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Organizational Justice and Social Media in the Employee Selection Process

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ORGANIZATIONAL JUSTICE AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE EMPLOYEE
SELECTION PROCESS

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Bachelor of Science with
Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

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*****

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2016

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ABSTRACT

This study combines aspects of social media’s role in employee selection and how it relates to potential employee attitudes toward a company. By measuring participants’ attitudes when told that their Facebook profiles would be taken into consideration in determining their job ability, applicant feelings of procedural justice (i.e., fairness of a process; PJ) were assessed and compared to a control group. To measure interactional justice (i.e., fairness regarding interpersonal treatment; IJ), participants were divided into two conditions: participants in the high justice condition were given an explanation of the rationale behind using social media as an evaluation tool and shown empathy, whereas participants in the low justice condition were provided with no information and shown no empathy. The current study also compared participants’ self-reported stress levels and personality with both PJ and IJ. Ninety-nine undergraduate participants completed self-report inventories in a lab setting. Results indicated a significant effect of empathy and explanation on IJ. Also, stress negatively correlated with PJ and IJ. PJ and IJ correlated with multiple dimensions of personality. No significant difference in PJ between the control and experimental groups was found.

Keywords: Social Media, Organizational Justice, Empathy, Selection, Stress
Dedicated to my parents for encouraging me to strive for excellence
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, social networking websites (SNSs), such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, have increased immensely in popularity and are invading most aspects of modern life. One aspect where we have seen this invasion is the mass influx of social networking that has entered the work environment. Eighty percent of companies in the United States report using Facebook in the workplace (Jennings, Blount, & Weatherly, 2014). It is apparent that through social media, organizations have found new ways to communicate with their employees and spread information. But perhaps the most affected area of employment is the pre-employment process, where there has been a large increase in the use of social media by hiring managers as a means to learn more information about potential employees (Brown & Vaughn, 2011). This new means of hiring is controversial and puts employers at legal and ethical risk as well as lowering their corporations’ attractiveness to job candidates (Stoughton, Thompson, & Meade, 2013).

Social media screening is not only making potential employees cautious, but could also raise feelings of inequity and workplace injustice. The concept of justice in the workplace is important in both the hiring process and actual employment. Cropanzano, Bowen, and Gilliland (2007) report that employee sentiments of organizational justice create many benefits to the work environment, such as trust, commitment, and overall better performance. Moreover, employee feelings of injustice have been known to
reinforce workplace deviance, which refers to employee behaviors that violate company norms (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). Workplace deviance can often result in workplace conflict and even economic costs (Ferris, Spence, Brown, & Heller, 2012). If it is true that employers using social media in the hiring process are creating feelings of injustice in their potential employees, the corporation is at risk for deviant workplace behavior.

The purpose of this paper is to review extant literature on both social media in employment, as well as employees’ perceptions of justice and inequity to determine commonalities between these two facets of the hiring process. The paper will be structured such that the literature on online social media use in the hiring process will be reviewed first, followed by the effects of organizational justice and its relation to pre-employment, as well as its link to employee stress and personality.

**Online Social Media in Employee Selection**

In recent years, the use of social media has grown rapidly. Originally intended as an online means to connect with friends, sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have now pervaded cultures around the world and are no longer used only for social purposes (Caers & Castelyns, 2011). Within the workplace context, social media has evolved from a method to promote social connections to a means of evaluation (Goodman, Smith, Ivancevich, & Lundberg, 2014). Goodman and colleagues report that an increasing number of hiring managers are using social media content as a means of assessing potential employees. This new means of hiring has beneficial qualities; however, there are also many inherent risks.

Whereas several online SNSs exist, most studies have looked specifically at Facebook. Facebook is undoubtedly the largest and most widespread SNS, with 1.49
billion monthly users as of June, 2015 (“Company Info,” 2015). Some SNSs exist for more specific purposes than Facebook, such as LinkedIn, which has accrued 80 million users as of 2010 (Caers & Castelyns, 2011). LinkedIn allows users to make profiles for potential employers to see, thus, much of the content on this website resembles a résumé. Meanwhile, it appears the main purpose of Facebook is not specifically job-related, but rather to acquire and connect with friends, as the content is often more related to one’s social life and interests (Stoughten et al., 2013).

Notably, a 2009 survey revealed that approximately 45% of employers report using internet searches and online social media to screen job applicants, a statistic which had doubled since the previous year (Haefner, 2009). Employers who use Facebook as a tool in hiring expose themselves to many ethical and legal risks. Perhaps the biggest issue that employers face is the feeling of privacy invasion that arises in many job candidates. One study conducted by Stoughten et al. (2013) showed that applicants whose Facebook profiles were screened felt an invasion of privacy, which can lead to lower organizational attraction.

In addition to perceptions of invasiveness, it appears job candidates also view social media screening as negative because they feel social life should be unrelated to the work environment. A study by Abril, Levin, and Del Riego (2012) surveyed undergraduate students about social media and employment expectations. Forty-nine percent of the respondents reported finding employers searching social media to assess potential candidates as being inappropriate. Additionally, 54 percent of respondents agreed that social life and work life should be kept separate and not affect each other. In
this way, social media content is often viewed as negative because candidates feel it is unrelated to the work environment.

In addition, there does not seem to be a clear construct for accurately analyzing Facebook content, nor does there appear to be evidence suggesting what one posts online is necessarily indicative of their job ability (Brown & Vaughn, 2011). Whereas there does not appear to be a clear construct of how to accurately judge a candidate’s social media content, it seems that content perceived to be negative is weighed more heavily than content perceived to be positive. According to a study by Weathington and Bechtel (2012), which assessed what content employers found to be risky in candidates, pictures and posts of alcohol consumption severely lowered employers’ impressions of candidates. The high non-standardization of Facebook content poses many ethical and legal risks for employers because this method of hiring is not necessarily a valid means to assess one’s potential performance.

Despite the risks and negative connotations involved, many employers still choose to use social media in their hiring decisions. This is done because Facebook profiles contain information that an employer could find beneficial, yet cannot gain from a résumé. This could be anything from screening for risk factors, such as drug use or explicit language (Weathington & Bechtel, 2012), to finding out if a candidate’s social interests would make them a good fit within a company (Brown & Vaughn, 2011). The main problem with this method is that employers will often fall victim to stereotyping, where they make conclusions based upon content that is not reflective of job effectiveness (Caers & Castelyns, 2011). Regardless of whether the information used is
valid in assessing ability, it appears that employers find social media conducive to screening applicants because it provides a wealth of information with little effort.

With this information in mind, one can see why this applicant evaluation method has become so prevalent. Despite the numerous risks involved, more employers each year are using social media to screen applicants and make hiring decisions (Caers & Castelyns, 2011). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the effect that this practice has on the feelings of injustice in job candidates. By doing this, we can help determine to what extent this method is actually beneficial in the hiring procedure.

Organizational Justice

Cropanzano et al. (2007) refer to organizational justice as an ethical assessment of the procedures used by management in the workplace. Researchers who study organizational justice are not only concerned with the ethics of an outcome, but also the process involved in producing that outcome. Perceptions of organizational justice are very important in a workplace. According to He, Zhu, and Zheng (2013), employee feelings of workplace justice are key motivators for positive work attitudes and job engagement. Organizational justice has also been found to be negatively related to turnover intentions and positively related to job satisfaction (Kahn et al., 2013). Moreover, feelings of organizational injustice have been linked to increased deviant behavior in the workplace (Ferris et al., 2012), as well as lower organizational attraction (Stoughten et al., 2013).

Many researchers believe organizational justice is composed of three different facets: distributive justice, which focuses on the fairness of the outcome of a procedure; procedural justice, which focuses on the fairness of a procedure itself; and interactional
justice, which focuses on the treatment of the individuals during a procedure (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Whereas all organizational justice components have been linked to important work outcomes [see e.g., Cropanzano et al. (2007) and Lam, Schaubroeck, & Aryee (2002)], the current study is not concerned with investigating perceived fairness of the outcomes (i.e., distributive justice) in the process of pre-employment, but rather the process itself and the treatment of individuals (i.e., procedural and interactional justice). Sweeney and McFarlin (1993) found that distributive justice is more predictive of personal-level evaluations (e.g., satisfaction), whereas procedural justice is more predictive of organizational-level evaluations (e.g., commitment). Thus, by measuring levels of procedural justice, one can evaluate organizational perceptions on a broader level. With this in mind, the focus of this paper will be on two dimensions of organizational justice—procedural and interactional—in an attempt to determine fairness perceptions in regards to social media use in the selection process.

**Procedural Justice in Hiring**

Previous research examining applicant perceptions of new hiring methods found that controversy arises when applicants feel a hiring method is not indicative of job ability, which can create unfair perceptions of the organization’s hiring procedure (Sumanth & Cable, 2011). Specifically, this study looked into the procedural justice perceptions of job applicants when the hiring process involved completing a cognitive ability test, which has been shown to be predictive of future job performance. Despite this, applicants reported feeling that this process was procedurally unfair. Thus, it appears that even when the new means of hiring is proven to be predictive of job ability, it can still be controversial and seen as unjust.
Social media use in hiring is also sometimes perceived to be procedurally unfair by applicants (Stoughten et al., 2013); however, the current study will not focus on social media being indicative of job ability. Rather, we are concerned with measuring applicants’ perceptions of job-relatedness when employers use social media in hiring. Bauer et al. (2001) describe job-relatedness as the extent to which a test measures content that is related to the job. According to Gilliland (1994), perceptions of job-relatedness are a main component of procedural justice in the hiring procedure. Bauer et al. (2001) also find support for dichotomizing job-ability into two factors: content validity (i.e., the test measures relevant content) and predictive validity (i.e., the test is indicative of future job performance). As such, the current study will measure both of these factors in assessing perceptions of procedural justice. Because social media content has been perceived as having low job-relatedness and as being unfair by applicants (Stoughten et al., 2013), it seems likely that participants will perceive analyzing Facebook content to make employee selections as being a procedurally unjust method of hiring.

**Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Participants who are told Facebook evaluations will be used in the hiring process will report lower levels of procedural justice than those who are not.

**Interactional Justice in Hiring**

Finally, it is important to evaluate the effect that explanation has upon lowering feelings of injustice. Muzumdar (2012) argues that interactional justice is made of two subcomponents: informational and interpersonal justice. Informational justice refers to the explanation as to why certain procedures are used, whereas interpersonal justice refers the degree to which people are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect in a
procedure. Additionally, perceptions of low interactional justice have been shown to be linked to increased counterproductive work behavior (Le Roy, Bastounis, & Minibas-Poussard (2012). It appears that how an employee is treated within a procedure can be attributed to the perceived fairness of the procedure itself.

Greenberg (1990) sought to analyze the effect of empathy and sensitivity on feelings of organizational justice in employees. In his study, pay cuts were implemented on two different manufacturing plants; the employees belonging to the two groups were given either a high justice or low justice manipulation variable. This manipulation came in the form of explaining the reason behind the pay cuts sensitively (i.e., high justice) or simply addressing the pay cuts in a curt manor (i.e., low justice). When employees were shown sensitivity and given a thorough explanation for organizational procedures, feelings of inequity, levels of employee theft, and the number of resignations were all reduced.

According to these findings, employees exhibit higher levels organizational justice when they are shown empathy and given an explanation for procedures. Extending the Greenberg (1990) findings to the context of social media in the pre-employment process, it seems likely that job candidates would exhibit higher levels of interactional justice when they are shown empathy and given an explanation for why a company looks at Facebook profiles to screen applicants.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Participants who are shown empathy and given an explanation for the use of Facebook evaluations in the hiring process will report higher levels of interactional justice perceptions than those who are not.
Injustice and Stress

Much like feelings of organizational injustice, workplace stress can have adverse effects on an employee, both psychologically and physically (Johnstone & Feeney, 2015). Stress has been defined as tension or uneasiness caused by mental or emotional disturbance (Morst & Furst, 1979). Lazarus (1993) describes these disturbances as stressors, and how that stressor is perceived defines the type of stress. Eustress, or good stress, occurs when stressors are viewed as opportunities, and distress occurs when stressors are perceived as threats or harm. The current study will focus on the negative effects of stress in the workplace.

According to Vermunt and Steensma (2003), feelings of distress are one of the consequences of unfair procedures. The same authors refer to the injustice stress theory (Vermundt & Steensma, 2001), where employee feelings of procedural fairness have been shown to reduce stress. With this in mind, it can be inferred that those who interpret a hiring procedure as being procedurally fair will also exhibit lower levels of stress.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): (a) Procedural justice perceptions and (b) interactional justice perceptions will be inversely related to employee stress when Facebook evaluation is used in the hiring process.

Injustice and Personality

Additionally, the current study will also analyze the effects of personality and injustice in the hiring procedure. The psychological concept of personality has been defined as an individual’s organized and enduring traits that influence his or her interaction with his/her environment (Larsen & Buss, 2005). The use of personality testing has become widespread in personnel selection (Risavy & Hausdorf, 2011), and
many inventories exist that assess applicants’ personalities across multiple dimensions. Perhaps the most widespread of these is the Big Five Inventory, which is based upon the five-factor model of personality (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). In this model, the five factors of personality are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, which together encompass the concept of personality without sub-facets overlapping.

Several previous studies have measured the relationship between personality and perceived injustice (Colquitt et al., 2006; Flaherty & Moss, 2007), and it has been found that participants with high levels of agreeableness often perceive situations to be more just. Likewise, in regard to social media use in hiring, Stoughten et al. (2013) reported that agreeableness in participants resulted in lowered feelings of invasion of privacy, thus higher levels of perceived justice. In accordance with these results, we hypothesize that participants with high levels of agreeableness will perceive higher levels of procedural justice.

_Hypothesis 4 (H4):_ Participant agreeableness will be positively related to procedural justice perceptions when Facebook evaluation is used in the hiring process.

As little research exists regarding the link between the remaining four factors in the Big Five model and both procedural and interactional justice, exploratory analyses will be conducted to examine these relationships.

_Research Questions (RQ):_ How are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism related to (a) procedural justice and (b) interactional justice?
SECTION 2

METHOD

Pilot Study

A two-part pilot study was conducted to develop scenarios used in the study’s manipulation. The second part was identical to the first, with the exception of wording alterations on two of the scenarios.

Participants. Thirty-six undergraduate students participated in part one of the pilot study [72.2% female; ages 18 through 25 ($M=20.24$, $SD=1.81$), 77.78% Caucasian]. In part two, 13 students participated [100% female; ages 18 through 23 ($M=18.53$, $SD=1.39$), 69.23% Caucasian].

Procedure. All participants came to the research lab to participate in the pilot study. Participants answered questions related to two hiring scenarios.

Materials. Four scenarios involving a hiring manager giving news about online social media being used in the hiring process were created, two of which were considered high justice, and two low justice. The high justice scenarios included explanations for why the procedure was being performed, as well as phrases to show empathy, such as “We understand that using online social media as an important part of our hiring decisions may seem unreasonable or even unfair, but we would like you to know that we do our best to treat all our applicants as fairly as possible.” The low justice scenarios did
not include any explanation for the procedure, nor empathizing phrases. Participants were asked to read two of the scenarios (i.e., one high and one low justice) and answer four questions about how each scenario made them feel (i.e., how respectful do you feel the manager was in speaking to you? How much information did you feel the manager provided you? To what extent did the manager provide reasonable explanation? To what extent do you feel this company cares for your best interest?). The participants were asked to answer the questions on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The four scenarios can be found in Appendix A.

**Results.** First, the means and standard deviations were examined for each scenario. The scenarios with the highest and lowest average scores were chosen as the high justice and low justice scenarios, respectively. Scenarios A and D were high justice, with means of 5.33 and 6.56 and standard deviations of 1.55 and 0.65, respectively. Scenarios B and C were low justice, with means of 3.21 and 4.68 and standard deviations of 1.38 and 1.57, respectively. Thus, scenario D was chosen as the high justice scenario, and B was chosen as the low just scenario for the current study. Part two of the pilot study was conducted on the two high justice scenarios (i.e., A and D) when the research team decided that more appropriate phrasing was necessary; thus, the phrases “unfair” and “unreasonable or even unfair,” were replaced with the word “unusual.” Results were consistent with the initial pilot test, and scenario D (with its revision) remained the high justice scenario ($M=6.58$, $SD=0.93$), as compared to scenario A ($M=5.61$, $SD=1.23$).
Full Study

Participants

Ninety-nine Western Kentucky University students (75.3% female; 71.2% White/Caucasian; mean age = 19.97, SD = 2.18) who had a Facebook profile were recruited to participate in a hypothetical hiring procedure. For participating, students were given class credit and a chance to win one of 20 cash prizes of $50.

Measures

This study employed the use of the following measurements: demographics, personality (measured two ways: a self-report inventory and a mock-interview), cognitive ability, procedural justice, interactional justice, and stress. Each of these is described below.

Demographic questionnaire. As part of the hypothetical hiring scenario, participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, which included items on age, gender, ethnicity, education, and years of work experience (see Appendix B).

Personality inventory. Participants completed the Big Five Inventory of personality (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008), which is a 44-item inventory that assesses personality across five factors: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (see Appendix C). The inventory asked participants to indicate the extent to which they felt a characteristic applied to them (e.g., I am someone who...is talkative, is reserved, etc.) using a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Scoring involved taking the average response of all items for each personality trait. The five factors (i.e., openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and
neuroticism) had internal consistency reliabilities of 0.71, 0.82, 0.86, 0.84, and 0.82, respectively.

**Cognitive ability test.** To measure cognitive ability, participants completed the 12-item short form of the Raven Advanced Progressive Matrices (Bors & Stokes, 1998; see Appendix D). Each item contained a 3x3 matrix of a specific pattern, and participants were asked to select which shape completed the pattern. Scores were determined by taking the number of correct responses. Overall scores ranged from zero to ten.

**Structured mock interview.** A structured mock interview (Van Iddekinge et al., 2005) was administered by two researchers (see Appendix E), where participants were asked to answer nine questions as if they were applying for a hypothetical job as a retail manager. Questions were alternately asked between the researchers and contained items regarding how the participant would handle an assortment of workplace tasks (e.g., suppose that you noticed a customer needed help but did not personally ask for it. What would you do? Why would you choose to act that way?) The interview contained nine items, measuring three facets of personality (i.e., altruism, self-discipline, vulnerability) that were used to represent agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability, respectively. From a pool of seven researchers, any two researchers were randomly assigned to rate each participant. Response scores were determined by each researcher on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good) for each of the nine questions and averaged together. Inter-rater consistency of the mock interview was computed by correlating the total scores of each participant between the two raters. The inter-rater consistency analysis yielded a correlation of $r=0.86$ ($p<.001$), suggesting very low random error among the ratings.
Procedural justice scale. The Selection Procedural Justice Scale (SPJS; Bauer et al., 2001) was adapted to measure perceptions of procedural justice (see Appendix F). Four dimensions were chosen from the SPJS that best adapted to the social media in hiring scenario; these were: job relatedness-predictive, job relatedness-content, chance to perform, and propriety of the assessment. In addition, the wording of items was adapted to better suit the social media scenario, where phrases such as “this test” were adapted to “social media evaluation.”

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the items, on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). All questions were asked in relation to applying for the retail manager position for which the participant previously interviewed. Eleven items total were taken from the SPJS. Examples of these items include: “Receiving a positive evaluation based on one’s social media profile means a person can do the retail manager job well,” and “A person who receives a positive evaluation on their social media profile will be a good retail manager.” The adapted SPJS was scored by averaging the responses for each of the four dimensions, as well as computing an overall average score of all eleven items. The four dimensions (i.e., job relatedness-predictive, job relatedness-content, chance to perform, and propriety of the assessment) had internal consistency reliabilities of 0.87, 0.86, 0.81, and 0.75, respectively. The 11 items total had an internal consistency of 0.87.

Interactional justice scale. To measure interactional justice, this study employed the use of two additional dimensions of the SPJS (see Appendix G). These two dimensions (i.e., two-way communication and treatment) were those which best related to interpersonal treatment within a hiring scenario. As with procedural justice, the wording
of items was adapted to better suit the social media scenario. Ten total items were taken and adapted from the SPJS. Examples of items include “There was enough communication during the social media evaluation process,” and “I was able to ask questions about the social media evaluation process.”

Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the items, on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). All questions were asked in relation to applying for the retail manager position, for which the participant previously interviewed. The adapted SPJS was scored by averaging the responses for both dimensions, as well as computing the overall average for all ten items. The two dimensions (i.e., two-way communication, treatment) had internal consistency reliabilities of 0.91 and 0.87, respectively. The 8 items total had an internal consistency of 0.90.

**Stress inventory.** To assess psychological stress, a general stress measure (see Appendix H) with adapted instructions (Stanton et al., 2001) was used. Participants were asked to respond to 15 items, indicating the extent to which each description was accurate in describing how he or she felt after the task they just completed (e.g., hectic, pushed, pressured, etc.). Responses were indicated by a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The measure contained two subscales: pressure (i.e., seven items 1-7) and threat (i.e., 8 items). Scoring was done by averaging the responses of the 15 items together, with items 3, 4, 9, 12, and 14 being reverse scored. Average scores were taken for both dimensions, as well as an overall average for all eight items. The stress inventory had an internal consistency reliability of 0.95, and the two
dimensions (i.e., pressure and threat) had internal consistency reliabilities of 0.91 and 0.92, respectively.

**Single Item Procedural Justice Inventory.** Because the control group was not exposed to the social media assessment, an additional procedural justice measure was necessary for comparing the control and experimental groups. To assess procedural justice, a one-item inventory was developed and administered to the participants in each condition. The item was: “The selection process used to hire for this position was fair.” Responses were indicated by a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

**Procedure**

Participants were randomly divided into three conditions: condition A (high justice), condition B (low justice), and a control group. All participants were told that the purpose of this study was to assess job ability and were asked to answer the following questions as if applying for a job as a retail manager (a job description was provided). As an incentive, the participants were also told there was a possibility to win one of the $50 cash prizes based upon how well they did on certain components of the study.

All participants were asked to complete the demographic questionnaire, the personality inventory, the cognitive ability test, and the mock interview. All of these measurements were used to make the hiring procedure appear as realistic as possible.

After participants completed the initial measures, participants in conditions A and B were told that in addition to how well they did on the questionnaires and interview, the cash prize winners would be determined based on an analysis of their Facebook profile. In delivering this news, participants in condition A were shown empathy and given an
explanation for the procedure, whereas participants in condition B were not shown empathy and were given no explanation for the procedure (see Appendix J). Participants in the control group were given no manipulation.

After the manipulation was performed, the participants in conditions A and B were asked to log into their Facebook account. While the researcher saved their profiles onto the computer, participants in conditions A and B then completed the procedural and interactional justice inventories. All participants then completed the task-specific stress measure and the single-item procedural justice inventory.
SECTION 3

RESULTS

Due to the directional nature of the hypotheses, all of the following analyses were conducted using one-tailed significance tests.

In order to examine H1 a t-test was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in procedural justice between the experimental groups and the control group. The analysis yielded no significant difference between groups, \( t(93) = -.906, p=0.184 \) (one-tailed), so H1 was not supported. Thus, participants who were told Facebook evaluations would be used in the hiring process did not report significantly lower levels of procedural justice than those who were not.

For H2, t-tests were conducted to determine whether a significant difference emerged in interactional justice between the high justice and low justice groups. Scores for the two dimensions of IJ (i.e., two-way communication and treatment) as well as a total score for IJ were used; thus, three t-tests were performed. The tests yielded significant results for both the IJ total score, \( t(59.92)=2.35, p=0.011 \) (one-tailed), and IJ two-way communication, \( t(63)=2.59, p=0.006 \) (one-tailed). However, the t-test for IJ treatment did not yield significant results, \( t(62)=1.00, p=0.161 \) (one-tailed). Thus, participants who were shown empathy and given an explanation for the use of Facebook evaluations in the hiring process reported overall higher levels of interactional justice.
perceptions, as well as more positive perceptions of communication quality than those who were not shown empathy or given an explanation for the use of the procedure, thereby partially supporting H2.

To assess H3, a correlation analysis was performed between overall stress scores and both IJ and PJ (see Table 1). Stress negatively correlated with PJ, $r=-0.27$, $p=0.018$ (one-tailed) and IJ, $r=-0.52$, $p<0.001$ (one-tailed). Thus, procedural justice perceptions and interactional justice perceptions were inversely related to employee stress when Facebook evaluation was used in the hiring process, so $H3a$ and $H3b$ were supported. IJ also significantly correlated with the two dimensions of stress (i.e., pressure and threat), $r=-0.38$, $p=0.001$ (one-tailed), and $r=-0.59$, $p<0.001$ (one-tailed), respectively, whereas PJ only significantly correlated with threat, $r=-0.32$, $p=0.006$ (one-tailed).

Correlations were also examined to determine the relationship between participant personality and both IJ and PJ (i.e., $H4$, $RQa$, and $RQb$; see Table 1). IJ significantly correlated with extraversion, $r=0.26$, $p=0.019$ (one-tailed), agreeableness, $r=0.25$, $p=0.022$, (one-tailed), and neuroticism, $r=-0.32$, $p=0.006$ (one-tailed), and PJ significantly correlated with extraversion, $r=0.22$, $p=0.042$ (one-tailed). All other correlations were non-significant. Because PJ did not significantly correlate with agreeableness, $H4$ was not supported.
SECTION 4

DISCUSSION

Study findings indicated that employers can lower applicant injustice perceptions regarding using social media evaluations in the hiring process by showing empathy and offering explanation for the reason for this practice ($H2$). Because organizational justice has been linked to many positive work outcomes, this information is important for hiring managers who wish to increase organizational attraction and employee satisfaction. Contrary to the expected results, there was no significant difference in procedural justice perceptions between those who were told Facebook evaluations would be used in the hiring process and those who were not ($H1$). However, this may have been due to a measurement issue, which will be discussed further in the limitations section.

Both procedural and interactional justice perceptions negatively correlated with applicant stress levels, indicating that by taking efforts to reduce injustice perceptions within a hiring procedure, employers can also reduce applicant stress ($H3$). These findings reveal that one way for hiring managers to reduce employee stressors in the selection process is by increasing fairness perceptions. This is particularly applicable in the context of social media use in making hiring decisions.

While certain factors of personality (i.e., extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) yielded weak to moderate correlations with interactional justice, and procedural justice correlated with extraversion, there was no evidence to support the claim that procedural justice is positively linked to agreeableness ($H4$). This indicates that an applicant’s level of agreeableness may not impact their fairness perceptions.
regarding the use of online social media as an evaluation tool. However, these findings do provide evidence for other factors of personality potentially having some effect on justice perceptions (i.e., extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism levels impacting applicant fairness perceptions regarding interpersonal treatment).

Taken together, these findings indicate that organizations that use social media evaluations in their selection procedures can do so more effectively by mitigating the risks associated with perceptions of injustice. By offering empathy and providing explanation for this practice, employers can raise organizational justice perceptions among applicants, creating a more cohesive work environment while reducing stress. Implications of these findings include raising organizational attraction and employee engagement. Moreover, employers can better utilize social media use within hiring by minimizing the risk of applicant perceptions of unfair treatment.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One limitation of the current study is the undergraduate sample. Having students as participants completing a mock application process can possibly weaken the generalizability to the actual workforce. However, this restriction is mitigated by the sample having a mean work experience of 3.40 years ($SD=4.18$). Nevertheless, future research should examine these relationships in a non-student sample.

Another limitation of this study is the use of a single-item inventory in comparing procedural justice levels between groups for H1. This was used in order to determine specific procedural justice perceptions outside of the experimental groups (i.e., assessing the control group). Because the SPJS (i.e., 11-item PJ scale) was adapted to fit the social media scenario, it could not be used in assessing the control group. A single item was
used to find differences between groups as succinctly as possible. Future research should look into a more reliable method to discern justice perception differences between control and experimental groups. Future studies should also seek to determine the extent to which injustice perceptions affect a hired employee (e.g., long-term effects) as well as juxtaposing the effect of empathy and explanation between those who are hired and those who are not.
REFERENCES


doi:10.1037/0021-9010.90.3.536


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*p < .05, **p < .01 (one-tail) N = 98 for Personality, 65 for Procedural Justice and Interactional Justice, and 94 for Stress
Pilot Study Materials

Demographics:
Age:
Gender: (circle one)
  Male
  Female
Ethnicity: (circle all that apply)
  African American
  Native American
  Hispanic/Latino
  Asian
  White/Caucasian
  Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
  Other (please specify): _____________________________
Education: (circle one)
  Freshmen
  Sophomore
  Junior
  Senior
  Graduate Student

Please read the following scenarios as if you are applying for a job, and the hiring manager is speaking to you. Then answer the questions accordingly on a scale of 1 (none/not at all) to 7 (a lot/very much).

Scenario A:
“Thank you for applying for this job; I see that you have many qualifications that would make you a fine addition to our workforce. Something you should know is that our company looks into job applicant social media profiles, such as those on Facebook, and the information we gather strongly influences our hiring decisions. We do this because many studies show that content on Facebook profiles can be good indicators of job ability. I know this can seem unusual, and we apologize for the inconvenience; please know that we are trying to find the best possible fit for our company.”

How respectful do you feel the manager was in speaking to you?
How much information did you feel the manager provided for you?

To what extent did the manager provide reasonable explanation?

To what extent do you feel this company cares for your best interest?

Scenario B:

“Thank you for applying for this job; something you should know about this company is that despite your qualifications, we also look heavily into candidates’ social media profiles, like those on Facebook, and use this information to determine if they will be a good employee.”

How respectful do you feel the manager was in speaking to you?

How much information did you feel the manager provided for you?

To what extent did the manager provide reasonable explanation?

To what extent do you feel this company cares for your best interest?

Scenario C:

“Thank you for applying for this job. Though you seem to be a qualified candidate you should know that our company looks at social media profiles when making hiring decisions. As we examine your application, we will also look at your Facebook profile. Our evaluation of your Facebook profile will weigh heavily in our decision.”

How respectful do you feel the manager was in speaking to you?

How much information did you feel the manager provided for you?

To what extent did the manager provide reasonable explanation?

To what extent do you feel this company cares for your best interest?

Scenario D:

“Thank you for applying for this job; I see that you have many qualifications that would make you a fine addition to our workforce. In addition to these qualifications we will also examine your Facebook profile when considering your application. We understand that using social media as an important part of our hiring decisions may seem unusual, but we are trying to find the best possible fit for our company. The reason that we look at Facebook profiles when considering applicants is based on research. Many studies have
found that applicants’ social media profiles are strongly linked to how they will perform on the job. If you have any questions about this research or our hiring processes please don’t hesitate to ask.”

How respectful do you feel the manager was in speaking to you?

How much information did you feel the manager provided for you?

To what extent did the manager provide reasonable explanation?

To what extent do you feel this company cares for your best interest?
Appendix B

Demographics

Instructions: Please indicate your response to each of the following items

1. Age: ______

2. Gender: (circle one) Male Female

3. Race: (circle all that apply)
   - Black/African American
   - Native American
   - Hispanic/Latino
   - Asian American
   - White/Caucasian
   - Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
   - Other (please specify): __________________________

4. Education: (circle one)
   - Freshman
   - Sophomore
   - Junior
   - Senior
   - Graduate Student

5. Years of Work Experience: ______
Appendix C

Big Five Inventory (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008)

Instructions: Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who *likes to spend time with others*? Then, using the response scale below, circle the number which best represents the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

I am someone who…

1. Is talkative
2. Tends to find fault with others
3. Does a thorough job
4. Is depressed, blue
5. Is original, comes up with new ideas
6. Is reserved
7. Is helpful and unselfish with others
8. Can be somewhat careless
9. Is relaxed, handles stress well
10. Is curious about many different things
11. Is full of energy
12. Starts quarrels with others
13. Is a reliable worker
14. Can be tense
15. Is ingenious, a deep thinker
16. Generates a lot of enthusiasm
17. Has a forgiving nature
18. Tends to be disorganized
19. Worries a lot
20. Tends to be quiet
21. Is generally trusting
22. Tends to be lazy
23. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset
24. Is inventive
25. Has an assertive personality
26. Can be cold and aloof
27. Perseveres until the task is finished
28. Can be moody
29. Has an active imagination
30. Values artistic, aesthetic experiences
31. Is sometimes shy, inhibited
32. Is considerate and kind to almost everyone
33. Does things efficiently
34. Remains calm in tense situations
35. Prefers work that is routine
36. Is outgoing, sociable
37. Is sometimes rude to others
38. Makes plans and follows through with them
39. Gets nervous easily
40. Likes to reflect, play with ideas
41. Has few artistic interests
42. Likes to cooperate with others
43. Is easily distracted
44. Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature
Appendix D

Advanced Progressive Matrices (Bors & Stokes, 1998)

ADVANCED
PROGRESSIVE MATRICES
SET I

Prepared by J C Raven

Published by Oxford Psychologists Press
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Practice Items
Instructions: For each item, identify the missing element that completes the pattern.
Test Items
Instructions: For each item, identify the missing element that completes the pattern.
Appendix E

Structured Mock Interview (Van Iddekinge et al., 1995)

Altruism 1

"Suppose that you noticed that a customer needed help but did not personally ask for it. What would you do? Why would you choose to act that way?"

Circle the number that best represents the applicant’s response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Example Answers</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 5 -- Very Good | • Would ask if the person needed assistance and would show a real concern for him/her  
                  • Would take full responsibility for resolving the issue, confirm the person’s satisfaction, and ask if there was anything else she could do |
| 4 -- Good     |                                                                                   |
| 3 -- Satisfactory | • Would ask the person if they needed help only because it was part of her job  
                           • Would help the person without asking if he/she actually needed assistance  
                           • Would ask if the person needed assistance and then tell him/her how to solve the problem rather than helping him/her do it |
| 2 -- Poor     |                                                                                   |
| 1 -- Very Poor | • Would be reluctant to get involved and would wait for the person to ask for help  
                           • Would ask someone else to assist the person  
                           • Would let the person figure out the problem for him/herself |
Altruism 2

"Imagine that you worked with someone new to your organization. How involved would you be in helping orient him or her to the job and/or company? Why would you act that way?"

Circle the number that best represents the applicant’s response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Example Answers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 -- Very Good</td>
<td>• Would immediately go out of her way to assist the new employee and show a real concern for him/her&lt;br&gt;• Would tell the new employee to let her know if he/she ever needed help again and would regularly followed up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 -- Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 -- Satisfactory</td>
<td>• Would offer to assist the new employee because she would feel obligated or want something in return&lt;br&gt;• Would not ask if the new employee needed help, but would just show him/her what to do&lt;br&gt;• Would ask someone else to help orient the new employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 -- Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 -- Very Poor</td>
<td>• Would wait until the new employee asked for help and would be reluctant to get involved&lt;br&gt;• Would help the new person if she was not too busy with her own duties&lt;br&gt;• Would let the new employee learn things for him/herself and would care little about the individual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Altruism 3

"Suppose that a coworker asked you to set aside your own work to help him or her with an important project. What would you do? Why would you do that?"

Circle the number that best represents the applicant's response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Example Answers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 -- Very Good</td>
<td>• Would go out of her way to offer assistance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Would agree to help out of genuine concern for the person</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 -- Good</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 -- Satisfactory</td>
<td>• Would agree to help the person only if it was an urgent matter,</td>
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<td>if it was part of her job to help the person, or if the outcome of the project</td>
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<td>would affect her in some way</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Would give the person some suggestions but would not actually help him/her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 -- Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 -- Very Poor</td>
<td>• Would agree to help the person only if they could not find someone else to</td>
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<td>assist or if he/she offered to do something for them in return</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would agree to help the person but only after she completed her own work</td>
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</table>
Self-discipline 1

“We have all had job tasks that were not that enjoyable. Suppose that you were required to perform a job task that you really disliked. What, if anything, would you do about it? Why would you do that?”

Circle the number that best represents the applicant’s response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Example Answers</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 -- Very Good</td>
<td>• Would perform the task because it was part of the job, because it was the right thing to do, or because it was important to the organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 -- Good</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 3 -- Satisfactory | • Would perform the task because she would want to keep the job or please the boss  
                     • Would perform the task but put off doing it until the last minute |
| 2 -- Poor | - |
| 1 -- Very Poor | • Would perform the task but put forth less than her best effort or get upset and/or complain about it  
                • Would ask someone else to help with the duty  
                • Would try to get out of doing the task or just not perform it |
**Self-discipline 2**

"By the end of the workday, it is hard for anyone to be as focused as they were at the beginning of the day. Suppose that a work-related problem occurred late in the workday. What would you do? Why would you act that way?"

Circle the **number** that best represents the applicant's response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Example Answers</th>
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</table>
| 5 -- Very Good | • Would put forth considerable effort and would be willing to do whatever was required to resolve the situation before the end of the workday  
• Would volunteer to stay late to resolve the issue because it would be the right thing to do |
| 4 -- Good     |                                                                                 |
| 3 -- Satisfactory | • Would come in early the next day to handle the situation  
• Would handled the situation that day because she would want to please the boss or get something in return (e.g., recognition, time off later on) |
| 2 -- Poor     |                                                                                 |
| 1 -- Very Poor | • Would begin to deal with the situation, but would leave work at the usual time and pick it up again the next workday  
• Would handled the situation that day but put forth little effort and/or quickly do it  
• Would ask a co-worker to handle the situation |
Self-discipline 3

"Projects rarely proceed without obstacles. Imagine a work project in which you encountered a series of obstacles. What would you do? Why would you do it that way?"

Circle the number that best represents the applicant's response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Example Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 -- Very Good</td>
<td>• Would stay focused and dealt with each obstacle immediately after it occurred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would go beyond what was expected to complete the project because she made a commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 -- Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 -- Satisfactory</td>
<td>• Would complete the project to please someone else or gain some personal reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would take several shortcuts in order to complete the project on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 -- Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 -- Very Poor</td>
<td>• Would not complete the project on time or would only complete part of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would become pessimistic and avoid the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would ask the person for an extension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would give up on the project after encountering several obstacles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vulnerability 1

“We all have had times when the pressure at work is extremely high. Imagine a time when you had several competing deadlines or had a very important project you were counted on to complete successfully. Describe how you would feel. How would you deal with the situation?”

Circle the number that best represents the applicant’s response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Example Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5 -- Very Good | • Would prioritize tasks and successfully complete all of the work without becoming stressed  
• Would stay calm and focused on the task and maintain a high level of professionalism in the situation  
• Would use an effective coping strategy (e.g., humor, positive thinking, exercise) |
| 4 -- Good     |               |
| 3 -- Satisfactory | • Would complete everything on time, but would not spend as much time on the tasks as usual because the stress would distract her  
• Would seek help from the appropriate source  
• Would accomplish everything but show signs of stress |
| 2 -- Poor     |               |
| 1 -- Very Poor | • Would be unable to properly prioritize tasks and would give up on meeting the deadlines  
• Would become upset or angry and very pessimistic about the situation  
• Would become completely overwhelmed and frustrated and would not attempt any strategies to cope with the stress |
Vulnerability 2

“Changes in life can be very stressful. Imagine that your job responsibilities suddenly changed a great deal. Describe how you would feel during this time. What are some things you would do to cope with the change(s)?”

Circle the number that best represents the applicant’s response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Example Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5 -- Very Good | • Would embrace the changes and help others handle the situation  
• Would stay calm, focus on the task, and make the best of the situation  
• Would use an effective coping strategy (e.g., humor, positive thinking, exercise) |
| 4 -- Good      |                 |
| 3 -- Satisfactory | • Would seek help from the appropriate source  
• Would become stressed and somewhat pessimistic but would remain productive |
| 2 -- Poor      |                 |
| 1 -- Very Poor | • Would focus solely on the changing environment and neglect her job duties  
• Would become very pessimistic about the situation and show signs of insecurity about her place in new job/organization  
• Would show signs of being completely overwhelmed and frustrated and would become totally dependent on others |
Vulnerability 3

"Imagine that you received little or no cooperation from a coworker on a very important task or project. How would this make you feel? How would you handle the situation?"

Circle the number that best represents the applicant's response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating Scale</th>
<th>Example Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 -- Very Good</td>
<td>• Would stay calm and focus on the task and make the best of a tough situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would try to understand the coworker's position and come up with a compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 -- Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 -- Satisfactory</td>
<td>• Would attempt to get the person to participate in the task/project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would approach a supervisor about the situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would ignore the person and attempt to complete the project independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 -- Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 -- Very Poor</td>
<td>• Would threaten or try to coerce the individual, or get upset and lose her temper with the person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would complain about the situation to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would ignore or give up on the task/project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Would show signs of being completely overwhelmed and frustrated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F

Adapted Selection Procedural Justice Scale (SPJS) (Bauer et al., 2001)

Instructions: Please answer the following on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

Job-relatedness – predictive

1. Receiving a positive evaluation based on one’s social media profile means a person can do the retail manager job well.
2. A person who receives a positive evaluation on their social media profile will be a good retail manager.

Chance to perform

1. I could really show my skills and abilities through my social media profile.
2. My social media profile allows me to show what my job skills are.
3. A social media evaluation gives applicants the opportunity to show what they can really do.
4. I was able to show what I can do through the social media evaluation.

Job-relatedness – content

1. It would be clear to anyone that social media is related to the retail manager job.
2. The content of my social media profile was clearly related to the retail manager job.

Propriety of the assessment

1. The social media evaluation did not appear to be prejudiced.
2. The social media evaluation did not seem too personal or private.
3. The social media evaluation seemed appropriate.
Appendix G

Interactional Justice Scale

Adapted from Selection Procedural Justice Scale (SPJS) (Bauer et al., 2001)

Instructions: Please answer the following on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

Two-way communication

1. There was enough communication during the social media evaluation process.
2. I was able to ask questions about the social media evaluation process.
3. I am satisfied with the communication that occurred during the social media evaluation process.
4. I would have felt comfortable asking questions about the social media evaluation process if I had any.
5. I was comfortable with the idea of expressing my concerns during the social media evaluation process.

Treatment

1. I was treated politely during the social media evaluation process.
2. The researchers were considerate during the social media evaluation process.
3. The researchers treated applicants with respect during today’s social media evaluation process.
4. The researchers put me at ease when my social media profile was evaluated.
5. I was satisfied with my treatment during the social media evaluation process.
Appendix H

General Stress Measure (Adapted from Stanton et al., 2001)

For each of the following words or phrases, please think about the social media evaluation process you just went through. Then, indicate your degree of agreement as to how much these words or phrases described this process on a scale from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

1. Demanding
2. Hectic
3. Calm
4. Relaxed
5. Many things stressful
6. Pushed
7. Pressured
8. Irritating
9. Under control
10. Nerve-wracking
11. Hassled
12. Comfortable
13. More stressful than I’d like
14. Smooth-running
15. Overwhelming
Appendix I

Manipulation Scripts

**Group A (High Justice):**

“Thank you for applying for this job; I see that you have many qualifications that would make you a fine addition to our workforce. In addition to these qualifications we will also examine your Facebook profile when considering your application. We understand that using social media as an important part of our hiring decisions may seem unusual, but we are trying to find the best possible fit for our company. The reason that we look at Facebook profiles when considering applicants is based on research. Many studies have found that applicants’ social media profiles are strongly linked to how they will perform on the job. If you have any questions about this research or our hiring processes please don’t hesitate to ask.”

**Group B (Low Justice):**

“Thank you for applying for this job; something you should know about this company is that despite your qualifications, we also look heavily into candidates’ social media profiles, like those on Facebook, and use this information to determine if they will be a good employee.”