

# Applicant perspectives in selection: Going beyond preference reactions

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# Applicant Perspectives in Selection: Going beyond preference reactions

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**In the present special issue new theoretical and empirical insights on applicant perceptions of selection procedures are provided. In this introductory editorial we address four primary goals. First, we introduce the reader to the topic of applicant perceptions and highlight key theoretical perspectives and past empirical findings. Second, we review the state of the literature and argue that research on applicant reactions has been prospering in the last two decades. Third, we summarize the six papers that have been assembled in this special issue and that are reviewed in the final paper as a discussants' commentary. We close with acknowledging and thanking all of those who have contributed to the publication of this special issue.**

## 1. Introduction

The introduction to the last IJSA special issue on applicant perspectives on selection procedures was titled 'The dark side of the moon' (Anderson, 2004). Now, 5 years later, we argue that the dark side has been considerably enlightened since this double special issue. Indeed, research on applicant perceptions of and reactions to selection procedures has blossomed since the last special issue, with an increasing number of papers being published and important research questions being addressed. Therefore, we felt it timely to initiate another issue dedicated to this emergent stream of research, and we would immediately acknowledge the valuable support and encouragement of the editor in chief of IJSA, Chockalingam Viswesvaran, who was instrumental in this effort and provided us with ongoing encouragement throughout the 2-year period of its production.

In the present special issue we have assembled a set of six individual papers representing diverse viewpoints on applicant reactions and offering theoretical as well as empirical insights. In conclusion, these are summarized and critically discussed in the final contribution by our

invited discussant authors, Fred Morgeson and Ann Marie Ryan. But first we will introduce the reader to the topic of applicant reactions more generally in this editorial paper. We will briefly review the state of the literature, highlight why applicant reactions research has important scientific and practical implications, and acknowledge recent developments. Second, we will provide a brief summary of each of the six papers. We will close with thanking and acknowledging all those who have supported us and who have contributed to the preparation and production of this special issue.

## 2. Why applicant reactions matter

Decision making in selection processes is bilateral (Anderson, Born, & Cunningham-Snell, 2001). Employers as well as applicants assess their counterpart in order to predict future work behavior or working conditions, both consider alternative candidates or organizations, and both finally reach a decision whether to make or accept a job offer. Consequently, research focusing on how applicants perceive and

react to recruitment and selection procedures complements research taking the organizational perspective, focusing predominantly on the predictive validity and utility of these procedures. There are a number of compelling arguments as to why the applicants' perspective deserves attention in selection research (cf. Anderson, 2004; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). First, as highlighted by Murphy (1986), disappointed applicants may withdraw their application during the selection process and organizations may thus lose potential high performers. There are two types of costs associated with this scenario, the immediate costs of the recruitment and selection procedure and the more longer-term costs that stem from losing a high performer to a competitor (Murphy, 1986). Second, unfavorable reactions to recruitment and selection procedures might affect an organization's image. Applicants might share their negative experiences with family members, colleagues, and friends with the result that these might refrain from applying to this organization in the future. A negative organizational image might further impact future consumer behavior (Hausknecht *et al.*, 2004; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Third, perceptions applicants form during the selection process may influence their work attitudes, work behavior, and performance after being hired (Gilliland, 1993). Fourth, negative applicant perceptions might even have legal implications. Applicants perceiving selection tools as unfair to the point of being discriminatory or as an unwarranted invasion of privacy might file complaints or even initiate legal proceedings (Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Pearlman, & Stoffey, 1993). In the worst case scenario, an organization's image as an employer can be severely harmed by an applicant, who initiates litigation and supplements this by 'whistleblowing' behavior of involving the press or media (Anderson, 2010). These are arguments that due to their pragmatic and economical implications might convince organizations to consider the applicants' point of view of selection procedures. There are, however, also scientific considerations that justify and support ongoing research into applicant reactions. Extant research suggests for instance that applicant reactions in terms of test taking attitudes affect the validity of selection procedures (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000) and researchers might want to learn more about the underlying processes involved. Finally, it is important to point out that studying the impact of selection procedures on applicants is relevant for the sake of the applicants' well-being and state of health – the so-called positive and negative psychological effects of selection procedures (Anderson, 2010). To the degree that selection procedures and the outcomes of selection processes affect applicants' feelings of self-worth and their well-being on a short-

or longer-term basis, this is a topic worth studying from an occupational health point of view.

To summarize all of these streams of argument and research, it is clear that there are compelling economic, performance-related, organizational reputation-dependent, and psychological reasons for studying applicant reactions in employee selection procedures. For applied psychologists involved in selection, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the 'coming of age' of applicant perspective research has occurred over recent years. What is perhaps less apparent, however, is precisely how much further our understanding of the applicant's view in selection has advanced in the relatively short period since it became a far more active perspective in selection research generally.

### 3. A brief overview of applicant reactions research

Diverse research questions have been studied under the umbrella terms of 'applicant reactions' and the 'applicant's perspective' with a multitude of different methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives having been taken by different studies and reviews. As page limitations do not allow giving a detailed account of all of these theoretical and empirical contributions, we will limit ourselves to giving a cursory overview of the most prominent research streams, highlight selected main findings, and attend to recent developments (see Ryan & Ployhart, 2000 for a detailed review).

#### 3.1. Key theoretical frameworks

Different theoretical frameworks have been presented that have guided research on applicant reactions.

A first line of studies can be subsumed under the test perceptions – performance framework (Ployhart & Harold, 2004). These studies focused on how applicants' test perceptions influence test performance and how they moderate test validity. Within this framework, Arvey, Strickland, Drauden, and Martin (1990) suggested studying attitudinal and motivational components of test taking. They developed the Test Attitude Survey, measuring motivational and attitudinal dispositions to selection tests (e.g., motivation, concentration, belief in test, anxiety) to explain differences in test performance that derive from other than ability-related differences. Empirical results showed that actual applicants differ from job incumbents on test attitudes and that test attitudes are related to test performance. Building on this work, Schmit and Ryan (1992) provided direct evidence that test attitudes and motivations do

indeed moderate test validities of a personality and an ability test. Chan and colleagues (e.g., Chan, DeShon, Clause, & Delbridge, 1997; Chan, Schmitt, Sacco, & DeShon, 1998) followed up upon their work and provided further evidence on the importance of test attitudes and motivation for test performance.

A different research program focused on the role played by applicant reactions for a broad array of personal and organizational outcomes, such as job-acceptance decisions, attitudes toward the hiring organization, and applicants' self-perceptions. Gilliland's (1993) justice model of applicant reactions has been especially influential in this area and has guided lots of empirical studies on applicant reactions. It is grounded in organizational justice theory (Greenberg, 1990) and has been adapted to the selection context by Gilliland. Ten procedural justice rules serve to evaluate the procedural justice of selection systems. The degree to which these rules are satisfied is seen as a determinant of applicants' evaluation of the overall fairness of the selection process. Similarly, the satisfaction of three distributive justice rules determines applicants' evaluation of the overall fairness of the selection outcome. These overall fairness perceptions of the selection process and outcome, in turn, influence a series of final outcomes, such as job-acceptance decisions, job performance, job attitudes, and self-perceptions. Truxillo, Steiner, and Gilliland (2004) provide a comprehensive and critical overview of research that has been built on the justice-based model of applicant reactions and articulate directions for future research.

Ryan and Ployhart (2000) presented a heuristic model that builds upon Gilliland's model. They differentiate four types of applicant perceptions (of the procedure/process itself, of one's affective and cognitive state during the process, of the procedure's outcome, of the selection process in general) that lead to various outcomes similar to those presented by Gilliland (e.g., behavioral intentions, performance, self-perceptions, perceptions of the organization). They extend Gilliland's model by considering additional antecedents of applicant perceptions, such as person characteristics (e.g., experience, personality), job characteristics (job attractiveness, KSA requirements), and the organizational context (e.g., selection ratio, history). Moreover, they suggest potential moderators (e.g., hiring expectations, job desirability, social support) of the relations between antecedents and applicant perceptions as well as between applicant perceptions and outcomes. Recently, Hausknecht *et al.* (2004) expanded the model by further differentiating antecedent and outcome categories in preparation of a comprehensive meta-analysis. These authors added test anxiety and test motivation to the applicant perceptions category, two factors that have also been considered in Arvey *et al.*'s (1990) model

of motivational and attitudinal components of test taking.

Further extending the organizational justice perspective to applicant reactions, Bell, Ryan, and Wiechmann (2004) drew attention to the concept of justice expectations, 'an individual's belief that he or she will experience fairness in a future event or social interaction' (p. 25). The model of justice expectations explicates how justice expectations are formed by personal and environmental influences and by prior selection experiences and beliefs. These justice expectations (e.g., expectations about interpersonal treatment in a selection situation, expectations about how decisions are made), in turn, influence applicants' justice perceptions after the selection process as well as their attitudes, affect, and behavior. A subsequently conducted empirical study provided initial support for the model (Bell, Wiechmann, & Ryan, 2006). Justice expectation displayed positive links with justice perceptions during the testing process. Moreover, they moderated the influence of justice perceptions on final outcomes such that the influence was higher under conditions of high justice expectations.

Yet another framework under which applicant reactions have been studied is attribution theory (Ployhart, Erhart, & Hayes, 2005; Ployhart, McFarland, & Ryan, 2002; Ployhart & Ryan, 1997). Recently, Ployhart and Harold (2004) presented the applicant attribution-reaction theory (AART) as a comprehensive framework accounting for applicant attributions during selection processes. The theory suggests that attributional processes explain why and how objective events occurring during the selection process lead to behavioral outcomes, such as test performance, job choice, or withdrawal. Applicants' fairness reactions, test attitudes, and test perceptions that have been in the center of interest in previous theoretical models are considered 'byproducts' of attributional processes in this theory. The propositions put forth in this theory still await thorough empirical testing.

A final theoretical perspective has been put forward most recently by Anderson (2010). Drawing from parallels in the psychological contract violations literature, Anderson argues that this framework provides a potentially valuable, but notably underutilized set of perspectives and empirical findings, that could account for applicant feelings of procedural justice and fairness of treatment in selection. Certainly, framing applicant reactions as perceptions of violations of the (pre-) employment psychological contract seems to hold out real potential to advance our understanding of how and why such reactions arise from the applicant's point of view. As highlighted in this model, accepted as well as rejected applicants may perceive discrimination at different stages during a selection procedure, and in job markets where applicants have few choices of alter-

native employers, they might accept an offer of employment despite these negative perceptions over their treatment.

Although there have been these quite different theoretical frameworks proposed by different authors to account for aspects of applicant reactions, these have remained disparate accounts of specific parts of the whole, arguably. Thus, there still is no single, overarching theoretical framework with general acceptance and 'buy-in' from researchers active across different areas in applicant reactions internationally. Rather, this variety of theoretical accounts have been invoked by different authors in a piecemeal manner to account for differing aspects of applicant reactions dependent usually upon which aspects of the applicant experience are uppermost in the minds of the researchers concerned. Unfortunately, this has resulted in a notably disparate theoretical patchwork spanning the applicant reactions field, with little integration or synergy in evidence, and as a consequence, with a whole variety of theoretical stances, underpinning concepts, and constructs having guided our empirical efforts.

### 3.2. Key empirical findings

Applicant reactions to selection procedures (i.e., predictor methods) *per se* have been in the center of interest in a number of studies (e.g., Anderson & Witvliet, 2008; Moscoso & Salgado, 2004; Steiner & Gilliland, 1996). The central question addressed in these studies is how favorably applicants evaluate different selection methods, especially the most popular methods including interviews, cognitive tests, personality tests, references, and assessment centers, for example. These studies have mostly built upon an organizational justice perspective adapted to the context of applicant reactions by Gilliland (1993). They have assessed the overall favorability of selection procedures as well as applicant perceptions of the fulfillment of specific procedural justice dimensions (Steiner & Gilliland, 1996). Interestingly, there seems to be a relatively stable and generalizable pattern of overall favorability ratings regardless of specific sample characteristics or the country studies stem from (Anderson & Witvliet, 2008): Most preferred are work samples and job interviews, followed by resumes, cognitive tests, references, biodata, and personality inventories, while honesty tests, personal contacts, and graphology elicit rather unfavorable reactions.

Emphasis has rightly been placed on studying the consequences of applicant reactions. Researchers have for instance investigated how applicants' perceptions of selection techniques influence test performance during hiring, how they affect applicants' self-perceptions (self-efficacy, self-esteem) and their attitudes toward the

hiring organization (Gilliland, 1993; Hausknecht *et al.*, 2004). Hausknecht *et al.*'s meta-analysis (2004) provides a comprehensive overview of primary study findings in this area, although it is worth noting that these primary studies were published up to and including 2003 and more studies have been published since then.

In sum, findings reveal that perceived procedural and distributive justice are moderately to strongly related to attitudes toward the hiring organization, namely perceived organizational attractiveness, recommendation intentions, and job offer intentions. Low but consistent positive correlations were found between justice dimensions and applicants' self-perceptions (self-efficacy, self-esteem). Although theoretical models (e.g., Gilliland, 1993; Hausknecht *et al.*, 2004) suggest applicant reactions to be conceptually linked to behavioral outcomes (e.g., work performance, organizational citizenship behavior, applicant withdrawal) and work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment) research on these outcomes is still sparse or even non-existent and they were therefore not included in the meta-analysis (for studies investigating withdrawal behavior see Ryan, Sacco, McFarland, & Kriska, 2000; Truxillo, Bauer, Campion, & Paronto, 2002).

Other studies have focused on antecedents of applicants' perceptions of selection techniques. Various antecedents have been studied, including person characteristics and characteristics of the selection procedure itself. Applicants with higher general mental ability (GMA) tended to place more importance on the content (e.g., fakability, job relatedness, objectivity) but less importance on the context of selection systems than applicants with lower levels of GMA (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2004). As to personality, the Big Five were, however, only marginally related to the importance placed on different aspects of selection system characteristics such as the content, the context, or the developmental process (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2004). Yet, the personality dimension of Neuroticism has been shown to be negatively related to applicants' evaluations of social fairness (fairness of interpersonal treatment) using a written test (Truxillo, Campion, Bauer, & Paronto, 2006). Regarding characteristics of the selection procedure itself, the provision of information about test procedures is positively associated with applicants' later evaluations of the structure fairness of selection techniques (Truxillo *et al.*, 2002). Further, the outcome of the selection process itself influences applicants' evaluations of selection procedures: Selected applicants evaluate the selection process more favorably than rejected applicants (Gilliland, 1994; Ryan *et al.*, 2000) and this effect is even more pronounced when applicants have high initial hiring expectations (Gilliland, 1994). Overall, less research has focused on antecedents of applicant reactions – especially on person, job, and organizational characteristics – than

on consequences of applicant reactions. A summary of study findings that have been published in this regard until December 2003 is provided in the meta-analysis by Hausknecht et al. (2004).

Summarizing this range of empirical studies, it is clear that our understanding of applicant reactions has advanced rapidly over recent years: The most and least favored selection procedures have been identified in a range of different countries, applicant reactions have been shown to be related to applicants' self-perceptions and behavioral intentions, and antecedents of applicant reactions, such as person characteristics and characteristics of the selection procedure, have been investigated. Moreover, in comparison with selection research more generally, this pace of advance has been striking. Selection research from the organization's perspective has been undertaken for at least a century now (Hülshager, Anderson, Havermans, & Salgado, 2008; Salgado, 2001), so applicant perspective research is far younger and understandably less advanced, with perhaps only a history spanning at most 20 years or so (if one takes Murphy 1986 as a starting point).

## 4. Beyond the fledgling stages

### 4.1. Some facts and figures

In the introductory paragraph we contended that applicant reactions research is prospering. We added above that the speed of developments has been especially noteworthy in applicant reactions research over the last two decades, and arguably, that this trajectory of development has been ever upward in terms of the recent growth of interest in applicant perspective research. To substantiate this impression and our assertion with some statistics, we conducted a literature search in order to get a more detailed impression of the state of the literature. Accordingly, we searched for the following keywords in the PsycInfo database:

Table 1. Number of publications on applicant reactions per year

Year	Number of publications on applicant reactions/perceptions
Until 1984	3
1985–1987	4
1988–1990	4
1991–1993	9
1994–1996	11
1997–1999	24
2000–2002	28
2003–2005	44 <sup>a</sup>
2006–2008	38

Note: <sup>a</sup>This category includes the IJSA double special issue on applicant reactions including 16 individual papers.

'applicant reactions,' 'applicants' reactions,' 'applicant perceptions,' and 'applicants' perceptions.' In so doing we retrieved over 165 individual papers published between 1979 and 2008. The vast majority of these papers were specifically devoted to the topic of applicant reactions while a handful of papers had a different main focus but touched the topic of applicant reactions (e.g., Lievens, Peeters, & Schollaert, 2008; Sackett & Lievens, 2008).

As can be seen from Table 1, publications on applicant reactions have increased steadily and in fact exponentially over the last three decades: While only four studies appeared between 1985 and 1987 and between 1988 and 1990, respectively, 44 papers appeared between 2003 and 2005, and 38 between 2006 and 2008. The observable peak of published papers between 2003 and 2005 is partly caused by the 16 individual papers published in the double special issue on applicant reactions (*International Journal of Selection and Assessment*; Anderson, 2004). Removing this double special issue from these publication figures, a steady growth trajectory becomes apparent. Similarly, an increase in dissertation projects on applicant reactions can be observed: While only six dissertations have been completed until 1999, 25 projects have been conducted between 2000 and 2008. Note that these figures are only based on the dissertations listed in PsycInfo, which only covers dissertations conducted in North America, while dissertations in other, for instance European, countries do not appear in the PsycInfo database. The actual number of dissertations devoted to the topic of

Table 2. Number of publications on applicant reactions research in selected IO-journals

Journal	Number of publications on applicant reactions/perceptions
<i>International Journal of Selection and Assessment</i>	21
<i>Personnel Psychology</i>	15
<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i>	12
<i>Journal of Business and Psychology</i>	10
<i>Journal of Applied Social Psychology</i>	5
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	4
<i>Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology</i>	4
<i>Human Resource Management Review</i>	4
<i>Human Performance</i>	3
<i>Human Resource Management</i>	3
<i>Applied Psychology: An International Review</i>	3
<i>Applied HRM Research</i>	3
<i>Personnel Review</i>	2
<i>Journal of Management</i>	2
<i>European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology</i>	1
<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>	1
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	1

applicant reactions and perceptions is thus likely to be considerably higher.

The papers we identified were distributed over the categories peer-reviewed journal articles (123), books or contributions to books (11), and dissertation abstracts (31). Focusing on the 123 journal articles, we were interested in the type of journals that published papers on applicant reactions. As can be seen from Table 2, the majority of papers were published in core journals of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, two of which have a strong focus on personnel selection (*International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, *Personnel Psychology*). In contrast, applicant reactions research is less present in journals that are more management oriented, such as *Journal of Management* and *the Academy of Management Review*. Interestingly, the four studies published in *Academy of Management Journal* appeared between 1979 and 1997, one of which was Gilliland's (1993) seminal piece introducing the organizational justice perspective to applicant reactions. Thus, it is arguable that applicant perspective research now features regularly in the premier journals in our field and has become a core topic in selection worthy of investigation and publication.

These figures provide a cursory impression of the quantity of research on applicant reactions and perceptions that has been conducted in the last decades. In the following section we will provide a review of some key strength of the research literature.

#### 4.2. Key strengths in applicant reactions research to date

First, we noticed that researchers have been actively taking into account cultural differences in applicant perceptions and reactions. It has been argued that due to cultural differences, different HRM practices, and differences in legislation applicants' preferences for selection methods may differ between countries. Accordingly, a number of international researchers have examined applicant reactions in a range of different countries, including the United States, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Germany, France, and Singapore (e.g., Anderson & Witvliet, 2008; Bertolino & Steiner, 2007; Marcus, 2003; Moscoso & Salgado, 2004; Nikolaou & Judge, 2007; Philips & Gully, 2002; Steiner & Gilliland, 1996). Most of these studies used Steiner and Gilliland's (1996) questionnaire into applicant reactions that builds upon Gilliland's (1993) justice theory of applicant reactions. By sharing a common methodological approach, these studies allow making direct comparisons between different countries. Interestingly, applicants seem to widely concur in their preferences for different selection methods, despite differences between countries in terms of culture, legislation, and HRM practices. Over-

all, across samples internationally, interviews and work samples seem to be most preferred, while honesty tests, personal contacts, and graphology receive less favorable ratings by applicants. To further advance cross-cultural investigations, an international group of researchers active in the field has started a research initiative aiming to expand research on cross-cultural issues in applicant reactions: ARCOS (applicant reactions cross-cultural organizational studies; <http://www.arc.pdx.edu/dev/arcos/>) is a platform for researchers meant to stimulate an international effort to exchange ideas, collect, and pool data on applicant reactions. Under the coordination of Talya Bauer (Portland State University), researchers from countries including Australia, Belgium, China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United States are actively participating in this endeavor (see also Anderson, Bauer, Koenig, & Truxillo, 2008).

Another strength of the research literature is that different methodological approaches have been taken in studying applicant reactions and perceptions: A large part have been laboratory studies that are especially apt to gain insights into a topic in early stages of research. If combined with an experimental approach (e.g., Bauer, Truxillo, Paronto, Weekley, & Campion, 2004; Cropanzano, Slaughter, & Bachiochi, 2005; Gilliland et al., 2001) they allow investigating well-defined processes under controlled conditions and they reveal insights into causal relations and interaction effects. A downside, however, is that laboratory studies often lack ecological and external validity because they are usually based upon student samples, who engage in hypothetical selection situations. It has therefore been criticized that applicant reactions research has relied too heavily on laboratory studies using student samples and simulating selection situations (Hausknecht et al., 2004). In recent years, a shift in research paradigms is noticeable: Increasingly, field studies appear in the literature (e.g., Bell et al., 2006; Carless, 2006; Chapman & Zweig, 2005; Schreurs, Derous, Proost, Notelaers, & De Witte, 2008; Truxillo et al., 2006) and laboratory studies have been complemented with field studies that allow verifying specific research questions initially tested in the lab with actual applicants in the field (Bauer, Truxillo, Tucker, Weathers, Bertolino, & Erdogan et al., 2006; Ployhart et al., 2005). Furthermore, meta-analyses have emerged in the last 5 years, another indicator that applicant reactions research is maturing. These meta-analyses summarize findings from primary studies and thereby provide important insights into general trends and mean relationships (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Hausknecht et al., 2004; Truxillo, Bodner, Bertolino, Bauer, & Yonce, 2009). Further, they guide future research by revealing which relationships have already been investigated exhaus-

tively and which research questions deserve more attention. Especially influential has been Hausknecht *et al.*'s (2004) work that categorized extant research according to an extension of Gilliland's (1993) justice model and established mean relationships using meta-analytic procedures.

Applicant reactions research might predominantly be associated with studies investigating applicants' attitudes, affective reactions, and cognitions toward traditional selection procedures. The research field does, however, cover a far wider area of research, including reactions to recruitment activities and HR policies (Carless & Wintle, 2007; McNab & Johnston, 2002), perceptions of selection procedures involving new technology (Bauer *et al.*, 2006, 2004), reactions to diversity practices (Williamson, Slay, Shapiro, & Shivers-Blackwell, 2008; Brooks, Guidroz, & Chakrabarti, 2009) and affirmative action plans (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2005; Slaughter, Bulger, & Bachiochi, 2005; Slaughter, Sinar, & Bachiochi, 2002), and reactions to practices meant to reduce faking behavior (McFarland, 2003).

Beyond these strengths it is finally worth noting that there are areas in which applicant reactions research warrants further development and attention and these have been discussed in detail in several reviews (e.g., Chan & Schmitt, 2004; Ryan & Huth, 2008; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Sackett & Lievens, 2008). Morgeson and Ryan (2009) highlight further directions for future research, so the picture is one of both achievements and advances in our understanding but also one where key issues and questions still remain to be answered by future research. We now turn our attention to the composition of this special issue and the papers included herein.

## 5. Overview of the special issue

The studies assembled in this special issue approach applicant reactions from a diversity of viewpoints: They promote new theoretical perspectives (Ford, Truxillo, & Bauer, 2009; Marcus, 2009), summarize findings of previous primary studies (Truxillo, Bodner, Bertolino, Bauer, & Yonce, 2009), and provide new empirical insights (Anseel & Lievens; Brooks, Guidroz, & Chakrabarti, 2009; Sieverding, 2009). In their discussant commentary, Morgeson and Ryan give detailed summaries of these individual papers. Thus, here we give the reader an introduction and overview of each paper and try to give key comments regarding each paper to highlight critical issues addressed in each paper published in this issue.

In the first paper, Truxillo and colleagues present a meta-analysis of the effects of explanations about the selection process on applicant reactions. They summarize an important research stream within the field, which

is not only theoretically relevant but also of great practical importance. In the opening paragraph we discussed a number of reasons why applicant reactions matter suggesting that they can have important consequences for organizations. Providing explanations about the testing procedure could be a practical and cost-effective way for organizations to positively influence applicant reactions. Because primary studies have provided mixed evidence as to whether explanations do indeed affect applicant perceptions or not, Truxillo and colleagues' quantitative review sheds vital light onto this important question both pragmatically and scientifically in selection. Results show that providing explanations is indeed related to perceived fairness of the selection process, perceptions of the hiring organization, test-taking motivation, and performance on a cognitive ability test. Yet, correlations are low overall. Furthermore, test-taking motivation mediated the relationship between explanations and test performance. Above and beyond these findings, the paper provides insights into methodological and theoretical moderators of main relationships that might explain why primary studies have yielded inconsistent results.

With the second paper we move on from studying explanations about the selection process to studying the effects of explanations about applicants' test performance, i.e. feedback. Anseel and Lievens draw on feedback process models to scrutinize the process through which feedback on selection test performance influences applicants' attitudes and behavior. In two experimental studies they identify feedback acceptance as a key mediator of the relationship between feedback and applicants' attitudes toward the hiring organization and subsequent test performance. Again, these findings have important practical implications. They indicate that it is not only necessary to provide applicants with informative feedback but that it is vital to do so in a way that helps applicants accept feedback even in the case of an unfavorable outcome.

Next, in the third paper in this issue, Brooks, Guidroz, and Chakrabarti address an emergent topic in IO Psychology, namely diversity management. In personnel selection research, the focus has predominantly been on the diversity–validity dilemma: The question how organizations can adhere to affirmative action policies and promote diversity without undermining the validity of their selection methods (e.g., Lievens & Coetsier, 2002; Newman & Lyon, 2009; Ployhart & Holtz, 2008; Pyburn, Ployhart, & Kravitz, 2008). Brooks and colleagues approach the topic from the applicants' perspective. Specifically, they investigate how applicants react to holistic (intuitive) vs mechanical (objective) approaches to considering diversity information in selection. They also examine how a situational factor – evaluation mode (whether applicants receive information about the approaches in isolation or simultaneously) – influences



applicants' preferences for the holistic or the mechanical approach. Two experimental studies revealed that overall participants displayed more favorable reactions toward the hiring organization and the selection policy under conditions of a holistic approach to incorporating diversity information. Differences in reactions to the holistic and mechanical approach were most pronounced when the two approaches were presented simultaneously so that participants had the chance to compare them directly. In sum, the study provides further evidence for the alarming observation that job applicants just as managers prefer intuitive over empirically validated, objective decision-making approaches in personnel selection. We are thus confronted with yet another dilemma, the dilemma between validity and favorable applicant reactions.

Sieverding investigates emotion suppression during a simulated employment interview and its effects on applicants' well-being, in the fourth paper published in the present issue. In so doing, she takes gender differences explicitly into account. Sieverding identifies the suppression of negative feelings as a specific impression-management tactic that applicants may use during employment interviews to convey a positive self-image and to increase their chances of being hired. Building on emotion regulation research she hypothesizes that suppressing emotions during an employment interview affects applicants' psychological well-being and mental health. The laboratory study revealed four main findings: First, a selection situation does indeed motivate applicants to hide negative feelings (e.g., insecurity, anxiety, anger) and it does so more for men than for women. Second, applicants hiding their negative feelings are evaluated to be more competent than applicants who do not hide their feelings of insecurity and anxiety. Third and most importantly, women hiding negative feelings during a job interview experience an increase in feelings of depression. This effect was absent for men. In sum, applicants – especially female applicants – face a particular dilemma in selection situations involving personal interaction: Suppressing negative emotions does indeed lead to more positive evaluations but it comes at the cost of reduced well-being.

The last two papers compiled in this special issue offer new theoretical perspectives on applicant perceptions and reactions and thereby disclose new pathways for future research. We have thus intentionally ordered the papers to move from meta-analytical approaches to primary studies, to theoretical contribution papers in this issue.

Ford, Truxillo, and Bauer call for a shift in focus in applicant reactions research. Starting from the observation that most research on applicant perceptions and reactions is based on entry-level applicants, they present compelling arguments as to why it is important to

start dedicating more attention to applicant reactions of internal applicants within promotional contexts. In so doing, they pick up earlier calls that have been made in this regard in previous reviews (Hausknecht *et al.*, 2004; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Truxillo *et al.*, 2004) but that have, to date, not been fully fleshed out. Ford and colleagues elaborate on the differences between entry-level and promotional selection situations, they scrutinize the processes that are unique to internal selection situations, and delineate specific outcomes that matter uniquely in promotional settings. Building on fairness heuristic theory and organizational justice theory, they refine Gilliland's (1993) model of applicant reactions and adapt it to fit the specifics of the promotional context. They identify additional antecedent conditions (e.g., organizational culture, leader-member relations), elaborate why certain justice rules have greater impact on internal than on external applicants, and specify outcomes that are especially important in promotional settings (e.g., occupational health outcomes, affective job attitudes, job performance). As a result they present a novel model of promotional applicant reactions, accompanied by 14 specific propositions that are ready to be tested in future research. We believe that this new perspective bears the opportunity to finally present evidence for the link between applicant reactions and those potential outcomes that have so long been called for (e.g. Anderson, 2004; Hausknecht *et al.*, 2004; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Sackett & Lievens, 2008): Performance-related outcomes, such as task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, counterproductive work behavior; job attitudes like job satisfaction and organizational commitment; and health- and stress-related outcomes.

The final paper by Marcus picks up an old but still ongoing topic in personnel selection research – the issue of faking. Typically, research on this topic centers upon the questions of whether personnel selection methods – especially personality tests – are fakable, whether they are indeed faked by real applicants and what the consequences of faking for construct- and criterion-related validities are. Although a myriad of primary and meta-analytic studies has been published on this topic (Alliger & Dwight, 2000; Birkeland, Manson, Kisamore, Brannick, & Smith, 2006; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Reiss, 1996; Viswesvaran & Ones, 1999; Viswesvaran, Ones, & Hough, 2001), this appears still to be hotly debated among personnel selection researchers (see Morgeson, Campion, Dipboye, Hollenbeck, Murphy, & Schmitt, 2007; Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Judge, 2007 for a recent debate). All of these studies, however, take the point of view of the employing organization. In his theoretical paper, Marcus introduces a different perspective on the topic, namely the applicant's perspective. Taking the point of view of the applicants he replaces the term faking by 'self-

presentation,' which he conceptualizes as legitimate behavior applicants show as an adaptation to situational demands in selection situations. Building on theories from personality and social psychology as well as on motivation theories he developed a process model of self-presentation and deduces a set of 13 testable hypotheses that will hopefully stimulate future research in this area.

Finally, this special issue concludes with the expert discussant commentary by Fred Morgeson and Ann Marie Ryan. Based upon the papers comprising this special issue, the authors note three overarching issues that warrant further research attention – (i) controlling applicant reactions and impressions, (ii) information given and received, and, (iii) the influence of context on reactions. We concur with Morgeson and Ryan that these issues do indeed emerge from the papers published herein and that they present something of a microcosm for the present state of the science in applicant perspective research. This being that new and insightful findings are emerging but that applicant perspective research should not lose sight of the paramount question for research and practice in this area – how applicant reactions influence and cause behavioral outcomes that are relevant for performance, psychological, and reputational outcomes noted at the outset in our editorial introduction.

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We also thank Fred Morgeson and Ann Marie Ryan who accepted our invitation to complete the special issue with a final discussant commentary providing constructive and critical reactions and remarks to each of the six individual contributions. Thanks to their widely respected expertise in personnel selection and applicant reactions research they have done so with aplomb and we hope that their suggestions move research into applicant reactions a step further. We also would thank all of the authors whose papers appear here for tolerating our multiple-stage requests for revisions, improvements, and modifications to their work. Sincerely, we hope that their reactions to our editorial process are that it was procedurally fair, constructive, comprehensive, and balanced. Given that their papers were successfully published from an initial submission set of far more papers, perhaps

their reactions may be somewhat positively biased, but we endeavored throughout this 2-year editorial production process to be fair, diligent, and constructively critical.

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