencil tests of intelligence, personality questionnaires, work samples, biodata instruments, assessment centers, and other more objective procedures" (Dipboye, 1989), practitioners can utilize the findings of this kind to refine the interviewing process that their firms use.

## 7.2 Conclusion

The above discussion represents a brief attempt to explain the phenomenon observed from the statistical results. Whether or not such explanation is considered reasonable, the fact that the variables being investigated do affect the formation of pre-interview impression should not be overlooked. However, one should not misunderstand the idea of the self-fulfilling prophecy. Though the pre-interview impression is believed to affect the post-interview evaluation, there is no evidence which suggest that recruiters should avoid forming pre-interview impression (Dipboye, 1982). Rather, the theory serves the purpose of depicting the details of the interviewing process through which the potential biasing effects of the initial impression should be

considered. Before the results obtained in this study can be taken further, the issue of generalizability should be attended to.

### 7.3 Limitations

#### 7.3.1 Pilot Study

Although Holland (1986) has established the relationship between personality and hobbies, his approach was more oriented towards vocational choices. In personnel selection research the big five personality traits have not been studied in terms of hobbies/ interests. The nominal group technique employed in the pilot study served as a mean to come up with a list of extroversion-introversion related activities for use in the main study. Nonetheless, the activities on the list were derived by a sample of nine students on campus. In terms of representativeness, the listing should be used with cautions. Although inter-rater reliability showed that the goodness of the items on the list was acceptable, all of the subjects were students. If the sample was not selected from the student group on campus, the results could be different. An assumption was made that extroversion-introversion as a personality trait is related to hobbies/interests. When the recruiters made their

decisions, hobbies/interests inferred personality was assumed to be the source of stimulation. After all, the pilot study was not designed to establish a precise relationship between any activities with a personality trait. The exercise merely served the purpose of providing activities for use in the instrument. While the results suggested that the assumed relationship did make a difference on the ratings, it may mean that future effort to generate a proper listing of personality related activities may be warranted.

### 7.3.2 Main Study

The statistical results in this experiment revealed an interesting pattern. For all the significant  $F$  values, the relating effect sizes were very large with an approximate range from 0.4 to 0.95. In behavioral research, effect size in this range is rare. Consequently, a brief effort was made to try to find out some possible reasons for the large effect sizes. Keppel (1983) discussed various issues in experimental design. He mentioned that, normally, researchers would insert two or three sets of stimuli for every one set stimuli of interest in the instrument. For the instrument in this experiment, the only distracting information in the instrument is the applicants' personal information, such as telephone

numbers and addresses, and work experiences. It would be very difficult to image a relationship between, let's say, the applicants' phone number with their likability. Therefore, the personal information section was merely part of the window dressing of the instrument. In the work experience section, all applicants have some kind of part-time experiences for about one year. Such information was intended to be distracting information. For the three variables being investigated, there was only one section that served this purpose. The rest of everything else such as the schools in which the applicants graduated from and the format of the applications were identical across all applicants. In this regard, the information that the recruiters received were carefully controlled. In other words, the internal validity was intended to be kept at a high level. Meanwhile, the external validity of the experiment is severely hampered. Putting this differently, the recruiters were left with very little choices to process the available information. Thus, they were forced to make judgment according to what were available to them. In real life situations when other information are available to them, will they still rely on the information from the same variables that are being investigated in this experiment? If more stimuli were inserted in the instrument and that significant differences were found, the results would



have been a lot more convincing. In short, not having enough distracting stimuli appears to be a design flaw of the instrument used in this experiment.

Therefore, although the results appear to capture the existence of various relationships as hypothesized. Due to the problems with the instrument, such results should be used with reservations.

Harry Hui, one of the external examiners of this thesis research, expressed concerns on the relevance of this study (Personal communications, 1995). Since no attempt has been made to connect the results obtained from the sample to their job performance, such results may merely represent the subjects' hiring experiences as heuristics. He also asserted that this study failed to demonstrate how the aggregate opinions of the subjects corroborate with the Self-fulfilling Prophecy Model. Certainly, the present study can be extended to relate the pre-interview impression to other phenomenon which took place during the later stages of the interview process. In this regard, since no information on this theory is available for the local population, the current study utilized a conservative approach to assess the appropriateness of using the Self-fulfilling Prophecy Model to study the interview process in the local environment. Nevertheless, the

narrow focus which ultimately limit the practical relevance of the results obtain is a shortcoming of this thesis research.

#### 7.4 Future Research

It appeared that the assumption made on the relationship between personality and hobbies/interests provided some interesting insight on pre-interview impression formation. Nonetheless, the procedures performed in the pilot study do not represent a theory on personality and hobbies/interests. If a more sophisticated theory in this area is available, the instrument design can be improved. The notion is that a theory-based list of activities should be more comprehensive and representative. The research has provided reasonable ground to investigate the underlying effect of personality inferred hobbies/interests on initial screening decisions. It would be proper to expand the list of activities to include those that can be related to other dimensions of the big five theory.

This experiment has unveiled at least part of the essence of pre-interview impression formation. The design glitch has qualified the goodness of the instrument and the data obtained using this instrument.

While no previous study of this kind was done in the local environment, the research results have offered insight in the impression formation process which should be environment specific. If further exploration on these issues were to be performed, it would be pertinent to refine the existing instrument. First of all, more distracting information should be inserted into the instrument. Doing so can increase the external validity of the study as explained in the discussion section. Also, the variables included were based on various information from the literature. Yet, it does not mean that such variables are the sole contributors to pre-interview impression. As such, it is important to try other variables in order to gain a more comprehensive view of the sources of the pre-interview impression. Simply put, this experiment needs to be replicated. Especially for the hobbies/interests variable, since no previous results are available, it will be interesting to see how this approach to categorize leisure activities can help us to understand the pre-interview impression formation and, in turn, the entire interviewing process.

On this same issue, Hui, H., (Personal communication, 1998) has pointed out that previous work on identifying the sources of information which discriminates accepted and rejected job applications at

the initial stage of the personnel selection process has been done before. For example, Windgrove, Glendinning and Herriot (1984) have done just that using an approach that was different from that in this study. Precisely, they gathered 792 job applications from six organizations as data input. From these applications, 315 different variables that were related to selection decisions were identified. Subsequently, information on these variables were factor analyzed to come up with a shorter list of 99 variables. These variables were then categorized into different sub-groups for the three types of organizations being studied. Using regression analysis, the authors were able to identify the key characteristics that different types of organizations tended to favor.

Windgrove, Glendinning and Herriot's (1984) study has better external validity compared to the current one. They tried to identify common characteristics of job applications from a pool of information that were collected in the practical environment. If the sole purpose of the study is to identify characteristics of job application in relation to indications of the hiring results such as performance, this approach is more efficient. However, such method does not have the necessary features to gain an in-depth understanding of the micro-analytics of the interviewing process. In

other words, the experimental approach taken in this study cannot be substituted by a method which merely identify the characteristics of job applications. Rather, this could be an efficient approach to pinpoint a few factors to be used in the actual instrument for an experiment such as the current study.

Returning to the issue of representativeness of the experimental results, as Olian (1986) has pointed out that one good way to improve the representativeness of experimental findings is also to replicate. For this case, the sample group was selected at random from the newspaper. More studies with specific focus on, for example, different occupational groups and different industries might give different results.

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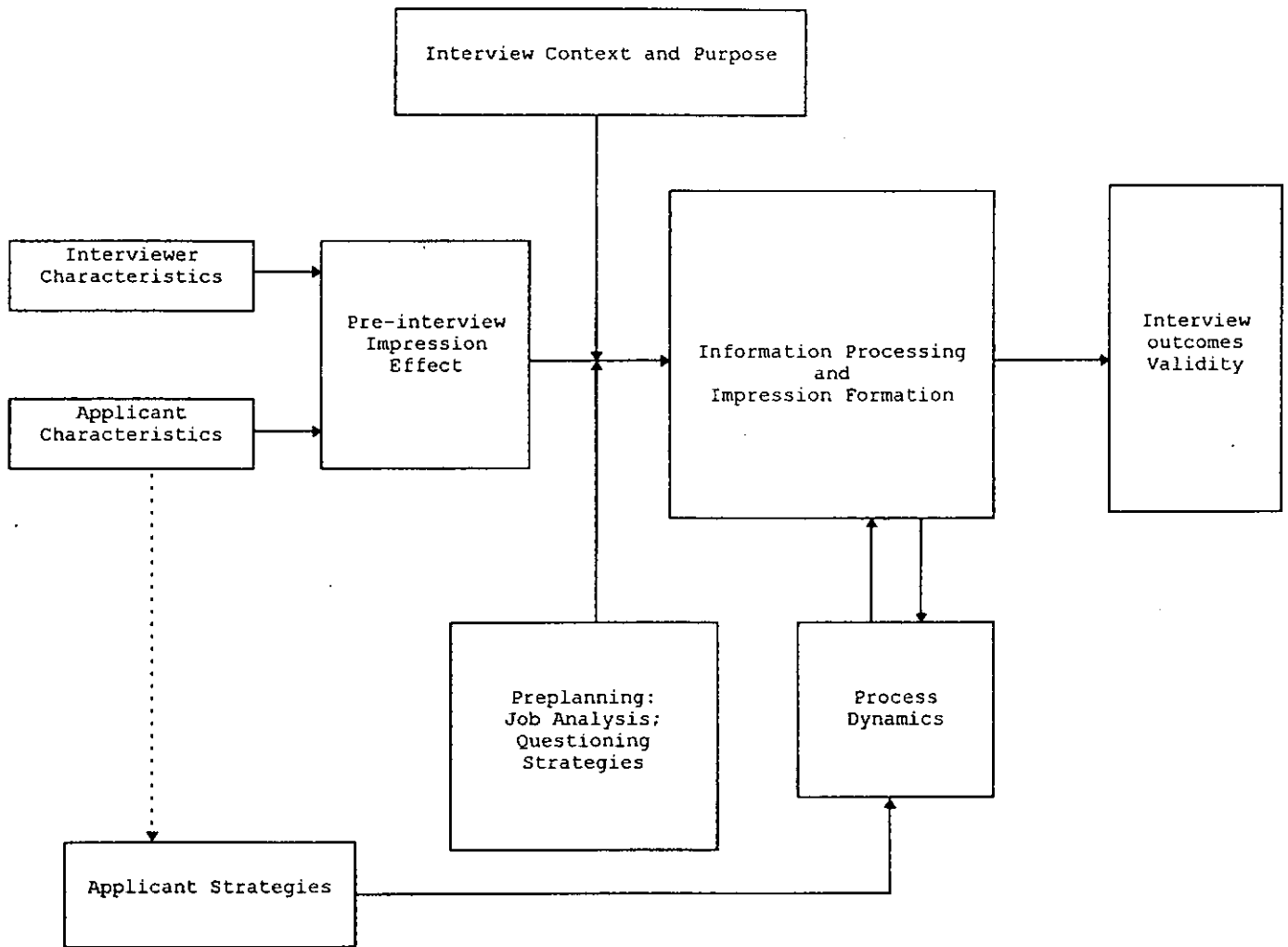
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Figure 1

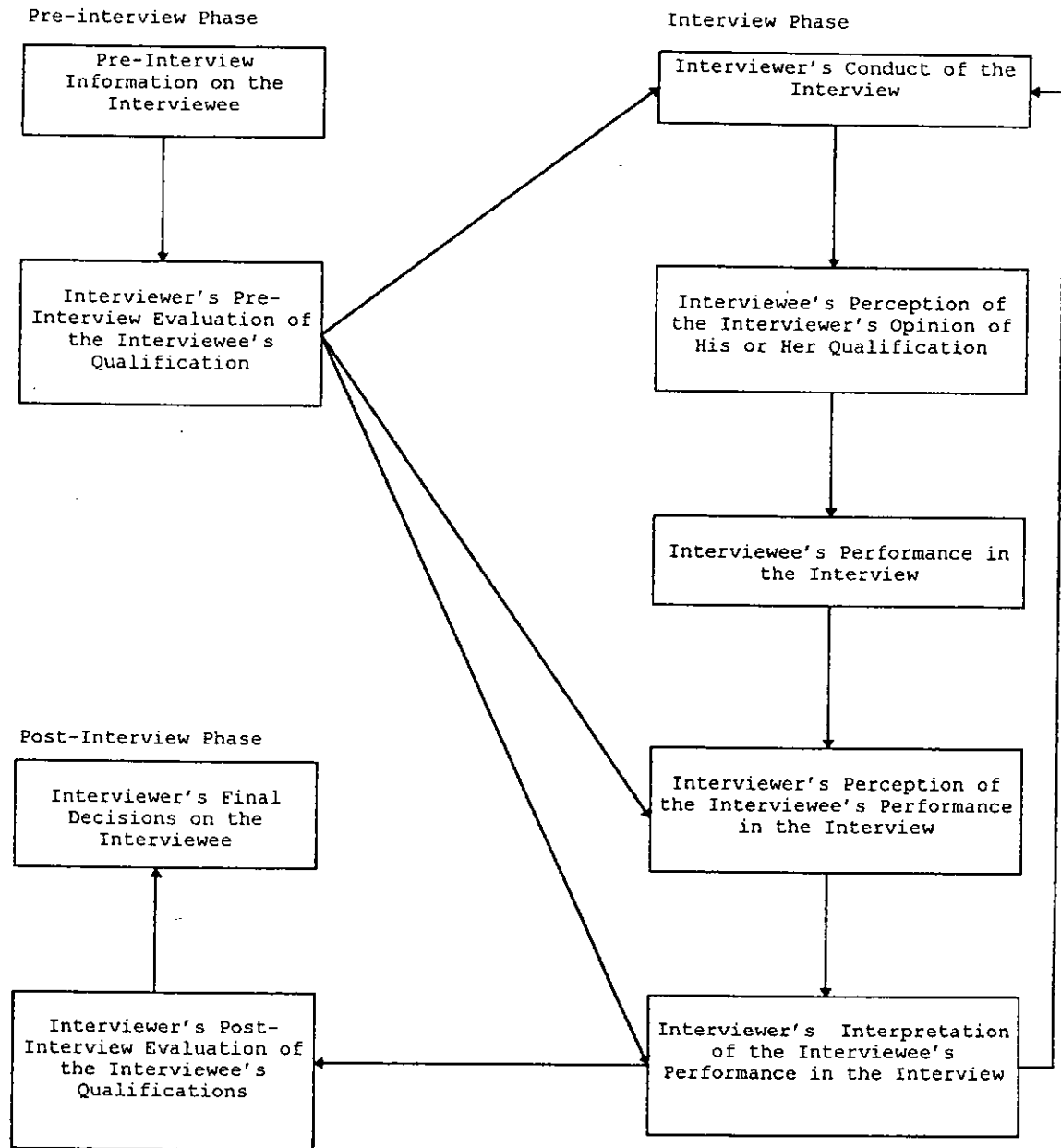
An Integrated Framework of Interview Research



(Eder, Kacmar, & Ferris, 1989)

Figure 2

A Model of Self-fulfilling Prophecy in the Interview



(Dipboye, 1982)

Figure 3

Gender x Hobbies Interaction for Qualification Match

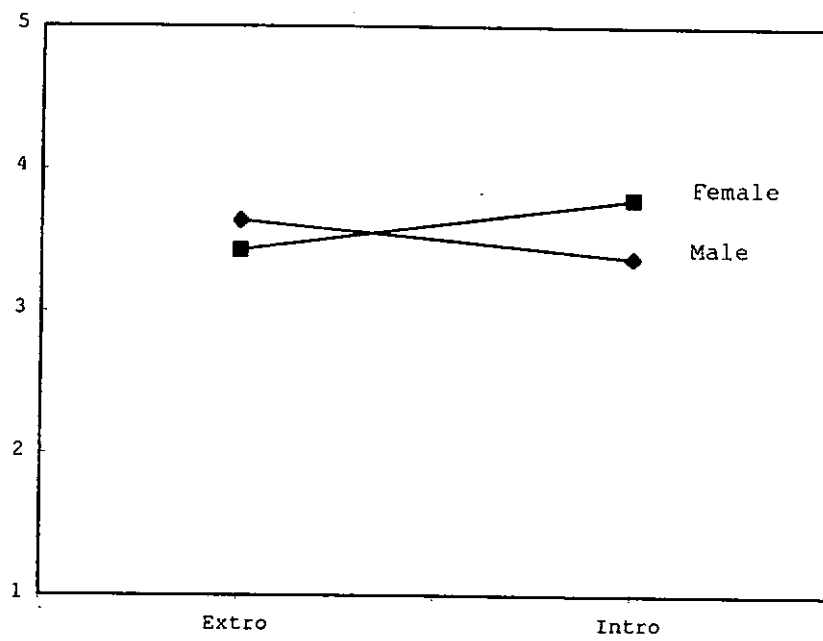


Figure 4

Gender x Hobbies Interaction for Decision

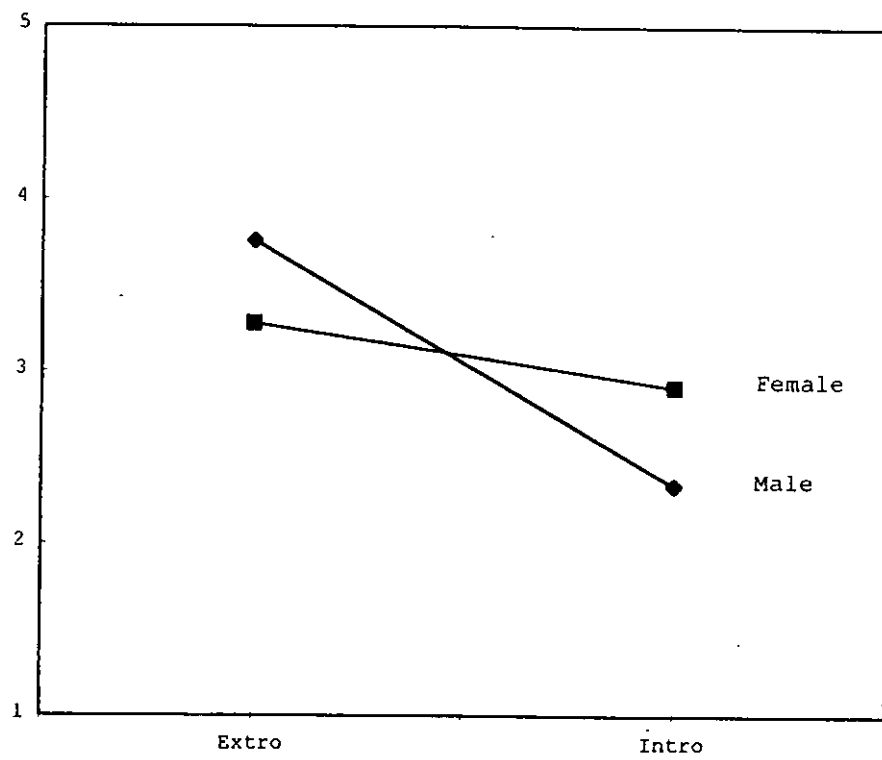




Table 1

## Methods of Recruitment in Hong Kong

Method	Percentage
Advertising in English Newspaper	91.0
Employment Agencies/Consultant	75.5
Advertising in Chinese Newspaper	68.4
Personal Recommendation from Existing Staff	65.6
Labor Department - Local Employment Service	34.4
Advertising in Professional and Trade Journals	18.4
Notices Outside Establishment's Premises	14.2
Others	17.0
Total number of valid returns	210
Total number of multiple responses	815

(Tang, 1995)

Table 2  
Methods of Selection in Hong Kong

Method	Percentage
Interview	99.1
Application Form	89.1
Reference Check	76.9
Own Test of Trade Knowledge/Skill	56.6
Physical Check-up	45.2
Psychometric Tests	8.0
Assessment Center	3.3
Others	1.4
Total number of valid returns	210
Total number of multiple responses	803

(Tang, 1995)

Table 3  
ANOVA Results of Gender as a Main Effect

	Male		Female		<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta <sup>2</sup>
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD			
Qualification Match	3.51	1.30	3.61	1.21	6.90	.013	.182
Interpersonal	3.30	0.92	3.39	0.68	1.82	.187	.056
Leadership	3.05	0.86	3.07	0.72	.02	.876	.001
Motivation	3.29	0.90	3.34	0.78	.33	.567	.011
Affect	4.66	1.21	4.59	0.91	1.00	.325	.031
Decision	3.05	1.18	3.09	1.05	.86	.361	.027

\* significant at  $p \leq 0.002$

Table 4  
ANOVA Results of Educational Background as a Main  
Effect

	Bus.		Non Bus.		<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta <sup>2</sup>
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD			
Qualification Match	4.64	1.30	2.48	1.21	397.03	.000*	.928
Interpersonal	3.51	0.75	3.18	0.83	39.48	.000*	.560
Leadership	3.22	0.83	2.90	0.75	28.11	.000*	.492
Motivation	3.38	0.85	3.26	0.84	6.49	.024	.016
Affect	4.95	1.07	4.30	0.97	65.20	.000*	.678
Decision	3.66	1.00	2.48	0.89	114.20	.000*	.803

\* significant at  $p \leq 0.002$

Table 5

ANOVA Results of Hobbies/interests Inferred Personality  
Trait as a Main Effect

	Extro		Intro		$\underline{F}$	$p$	$\eta^2$
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD			
Qualification Match	3.53	1.26	3.59	1.24	1.34	.256	.041
Interpersonal	3.83	0.56	2.86	0.72	141.71	.000*	.821
Leadership	3.54	0.65	2.58	0.61	138.32	.000*	.827
Motivation	3.83	0.69	2.81	0.66	95.77	.000*	.768
Affect	5.11	1.02	4.14	0.87	61.42	.000*	.665
Decision	3.52	1.10	2.63	0.94	59.42	.000*	.657

\* significant at  $p \leq 0.002$

Table 6  
ANOVA Results of Gender x' Hobbies Interaction

	Male				Female				<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta <sup>2</sup>
	Extro		Intro		Extro		Intro				
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD			
Qualification Match	3.64	1.21	3.38	1.39	3.43	1.33	3.79	1.04	33.60	.000*	.520
Interpersonal	4.03	.46	2.57	.62	3.62	.59	3.16	.70	28.24	.000*	.477
Leadership	3.71	.50	2.40	.62	3.38	.75	2.76	.54	29.56	.000*	.505
Motivation	3.93	.67	2.66	.61	3.72	.70	2.97	.67	14.27	.001*	.330
Affect	5.36	.97	3.97	1.01	4.86	1.03	4.31	.68	19.48	.000*	.386
Decision	3.76	.96	2.34	.93	3.28	1.18	2.91	.86	46.14	.000*	.598

\* significant at  $p \leq 0.002$

Table 7

ANOVA Results of Gender x Educational background x  
Hobbies Interaction

	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>	eta <sup>2</sup>
Qualification Match	19.19	.000*	.382
Interpersonal	31.78	.000*	.506
Leadership	13.09	.001*	.311
Motivation	2.75	.108	.087
Affect	16.94	.000*	.353
Decision	16.00	.000*	.340

\* significant at  $p \leq .002$

## Appendix 1

### A Discussion on Using Experimental Research Method in this Study

The main theme of this discussion is to explain the rationale of using experiment as the research method in this thesis research. To begin with, it is important to distinguish the differences between field research and lab research. According to Olian (1986),

"the crucial discriminator between the two settings is whether decisions were implemented in the actual criterion context. Other features common to lab studies that might introduce demand characteristics are that: (1) the study was conducted in an environment contrived for study purpose, (2) participants were aware that they were part of a research project, and (3) the investigation included experimentally created manipulations."

For the present study, the decisions are not to be made in the actual criterion context. The scenario is an administrative situation that was created out of all the necessary constraints that should be considered. In other words, it was a story specifically written for the purpose of this study. It has no bearing on the



subjects' company policies, and/or their normal hiring practice.

However, the study is not to be conducted in an environment of an laboratory. The entire procedures are to be done at the subjects' convenience. They would not need to come to a specific place to review the applications. The subjects have their freedom to work on the applications either at work or at other places during or outside normal working hours.

Everyone of the subjects are aware that they are part of my thesis research project. Before sending out the packets to the subjects, they are telephoned to explain the entire research process. Also, in every application packet, there is a cover letter that included the details of the project. With these information, all subjects should be aware of the fact that the present study is artificial in nature.

Finally, the investigation includes experimentally created manipulations. All the information regarding the three variables to be tested are created with 2 levels on each variables. Therefore, in each (revised) application packet, there are  $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$  applications that included all level-combinations for the three proposed variables. Following Olian's

definitions of lab research, this thesis research is in between a lab and a field study. Hence, at least part of the criticism for lab research as iterated by Olian is applicable for this study.

The Model of Self-fulfilling Prophecy in the Interview can be used to explain the effect of pre-interview impression on interview outcome at the microanalytical level. Such approach calls for observing the behavioral pattern of the subjects during the experiment. In this regard, critics have expressed concerns with the generalizability of research results that are derived from artificial research settings. Opponents of lab research in this area claim that subjects that are placed in artificial environment may not perform in the same manner as people do in real life situations (Cleveland, 1991).

Gorman, Clover, and Doherty (1978) conducted two studies to investigate the external validity of experimental research using paper people. The authors were trying to compare the results of reviewing paper people with interviewing real people. In the pilot study, a group of graduate students reviewed the test results of undergraduates. Subsequently, the undergraduates were interviewed. Having done that the same group of graduate students reviewed the test

results of another group of undergraduate students without interviewing them. In the second study, professional interviewers reviewed paper credentials of people that were previously interviewed by these interviewers. In both studies, the final outcome of review paper alone were compared to the outcome of interviewing. On both occasions, profoundly different results between interviewing and reviewing paper people were found. The conclusion was that since differences of this kind existed, the generalizability or external validity of the results obtained by reviewing paper people would be questionable.

On this same issue, others have expressed that using paper people may be very useful under various circumstances. Cleveland (1991) examined the relationship between a group's self-stereotype and the group's perceptions of the suitability of the applicant to enter the group. 29 students were asked to review 20 paper peoples' profiles. The purpose of the review was to identify the profiles that were most compatible with a predetermined group profile. Results from this review was compared to another review using real people. The comparative results showed similarities between using actual and hypothetical applicants. In this case, it has been shown that results derived from experimental research may be

useful at least in some instances. Cleveland asserted that it is important to consider the conditions under which the experiment is to be carried out. In order for the results obtained using paper people to be useful, the processes involved in the research setting need to be similar to the actual processes as in the real life situations.

For staffing research in general, Olian (1986) did a review on the issue of external validity of lab research results. The following paragraphs are the highlights of her conclusion.

By comparing actual results obtained in various lab research to that obtained in field research, the author was not able to give a simple yes or no answer to the generalizability of lab research results in this area. The problem was that some results indicated similarity between lab and field research while the others did not. Even in one area, research projects can be of various contexts. Within the same context, many variables contribute to the eventual results of the study. As a result, a general statement regarding the external validity of lab versus field research would be very difficult to make. Nevertheless, the author was able to highlight some important issues that

are related to the generalizability of lab research results.

In hiring research, the experience of the decision maker is a point to consider. It has been shown that students give different results as oppose to professionals. Students and practitioners most likely would have their own sets of values. Therefore the hiring criteria for these two groups of people are probably different. When conducting lab experiments that involve making this kind of decisions, using professionals as the subjects would be more appropriate.

Results from decision literature indicated that the amount of information available to the decision makers is related the decision processes employed. Therefore, for lab research which involves hiring decisions, the experimenter should provide the subjects with more comprehensive information about the applicants.

In face-to-face interviews, interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee can have impact on the final interviewing decision. Such interaction is absent in reviewing paper people. In this regard, reviewing paper people as a substitute to the actual

interview may not reflect the content or process of the actual interviewing.

No studies that dealt with organizational policies were uncovered in the literature search when the author did the review. In practice, different organizations may provide different hiring environments. Policies as well as procedures may have impact on the companies' hiring decisions. In this regard, reviewing paper people probably will not provide too much insight.

In real life situations, hiring people have consequences. There are costs involved. If a wrong decision is made, the organization may suffer loss. Such costs for organizations may reflect the hiring practice of the organization. On the other hand, the costs involved for the decision makers may make contribute to their information processing style. The one who make the decision to hire may be held personally accountable for a wrong decision. Insofar, it is clear that the consequences of hiring could be severe depending on the organization and the position to be filled. Such issue is unlikely to be revealed in paper people experiments because, a lot of times, subjects would simply perform the reviewing exercise with "no strings attached" to it. This being the case, decisions made according to screening paper people may

not be compatible with decisions made in organizational settings.

In this vein, the author encouraged researchers to work on longitudinal designs. Over time, the experimenters would be able to receive feed back along the line of investigation. Adjustment can be made accordingly. One time experiments conducted in laboratory environments are unlikely to be able to capture all the variables that are present in organizational settings.

In sum, there are no firm evidence that would completely dismiss the validity of experimental research results. Yet, such type of research should be conducted with great care. The research settings should be comparable to that in real world situations. The tasks involved for the subjects should be compatible with what they are given. Results from one single experiment probably would not provide a comprehensive view of the complex environment within which the dynamics of interviewing take place.

## Appendix 2

### Extroversion and Introversion: A Personality Trait

Extroversion-introversion is one dimension of personality that psychologists have been studying for a long time (Morris, 1979). Such personal characteristics have been related to various phenomenon including individual scholastic performance, motivational drive, tendency to commit crime, and vocational choice, just to name a few.

Traditionally, extroverts tend to direct their energies more towards the outside world. On the other hand, introverts are believed to direct their energies more towards their inside world (Lynn, 1971). Eysenck, a prominent figure in personality research, described extroverts and introverts as the following: "Extroverts are sociable and impulsive individuals who like excitement and who are oriented toward external reality, while introverts are quiet, introspective individuals who are oriented toward inner reality and who prefer a well-ordered life (Ryckman, 1989)". In addition, he characterized extroverts as "...lively, seeking novelty and change, carefree, and emotionally expressive. In contrast, the introverts are ...intellectual, well ordered, emotionally inexpressive,



and value oriented; prefers small groups of intimate friends; and plans well ahead" (Eysenck, 1976).

An important point to notice is that extroversion and introversion are not two distinct concepts. Instead, they are two ends on a continuum (Lynn, 1971). Consequently, it is difficult to describe an individual with one label or the other. However, this personality trait can be measured with quantitative tools that would result in an indication on which end on the continuum an individual is more inclined to.

The following is a summary of some behavioral patterns that researchers have found on extroverts and introverts:

1. Extroverts prefer vocations involving interactions with other people whereas introverts tend to prefer more solitary vocations. Extroverts seek diversion from job routine whereas introverts have a lesser need for novelty.
2. Introverts do better in school than extroverts, particularly in more advanced subjects. Also, students withdrawing from college from academic reasons tend to be extroverts whereas those who withdraw for psychiatric reasons tend to be introverts.

3. Extroverts are more suggestible than introverts.
4. Extroverts more often chose to study in library locations that provided external stimulation than did introverts.
5. Extroverts took more study break than did introverts (Pervin, 1989).

Finally, one should not be confused with the reasons of studying personality. The dimension extroversion-introversion serves no purpose as an indication of a person's well-being. Rather, as stated in the previous paragraphs, learning about personality can help us to understand, predict, and control behavior (Morris, 1979).

Having gained a brief understanding of the concept of extroversion-introversion as a personality trait, please answer the following questions in your own opinion. Please do not discuss your answer to anyone as this will affect the final outcome of this exercise. In addition, this exercise is not meant to be exhaustive. You are asked to simply give your instant response to the questions.

It is believed that an individual possessing a particular personality trait displays a particular

pattern of behavior. If this is the case, in your opinion, what leisure activities/hobbies would extroverts and introverts engage in? (the answer is expected to be a list of items that instantly come to your mind, please feel free to include anything that you can think of) For the purpose of answering this question, leisure activities/hobbies refer to the activities that a person would do outside of regular work which may be a full time job or work involved as a student. For example, some people prefer to do things in groups such as playing sports. Likewise, some may choose to do things on their own such as reading.

## Appendix 3

### The Actual Instrument Used in the Experiment



*Transworld Freight Company*

#### NOTES FOR THE RECRUITERS

##### Instructions

Supposedly, you have been hired by the Transworld Freight Company as a recruiter. Your job is to evaluate the job applications according to the information given to you. First of all, you should read the information on the company, the position to be filled, and the reviewing process in the following sections. Having done that, you can begin to evaluate the application forms. You should fill out one evaluation form after reviewing each application. Please do not rush through the stack as this may affect the accuracy of your evaluation. Finally, after you have finished evaluating the applicant, you should fill out the company and personal data form and return the completed packet using the enclosed envelop.

##### The Company

Transworld Freight Company is the leader in providing containerized cargo transportation service in the Transpacific Trade. We are committed to provide our customers with quality service through our highly motivated and productive work force.

##### The Position

Our company is currently seeking applications for management trainees to join the management team. The successful candidate will be trained to play the role as a generalist to implement management programs and provide all spectrum of management services to enable the organization to more effectively manage its employees.

The candidates are expected to possess the following qualities:

1. A bachelor degree, preferably in the area of business studies.
2. Potential to assume managerial responsibilities.
3. Intelligent and hardworking.

##### The Reviewing Process

Past experience indicated that such kind of positions are very popular for fresh graduates. Therefore we have decided to recruit through the University. The



*Transworld Freight Company*

selection process is divided into two phases. At the first phase, a group of potential candidates will be selected to come to an on-campus interview. On the interviewers' recommendation, suitable individuals will be invited to come to the second interview. Because of the large number of applicants, preliminary application forms have been distributed through the Career Office of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

The first batch of sixteen applications have been returned to the Career Office. These personal profiles are to be screened to pick the right candidates for their first interview. Your job is to rate the applicants. Since the final decision to make interview offers will be based on the aggregate ratings from a large number of reviewers, you should feel free to render your opinions on the applicants. Though there might not be sufficient information for every question in the evaluation form, you are strongly recommended to answer all of them, by your first impression if necessary.

In an effort to maintain consistency among different reviewers, the attached application evaluation forms will be used by all reviewers. The evaluation forms are designed to give brief indications on the applicants' perceived abilities as required for the position. Finally, no selection quota has been set. In other words, the reviewers are not bound by any quantity constraints.



*Transworld Freight Company*

### APPLICATION EVALUATION FORM

Position Applied For: Management Trainee

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate how you perceive the applicant's ability for the position according to the following dimensions.  
(1 = very good; 2 = good; 3 = average; 4 = poor; 5 = very poor)

Qualification Match:	the relevance of educational background	1	2	3	4	5
Interpersonal:	the capacity to interact with and relate to others	1	2	3	4	5
Leadership:	the capacity to direct, control, and coordinate others	1	2	3	4	5
Motivation:	drive and level of energy	1	2	3	4	5

I feel that I would probably

- ☐ like this person very much.
- ☐ like this person.
- ☐ like this person to a slight degree.
- ☐ neither particularly like nor particularly dislike this person.
- ☐ dislike this person to a slight degree.
- ☐ dislike this person.
- ☐ dislike this person very much.

Would you recommend this applicant for interview?

- ☐ Definitely would not recommend offering interview.
- ☐ Would not recommend offering interview.
- ☐ Neutral.
- ☐ Would recommend offering interview.
- ☐ Definitely would recommend offering interview.



Transworld Freight Company

APPLICATION FORM

Name: Cheung Siu Lan (Chinese) 張少蘭  
Address: Rm 1209 Blk 2, Hong Kong  
Telephone (Home) 2523 (Office) \_\_\_\_\_  
Date and Place of Birth: Hong Kong Gender: Female  
Position Applied for: Management Trainee

Qualification:

Institution	Qualification Earned	From	To
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	B.A. (Hons.) Business Studies	10/94	6/97

Relevant Experience:

Company	Position Held	From	To
Hayes (Asia Pacific) Ltd.	Part time administrative assistant	11/94	10/95

Hobbies/Interest: Playing volleyball; committee member of the Student Union

Other Achievement:



Transworld Freight Company

APPLICATION FORM

Name (English) Leung Yin Feng (Chinese) 梁英鳳  
Address North Point, Hong Kong  
Telephone (Home) 2578 (Office) \_\_\_\_\_  
Date and Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: Female  
Position Applied for: Management Trainee

Qualification:

Institution	Qualification Earned	From	To
H.K. Polytechnic Univ.	B.A. (Hons.)	10/94	6/97
	Business Studies		

Relevant Experience:

Company	Position Held	From	To
Allianz Cornhill Insurance	Assistant Claim	7/95	8/96
	Officer (part		
	time)		

Hobbies/Interest: Reading; writing at free time

Other Achievement:





Transworld Freight Company

APPLICATION FORM

Name: Tam Wai Hong

(Chinese)

譚偉雄

Address

3/E Block B, Kowloon

Telephone:

(Home) 2381

(Office)

Date and Place of Birth:

Hong Kong

Gender:

Male

Position Applied for:

Management Trainee

Qualification:

Institution	Qualification Earned	From	To
The Hong Kong Polytechnic	B.S.W. (Hons.)	10/94	6/97
University	Social Work		

Relevant Experience:

Company	Position Held	From	To
The Hong Kong Polytechnic	Research helper	11/94	10/95
University	(part time)		

Hobbies/Interest: outting/camping; member of St. John Ambulance

Association

Other Achievement:



Transworld Freight Company

APPLICATION FORM

Name: Yip Kai Chung (Chinese) 葉啟聰  
(English)  
Address: 19/F Flat 1, Kowloon  
Telephone: 2796 (Office)  
(Home)  
Date and Place of Birth: Hong Kong Gender: Male  
Position Applied for: Management Trainee

Qualification:

Institution	Qualification Earned	From	To
<u>Hong Kong Polytechnic</u>	<u>B.A. (Hons.)</u>	<u>10/94</u>	<u>6/97</u>
<u>University</u>	<u>Business Studies</u>		

Relevant Experience:

Company	Position Held	From	To
<u>Hyperion Software Co. Ltd.</u>	<u>Office Assistant</u>	<u>11/94</u>	<u>10/95</u>
	<u>(part-time)</u>		

Hobbies/Interest: Enjoy reading; water colour painting

Other Achievement:



Transworld Freight Company

APPLICATION FORM

Name (English) Lui Kam Fong (Chinese) 劉金鳳  
Address Flat A, Kowloon  
Telephone (Home) 2366 (Office) \_\_\_\_\_  
Date and Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Hong Kong Gender: Female  
Position Applied for: Manacement Trainee

Qualification:

Institution	Qualification Earned and Scholastic Standing	From	To
Hong Kong Polytechnic University	B.Sc. (Hons.) Geography	10/84	6/97

Relevant Experience:

Company	Position Held	From	To
Prudential-Zache Securities	part-time bill checker	4/86	present

Hobbies Interest: Karaoke; playing basketball

Other Achievement:



Transworld Freight Company

APPLICATION FORM

Name: Lai Chi Ming (Chinese) 33 04  
(English)  
Address: Shanghai Street, Kowloon  
Telephone: 2782 (Office)  
(Home)  
Date and Place of Birth: Hong Kong Gender: Male  
Position Applied for: Management Trainee

Qualification

Institution	Qualification Earned	From	To
H.K. Polytechnic Univ.	B.A. (Hons.)	10/94	6/97
	Business Studies		

Relevant Experience

Company	Position Held	From	To
Hong Kong Bank	Telemarketer	3/95	3/96
	(part-time)		

Hobbies/Interests: Playing basketball; Student Union committee member

Other Achievement



Transworld Freight Company

APPLICATION FORM

Name: Tsang Tak Pui (Chinese) 17/11/94  
(English)  
Address: 17/11, HONG KONG  
Telephone: 2832 (Office)  
(Home)  
Date and Place of Birth: Hong Kong Gender: Male  
Position Applied for: Management Trainee

Qualification:

Institution	Qualification Earned	From	To
H.K. Polytechnic Univ.	B.Sc. (Hons.)	10/94	6/97
	History		

Relevant Experience:

Company	Position Held	From	To
Schmidt & Co. Ltd.	Accounting Clerk	6/94	8/95
	(part time)		

Hobbies/Interests: Cultivate pot plants at home; study astronomy as a  
hobbie

Other Achievements:



Transworld Freight Company

APPLICATION FORM

Name: Choi Yin Yu (Chinese) CHOI YIN YU  
(English)  
Address: Hong Kong  
Telephone: 2873 (Home)  (Office)  
Date and Place of Birth: Hong Kong Gender: Female  
Position Applied for: Management Trainee

Qualification:

Institution	Qualification Earned	From	To
H.K. Polytechnic	B.Sc. (Hons.)	10/94	6/97
University	Psychology		

Relevant Experience:

Company	Position Held	From	To
Kerry Properties Limited	part-time office	8/96	present
	assistant		

Hobbies/Interest: Visit bookshops and library; photography

Other Achievement:

## Appendix 4

### Manipulation Checks Routine

1. Did you consider gender as a factor when answering the question?
2. If the answer for question 1 is no, were you aware that there are both male and female applicants in the batch?
3. Did you consider educational background as a factor when answering the question?
4. If the answer for question 3 is no, were you aware that some of the applicants have business degrees while the others don't?
5. Did you notice that all applicants have put in some form of hobbies/interests in their applications?
6. If the answer to question 5 is yes, would you think hobbies/interests can be related to personality? For example, what kind of personality trait can be related to working/playing with computer, cultivating pot plants at home, studying astronomy, photography,

reading, painting, and writing? Likewise, what kind of personality trait can be related to karaoke, playing sports, active participants in school/community activities, outting/camping?

7. Did you consider the issue in question 5 as a factor in answering the question? In this regard, are there any differences for male or female? For example, would you consider certain personality to be more acceptable for male or female?
8. What factors do you consider to be most important?  
Any final comments?