

## Chapter 3C – REALISTIC INFORMATION OR NOT!: SHORT-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF (MIS)INFORMATION

**Bert Schreurs**

Belgian Defence Directorate of Human Resources, BEL

[bert.schreurs@mil.be](mailto:bert.schreurs@mil.be)

### 3C.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter describes the various facets of information that might have an effect on turnover during military training. First, a typology of information provision is presented. A distinction is made between intentional and unintentional information provision, and between the accuracy of the information provided and the accuracy with which the information is perceived. The first part of this chapter deals with organizations' intentional efforts to provide accurate (both favorable and unfavorable) information to applicants in early recruitment stages. Realistic job previews (RJPs) are undoubtedly the most well-known recruitment technique with regard to the communication of both favorable and unfavorable job information. RJPs are intended to reduce the initial turnover rate and are assumed to improve a variety of other organizational outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, performance, commitment). The five most common theoretical explanations of RJPs are presented: Freedom of choice, coping, trust and honesty, self-selection, and unmet expectations. Next, three potential moderators of the RJP-turnover relationship are discussed: Context, timing, and method of presentation. RJPs seem to have the most impact on voluntary turnover when they are presented in a field setting, just before hiring, by means of a two-way communication process. Then, a brief overview of recruitment source research is offered, followed by a discussion of newcomer orientation programs and two alternatives to RJPs, decision-making training (DMT) and expectation-lowering procedure (ELP). The second part of this chapter extends the view taken in part one by proposing that all recruitment and selection procedures, and thus not only RJPs, convey information about the organization, intentionally or unintentionally. Three theoretical frameworks are briefly discussed: Signaling theory, socialization theory, and organizational justice theory. Signaling theory suggests that in the absence of other information about the organization, applicants interpret information they receive in the course of the recruitment and selection process as 'signals' about what it would like to be employed by the organization. Along the same line, socialization theory and organizational justice theory propose that recruitment and selection procedures convey information that may influence post-hire turnover decisions. In the final part of this chapter several practical recommendations are put forward. For example, we recommend the military to install RJPs, but not to think of them as a single event. Instead RJPS should be considered as a process of providing accurate information at several points during the hiring process.

Sergeant Oldham was sitting at his desk, recovering from his third exit-interview that day, when his superior knocked on his door and stuck his head in.

“Carl, I have another recruit waiting for you outside. This one is also determined to quit. Says we have misled him at the recruiting center. Can you deal with him?”

“Of course, Captain.”

Carl Oldham is a seasoned interviewer. His job is to ask recruits why they want to leave the Army, and what measures the Army could take in order to retain them. Often, the answer to the first question sounded “I had

not expected that military life would be like this.” The answer to the second question usually was “if I had received better information beforehand, I would have never applied in the first place.” Carl assumed this case would not be any different.

“State your name and number, please.”

“Private Jones, 9958248, Sir.”

“Sit down, Jones, and tell me, why do you want to leave the Army? You know you can speak freely. There is no one listening but me. And I promise that everything you say is confidential and will stay within these four walls.”

“I believe I am not cut out for the Army, Sir.”

“Why do you believe that?”

“I can’t put up with the instructor’s shouting and raging, Sir. All he ever does is yell at us, like we are animals. I cannot stand it any longer.”

“You know this is just a temporary situation, don’t you? It is necessary for all recruits to get acquainted with military habits and traditions. I know the first weeks have been tough, but eventually you will be glad that you’ve lived through it, like we all did.”

“It is just that this is not what I had expected, Sir.”

“Didn’t the recruiters at the recruitment office warn you that this was going to happen?”

“No Sir, they didn’t. They told me about the excitement and adventure I would experience in the military. They also told me about possible career paths and military operations I could participate in, but they kept silent on the instructors’ attitude. It’s like they deliberately didn’t tell me the whole story. Somehow, I get the feeling that I’m deceived. If I had known in advance that military training would be like this, I would have never applied in the first place.”

Sergeant Oldham heaved a sigh. Four in a row: all of them claiming to be misinformed. No wonder they wanted to quit. He probably would feel the same.

### **3C.2 INTRODUCTION**

Recruits who drop out of initial training often complain that they had “a wrong idea of what the organization was really like”; that they “had not expected military life to be like that;” that “insufficient information was provided to them to make thought-out career choices.” It is often heard from recruits who drop out of boot camp that “if they had known beforehand that military training would be so hard, they would have never applied in the first place.” These comments show that newcomers are not always well informed about the characteristics of the job and the organization. Their initial idea of military life differs from reality. Their initial expectations remain unmet. This disappointment of initial expectations will lead to a decrease in job satisfaction and to a high risk of voluntary turnover.

In this chapter, the various facets of information that might have an effect on post-hire consequences are looked at. One of the more critical decisions that (military) organizations must make about their recruitment

materials and practices involves the accuracy, or realism, of the information they provide. One approach is to focus on pre-hire attraction by emphasizing positive features and disregarding negative features. By portraying the organization in a favourable light, prospects are attracted to apply. However, this ‘selling’ approach has a serious drawback: newcomers who had inaccurate information are more likely to drop out once they have joined the organization. An alternative is to focus on post-hire commitment (or job tenure) by providing complete and balanced information about the organization and the job, revealing both positive and negative features. This is the basic idea behind realistic job previews (RJPs). RJPs are designed expressly for the purpose of conveying realistic information about the job and/or organization to applicants (Anderson and Ostroff, 1997). In this chapter, I will summarize the literature on RJPs, thereby focussing on the relationship with employee turnover early after entrance.

However, the information process is not restricted to the provision of purposeful (realistic) information on the part of the organization. In line with recent scholarly work (e.g., Anderson, 2001; Anderson and Ostroff, 1997; Herriot, 1989; Iles and Robertson, 1997), I will argue that *all* recruitment and selection techniques contain at least some information on job and organizational attributes. More specifically, at early recruitment stages when applicants still have incomplete information on their potential future employer, they are likely to make inferences on organizational and job attributes based upon their experiences during recruitment and selection. This inferred information might unintentionally attract or repel applicants. Therefore, I believe it is important that organizations investigate and take into account the embedded message that is communicated by their recruitment and selection procedures. However, before addressing RJPs and the informational value of recruitment and selection procedures in more detail, I think it is necessary to make a distinction between various types of information provision.

### **3C.3 CATEGORIZING INFORMATION PROVISION**

A first important distinction that can be made is that between intentional and unintentional information provision. Intentional information provision relates to messages that are sent by design on the part of the organization, whereas unintentional information provision refers to messages that are communicated although this was not planned by the organization. In a hiring context, most recruitment and selection techniques are not designed to explicitly convey any particular type of information to applicants, but to assess applicant attributes and predict job performance. Yet, these recruitment and selection procedures “can and do portray a great deal of information about the organization to applicants” (Anderson and Ostroff, 1997, p. 428). For instance, through the use of situational judgment tests (SJT) hiring organizations can predict how effective applicants will be in handling actual job situations. Because applicants are faced with actual job situations they can learn quite a lot about the organization as well. More specifically, SJTs provide the applicants with an accurate picture of the job, allowing him or her to make a decision as to whether to continue with an application (Iles and Robertson, 1997).

Secondly, a distinction can be made between the accuracy of the information provided and the accuracy with which the information is perceived. In a recruitment context, accuracy of the information provided boils down to the realism of the recruitment message. In recruitment advertisements and media messages hiring organizations often tend to over-represent the positive aspects of the organization in order to attract as many applicants as possible. Other organizations adhere to realistic messages to limit the number of post-hire dropouts. The accuracy of the provided information is not necessarily tied up with its intentionality. For instance, during selection interviews recruiters might unsuspectingly picture the organization somewhat better towards what they perceive as “good” applicants as against to “weak” applicants. Therefore, intentional messages are not necessarily accurate messages and unintended information can be accurate. Likewise,

the information provided by the organization can be interpreted accurately or inaccurately. Although this observation seems pretty straightforward and certainly not earthshaking, in my opinion it is often overlooked by HR managers. Recruitment departments are repeatedly criticized because of their alleged misrepresentation of the (military) work situation. If a dropout complains that s/he has false expectations, this surely must mean that the recruiter did not perform his or her job well, wouldn't you say so? But what if turns out that all prospects already receive the same accurate detailed information in a standardized way? Then the conclusion must be that the message is misconstrued by the prospect. Maybe the prospect was distracted by the impressive computer infrastructure present in the recruitment station or was overwhelmed by the amount of given information. Or maybe the prospect was not interested in hearing too many details at all, but just needed a job. How this misconstruction exactly occurs goes beyond the scope of this chapter.

Figure 3C-1 depicts the 2 x 2 factorial with the dimensions of accuracy from the organizational and individual perspective.

		<b>Organizational Message</b>	
		<b>Accurate</b>	<b>Inaccurate</b>
<b>Applicant Perception</b>	<b>Accurate</b>	Quadrant 1 Realistic – Correctly construed	Quadrant 2 Unrealistic – Correctly construed
	<b>Inaccurate</b>	Quadrant 4 Realistic – Misconstrued	Quadrant 3 Unrealistic – misconstrued

Figure adapted from Anderson and Ostroff (1997).

**Figure 3C-1: Categorization of Information Provision.**

Clearly, Quadrant 1 is the most preferable state. The hiring organization provides realistic information on the job and organizational attributes, and applicants are able to correctly interpret this information. In this situation, applicants can determine whether they really want to continue to pursue a job with that organization. Maybe they have now come to the conclusion that the organizational context is not an appropriate fit for them (Anderson and Ostroff, 1997), and that they should self-select out after all (Wanous and Colella, 1989). In Quadrant 2, applicants are misinformed by the hiring organization. This may result in “good” applicants deciding to self-select out of the process, thereby decreasing the utility of the hiring system (Murphy, 1986). Furthermore, unrealistic information will surely lead to inflated expectations and/or may applicants give the false impression that they fit the organization. In either case, unrealistic information is likely to have

detrimental effects on the socialization and integration of newcomers in the organization. In Quadrant 4, the hiring organization provides realistic information, but applicants misinterpret this information. In Quadrant 3, unrealistic information is provided by the organization and is misconstrued by applicants. In both cases, applicants are likely to make poor job decisions (Anderson and Ostroff, 1997).

For a long time practitioners and researchers have been occupied with the question whether recruitment messages (e.g., job advertisements) should only emphasize the positive side or should convey a balanced/realistic message by including negative information about the organization as well. In the following section, I present an overview of research findings on realistic information and the theoretical rationales for the effects of realistic information on post-hire outcomes.

### **3C.4 REALISTIC INFORMATION**

I would like to start the discussion on realistic information with an extract based on a true conversation between an examinee and his professor HRM.

- P: Would you always tell the truth when an applicant would ask you about the working conditions in your organization?
- E: (*very convinced*). Of course I would! I believe all applicants are entitled to know what they can expect once they enter the job. Otherwise, they will be disappointed and leave for sure. They will feel betrayed. At least, I would.
- P: Imagine that your boss has just sacked three newly hired employees and that since his divorce his outbursts are even worse than before. Would you tell this to your applicant?
- E: (*still convinced*). Yes. It is better to tell him in advance and face the consequences than to conceal this fact and end up with a very disenchanted co-worker who will probably quit after all.
- P: I understand what you are saying. Imagine now that your department desperately needs to recruit in order to attain the organization's recruitment objectives. Your salary depends on it. So far, your strategy to be as honest and realistic as possible has only led applicants to self-select out. In this situation, would you still openly tell your applicant about a possible take-over by a competitive firm and all consequences attached?
- E: (*not so convinced any more*). Probably, although it might be better for my wallet to keep silent about it, I guess. Still, I think I would try to improve the working conditions first, before raising false hopes.
- P: Of course, but that is not always possible. Consider the hostile take-over and the angry boss. Besides, don't you think that newcomers are able to adjust fairly easily to their work environment, despite all unmet expectations?
- E: (*silence*).

The above conversation concerns the extent to which applicants should have a full and accurate picture of what life in the organization is really like. From an ethical point of view the answer to this question is probably affirmative: organizations should try to be as complete and honest as possible (Buckley, Fedor, Carraher, Frink and Marvin, 1997). In the conversation, the examinee approached the question about "telling the truth" from an ethical point of view as well ("all applicants are entitled to know what they can expect"). Yet, his main objection to being dishonest/incomplete was that newcomers would probably quit once they note that organizational life is not what they had expected. Many practitioners agree with the examinee as appears from the numerous organizations that have implemented recruitment programs to provide applicants

with balanced information in order to reduce post-hire turnover. Realistic job previews (RJPs) are probably the most well-known recruitment technique with regard to the communication of both favorable and unfavorable job information. RJPs may range from videotaped demonstrations of the job to having the applicant talking directly to current employees, but usually RJPs are administered via a written booklet or brochure (Saks and Cronshaw, 1990), or by recruiters during the employment interview or orientation (post-hire) (Griffeth and Hom, 2001). As I will discuss later, the latter complicates the interpretation of many of the RJP research findings. The military typically makes use of recruiting centres to convey realistic information to potential applicants (Schreurs et al., 2005) or alternatively, include RJPs as part of their regular selection and assessment program (Bradley, Lawrence and Noonan, 1998).

In the first published account of a realistic job preview experiment almost 50 years ago now, Weitz (1956) lauded the potential usefulness of having potential employees' expectations as realistic as possible. During the years following this research, equivocal accounts of the effectiveness and rationale behind the use of RJPs and related techniques devised to improve a variety of organizational outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, performance, job tenure, commitment) have been reported. Several RJP studies have been carried out within the military (Ganzach, Pazy, Ohayun and Brainin, 2002; Ilgen and Seely, 1974; Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood and Williams, 1988), probably because the military historically has high annual turnover rates (Grissmer, Eisenman and Taylor, 1995; Mael and Ashforth, 1995).

Despite the compelling logic behind RJPs, results from RJP studies are rather contradictory. They vary from a significant reduction of turnover (e.g., Ilgen and Seely, 1974; Suszko and Breugh, 1986) to little or no effect on turnover (e.g., Dean and Wanous, 1984; Reilly, Brown, Blood and Malatesta, 1981). Yet, most meta-analyses<sup>1</sup> on RJP research (e.g., McEvoy and Cascio, 1985; Phillips, 1998; Premack and Wanous, 1985; Wanous, Poland, Premack and Davis, 1992) suggest that RJPs are effective in facilitating some positive organizational outcomes, especially when several variables are attended to (medium of RJP, timing of RJP, and research setting) (Buckley et al., 2002). I will discuss these moderating variables in more detail later in this chapter. In addition, utility analysis suggests that RJPs can result in substantial employee-replacement cost savings (Premack and Wanous, 1985). Considering the beneficial effect of realistic information on post-hire outcomes, it is important to unravel the mechanisms of RJPs. Which psychological mechanisms mediate the impact of RJPs on employee attitudes and turnover? In the next section, I will give an overview of the theoretical explanations of RJPs that can be found in the literature.

### **3C.4.1 Realistic Information: Theoretical Rationales**

#### **3C.4.1.1 Freedom of Choice**

RJPs would emphasize freedom of choice (Ilgen and Seely, 1974; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978). Having received an RJP, the applicant believes he/she was able to make a fully informed job choice. According to Salancik and Pfeffer (1978), "having made a choice, and having made it with full information, the individual will be more committed to the choice" (p. 246). Or put differently, "RJPs cause applicants to feel greater commitment to the decision to accept the job which leads to more positive attitudes and lower probability of turnover" (Reilly et al., 1981, p. 828).

---

<sup>1</sup> A meta-analysis is a statistical practice of combining the results of a number of studies that address a set of related research hypotheses. Analyzing the results from a group of studies can allow more accurate estimation of effects.

### **3C.4.1.2 Coping**

Secondly, RJPs may reduce dissatisfaction and turnover by improving a new employee's ability to cope with job demands. "If employees are made aware of problems to be faced on the job, they cope with such problems better when they arise, either because they are less disturbed by the problems about which they have been forewarned or because they may pre-rehearse methods of handling these problems" (Dugoni and Ilgen, 1981, p. 828). In a related vein, RJPs may encourage individuals to change the importance they attach to certain job attributes (Locke, 1976), cause individuals to worry about the particularly noxious aspects of the job (i.e., 'work of worry' hypothesis, Janis, 1958), or reduce role ambiguity (i.e., 'reduction of ambiguity' hypothesis, Horner, Mobley and Meglino, 1979), and, therefore, decrease turnover (Fisher and Gitelson, 1983). Suszko and Breugh (1986) found evidence for the coping hypothesis. They asked employees the degree to which they were upset by four commonly occurring stress-provoking situations, generated by job incumbents during the RJP development phase (e.g., "You were assigned to count an area that was disorganized and messy," "other employees were not very friendly; some may even have teased you about being a rookie"). In addition, they were asked the extent to which they handled the situations well. The results showed that RJP recipients were consistently less upset by stressful job demands and felt that they handled them better. However, others (Meglino et al., 1988; Premack and Wanous, 1985) were unable to find support for the presence of coping mechanisms.

### **3C.4.1.3 Trust and Honesty**

RJP as a form of communication is assumed to transmit an underlying meta-message of trustworthiness, honesty and care (Schein, 1968; Wanous, 1977). Applicants may, therefore, have a more positive view on future interactions and communications with the organization (Dugoni and Ilgen, 1981). Evidence for the honesty hypothesis has been found by several authors (e.g., Suszko and Breugh, 1986; Meglino, DeNisi, and Ravlin, 1993; Meglino et al., 1988). Suszko and Breugh (1986) randomly assigned 28 individuals, who applied for the position of inventory taker, to either the experimental (RJP) or the control (no RJP) condition. Those in the RJP group received a written and oral RJP. Those in the control group did not. Results showed that the experimental group perceived the organization as being more open and honest with them than applicants who did not receive RJPs. Meglino et al. (1988) used a longitudinal experimental design involving 533 U.S. Army trainees to evaluate the effects of two different types of RJPs: one designed to reduce overly optimistic expectations (called by the authors a reduction preview), and one constructed to enhance overly pessimistic expectations (called an enhancement preview). It was found that applicants exposed to either a combined enhancement or reduction preview or a reduction preview alone saw the organization as more honest and trustworthy. Meglino et al. (1993) assigned 1,117 correction officer (prison guard) applicants randomly to two groups. One group was not given a realistic job preview. The other group saw a 22-minute videotaped realistic preview that contained accurate positive and negative job information. They found that RJP recipients perceived the organization as more honest, trustworthy and caring. Although the authors did not find an overall effect of RJPs on retention, the results showed that those with previous job exposure were less likely to quit during a probationary period (but more likely to quit thereafter).

### **3C.4.1.4 Self-Selection**

RJPs are thought to screen out individuals whose needs are incompatible with the demands of the job or the culture of the organization (Wanous, 1973; 1980). Applicants provided with realistic information will be better able to make a more informed choice about whether or not to accept an offer of employment. They will be better able to decide whether the job is consistent with their preferences and needs, "and those applicants who find the context described by the realistic preview to be unacceptable will self-select out of the process" (the 'self-selection' effect, Wanous and Colella, 1989). There is substantial evidence for the self-selection

mechanism in that exposition to RJPs is found to be associated with higher job rejection rates (Meglino et al., 1988; Premack and Wanous, 1985; Suszko and Breugh, 1986; Wiesner, Saks and Summers, 1991). For that matter, RJPs are often criticized: attraction, and particularly pre-entry attraction, would decrease when negative information about the organization is revealed. However, a meta-analysis by Phillips (1998) found an average correlation of  $-.03$  between RJPs and applicant withdrawal from the selection process. Due to the large number of subjects involved, this correlation was statistically significant. However, it is reasonable to conclude that this correlation rather indicates the absence of a relationship than the opposite (Rynes and Cable, 2003). In addition, Highhouse, Stanton and Reeve (2004), studying individuals' online reactions to simulated computer-based recruitment messages, found that negative information about prospective companies was discounted more than positive information. Based on these findings, the authors suggested that negative information in recruitment messages "may not be as harmful to attraction as some have suggested" (p. 94), and that the potential adverse impact of negative information is cancelled out by the positive information included in the message.

Furthermore, several studies have found that the effects of RJPs on job acceptance may depend on applicants' prior work experiences and their job alternatives. Meglino et al. (1993) found that applicants *with prior job exposure* are likely to overemphasize negative job information, resulting in *reduced job acceptances*. On the other hand, those *without prior job exposure* are likely to show *increased job acceptances*. Meglino, Ravlin and DeNisi (1997) concluded that for organizations whose applicant pool consists mainly of persons without prior job exposure, realistic job descriptions should be highly appropriate. According to the authors, in addition to providing information about the job, RJP can be considered as a recruiting device in circumstances where applicants have had no prior job exposure, since it tends to increase the rate of job acceptance for such applicants. They believe that:

"Perhaps this is one reason that the U.S. military has actively supported motion pictures about war even when they contain particularly noxious images. Since potential recruits are unlikely to have had direct wartime experience, the negative images are not likely to overwhelm the more glorious depictions contained in such films. It's not surprising that such motion pictures have historically tended to increase enlistments in the armed forces." (p. 419).

In addition, several studies have found that the effects of RJPs on job acceptance depend on job alternatives. More specifically, it has been found that RJPs are most likely to result in lower job acceptance rates when subjects have a job alternative presented to them via a traditional job preview (Saks, Wiesner and Summers, 1994; Wiesner et al., 1991).

In a related vein, Rynes and Barber (1990) argued that the effects of RJPs are likely to be not independent of job and organizational characteristics. As a test of this hypothesis, Saks, Wiesner and Summers (1996) conducted a laboratory study in which subjects were asked to choose between a job described by an RJP and a job described by a traditional (i.e., all positive) job preview (TJP). The conditions varied by the compensation policy of the jobs presented in the job previews (high versus average). Results indicated that subjects preferred the TJP when compensation levels were higher than or equal to compensation levels associated with the RJP. When the RJP job offered higher compensation than the TJP no differences in attraction were observed. These results suggest that the effects of RJPs on applicant attraction and job choice might depend on the compensation of the job and other job attributes.

Bretz and Judge (1998) examined whether self-selection based on job expectation information may be adverse from the organization's perspective. That is, whether the best qualified applicants are most likely to self-select out when presented with negative information about the organization. The results of this study yielded mixed

support for the adverse self-selection hypothesis. That is, high quality applicants placed more weight on negative information than lower quality applicants. Ryan, Sacco, McFarland and Kriska (2000) found that applicants who dropped out the selection process for police officers tended to have less commitment to law enforcement, suggesting that self-selection was rather beneficial from the organization's standpoint. Yet, they concluded "we need better means of assessing whether self-selection is adverse, both from the organizational and the individual perspective" (p. 177).

### **3C.4.1.5 Met Expectations**

Last, but certainly not least, RJPs are thought to reduce overly optimistic expectations to levels more consistent with actual work conditions (i.e., the 'inoculation' or 'vaccination' hypothesis, Wanous, 1977; 'met expectations' hypothesis, Porter and Steers, 1973). That is, individuals whose expectations are met will be more satisfied with the job and therefore less likely to voluntarily leave it (Wanous, 1980). Newcomers whose pre-hire expectations are met are more likely to remain on the job, while newcomers whose expectations are not met are likely to be dissatisfied with their job and eventually to leave it (Barber, 1998). Porter and Steers (1973) used the met expectations mechanism as the core of their turnover model. According to these authors:

"The concept of met expectations may be viewed as the discrepancy between what a person encounters on the job in the way of positive and negative experiences and what he expected to encounter. Thus, since different employees can have quite different expectations with respect to payoffs or rewards in a given organizational or work situation, it would not be anticipated that a given variable (e.g., high pay, unfriendly work challenges, etc.) would have a uniform impact on withdrawal decisions. We would predict, however, that when an individual's expectations, whatever they are, are not substantially met, his propensity to withdraw would increase." (p. 152).

Of all possible rationales for RJPs, the met expectations hypothesis has been examined the most thoroughly (Griffeth, Hom, Fink and Cohen, 1997). Substantial meta-analytical support has been found in favor of this hypothesis, suggesting that RJPs are able to lower pre-entry expectations (McEvoy and Cascio, 1985; Premack and Wanous, 1985; Reilly et al., 1981; Wanous et al., 1992). Despite this extensive support in favor of the met expectations, some authors have thrown doubt on these findings. Drawing on the work of Edwards and his colleagues (Edwards, 1994; Edwards, 2002; Edwards and Parry, 1993), Irving and Meyer (1994; 1995; 1999), argued that most RJP research was done in a methodologically flawed way. More specifically, the use of difference scores and direct measures of met expectations has been heavily fired at, which has led some scholars (Hom, Griffeth, Palich and Bracker, 1999; Irving and Meyer, 1995) to conclude that the results of studies using these flawed measures are misleading and that "using RJPs to lower expectations in an attempt to ensure that pre-expectations are met may be an inappropriate strategy for improving work attitudes and reducing turnover" (Irving and Meyer, 1995, p. 1172). In a related vein, Hom et al. (1999) concluded that "RJP scholars should focus on other mediation theories rather than expectation fulfilment to elucidate how RJPs work" (p. 107). In fact, studies on met expectations (Colella, DeNisi and Wanous, 1994; Irving and Meyer, 1994) using polynomial regression analysis suggest that organizations would be better advised to focus on positive work experiences as a means of minimizing turnover. This criticism is by no means meant to be a deathblow for RJPs. It is sufficiently demonstrated that RJPs have a positive – albeit small – effect on post-hire outcomes, but apparently "these effects are achieved through mechanisms other than reduced expectations" (Irving and Meyer, 1995, p. 1173).

### **3C.4.2 The Role of Context, Timing, and Method of Presentation**

Through a meta-analytic study, Phillips (1998) investigated whether setting (field versus laboratory studies), timing (RJPs presented before versus after hiring) and method of presentation (verbal, written or videotaped

RJP) moderated the effects of RJP on various outcome variables, such as attrition from the recruitment process, level and accuracy of initial expectations, affective reactions (e.g., organizational commitment), performance, and turnover. He found moderating effects for most outcome variables. For example, a negative effect of RJP on voluntary turnover was found in the field ( $r = -.09$ ), but not in the lab ( $r = -.01$ ), suggesting that RJP processes may differ depending on the setting (in laboratory settings, subject know they will only be “employed” for a short time, regardless of whether or not they wish to continue working on a task) and that turnover may be best studied in the field, where relevant RJP processes are operating. Voluntary turnover was reduced when a verbal RJP ( $r = -.15$ ) or a written RJP ( $r = -.05$ ) had been administered. Videotaped RJP, on the other hand, were unrelated to voluntary turnover ( $r = .00$ ). Apparently, “RJP information presented via a two-way communication process (i.e., verbally) facilitates applicant attention and comprehension better than RJP information presented via one-way communications like brochures or videotapes” (Phillips, 1998, p. 685). Interesting are Phillips’ findings with regard to RJP timing. He found that RJP presented very early in the application process were unrelated to voluntary turnover ( $r = .02$ ), whereas RJP presented just before hiring ( $r = -.09$ ) and after hiring ( $r = -.07$ ) were negatively related to voluntary turnover. The results were somewhat different for all turnovers (leaving the organization for any reason): RJP given just before hiring were found to be related to reduced turnover ( $r = -.08$ ), as were post-hire RJP ( $r = -.03$ ) and RJP presented very early in the recruitment process ( $r = -.05$ ). These (and other) results indicate that RJP may operate differently depending on when in the hiring process information is presented.

### **3C.4.3 Realistic Information Sources**

One of the first decisions hiring organizations are facing is what channels or sources to use to reach the target group. Traditionally, research on job information sources has drawn a distinction between formal and informal recruitment sources. The former involves the use of formal intermediaries such as placement offices, and recruitment advertisements, whereas the latter does not involve the use of formal intermediaries (e.g., friends and relatives) (Saks and Ashforth, 1997).

Wanous (1992) distinguished three groups of recruitment sources: *internal* (‘inside’) recruitment sources, *external* (‘outside’) recruitment sources and *walk-ins* (‘unsolicited applications’ or ‘direct applications’). Internal recruitment sources contain internal information about the organization available to applicants before they enter the organization (e.g., referrals, rehires, internships, in-house notices), whereas external sources (e.g., job advertisements, employment agencies, executive search firms) typically do not contain such inside information. There exists no clear evidence on the kind of information walk-ins have before entering the organization (Moser, 2005).

More recently, Cable and Turban (2001) conceptualized the various informational sources along two dimensions: an internal-external dimension, and an experiential-informational dimension. Internal sources (e.g., recruitment advertising) are largely under the control of the organization and are used to disseminate recruitment-related information to potential applicants, whereas external sources (e.g., word-of-mouth, publicity) are not under the direct control of the organization and generate information that is available to the general public. Experiential sources (e.g., interviews) require applicants to personally experience some aspect of the organization to obtain information, whereas informational sources include media coverage, advertisements, and annual reports that contain ‘pre-processed’ information.

Barber (1998) gave the following overview of the various recruitment sources: “Traditional sources include employee referrals, employment agencies (including campus placement offices and executive search firms), newspaper or radio advertisements, and unsolicited applications or ‘walk-ins’. More recently, organizations have turned to alternative sources, such as on-line (internet) hiring services, job fairs, and competitors’

layoffs/outsourcing programs as means of identifying candidates (Glickstein and Ramer, 1988)” (p. 22). The military usually makes use of (formal) recruiting centres to inform job seekers about organizational characteristics and job opportunities.

Research on recruitment sources has primarily focused on the effects of different sources on various post-hire outcomes, such as job satisfaction, job performance, and most important to our discourse, turnover. Interestingly, little is known about the relationship between recruitment sources and more proximal recruitment outcomes, such as the identification and attraction of applicants (Barber, 1998). The majority of studies (e.g., Kirnan, Farley and Geisinger, 1989; Saks, 1994) have found that applicants who were recruited through informal recruitment sources tend to have higher job survival rates than applicants hired through formal sources. This led Saks (2005) to conclude that organizations should “use informal sources of recruitment such as employee referrals, direct applications, as well as rehires to recruit employees rather than formal sources (i.e., newspaper advertisements and employment agencies)” (p. 53).

Two prime hypotheses have been offered to explain the differences in post-hire outcomes, in particular, tenure of employees recruited from different sources: the ‘realistic information’ hypothesis and the “individual differences” hypothesis. The realistic information hypothesis stems from Wanous’ (1978; 1980) work on RJPs. It proposes that informal recruitment sources provide more accurate and more specific job information to applicants than do formal sources, “thus leading to greater role clarity, more realistic expectations, and better adjustment to the new job, which in turn would lead to better attitudes, performance, and greater longevity” (Barber, 1998, p. 23). According to the individual differences (or pre-screening) hypothesis, formulated by Schwab (1982), different sources attract applicants with differing qualifications and other outcome-related attributes. This means that recruitment sources might differ in the kind of applicants they reach, and that these differences in applicants might result in different post-hire outcomes, such as job tenure (Barber, 1998; Rynes and Cable, 2003). For example (from Taylor and Schmidt, 1983, p. 345), a recruitment advertisement aired only on daytime television would be expected to reach a different group of people than would a radio advertisement broadcast during heavy commuting hours. Previous research primarily focused on demographic differences (e.g., age, location, and educational level), leaving personality and motivational constructs largely untouched despite their theoretical importance (Buyens, De Witte and Martens, 2001).

Consistent with these two hypotheses, several studies have indeed shown that different recruitment sources generate applicants with different individual characteristics, job-related information, or both (Blau, 1990; Griffeth et al., 1997; Kirnan et al., 1989; Werbel and Landau, 1996; Williams, Labig and Stone, 1993). However, direct tests of the mediating effect of realism and individual differences are less conclusive. Some studies (e.g., Werbel and Landau, 1996; Williams et al., 1993) failed to find mediation, whereas others (Griffeth et al., 1997) only found partial mediation. These findings led several authors to conclude that future research should include a broader range of potential mediators, such as personality and motivational constructs (Blau, 1990; Griffeth et al., 1997; Wanous and Colella, 1989; Williams et al., 1993). Several scholars (e.g., Barber, 1998; Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Rynes, 1991; Werbel and Landau, 1996; Williams et al., 1993) have suggested that future research on recruitment sources should also place more emphasis on pre-hire outcomes (e.g., applicant number and quality) instead of focusing solely on post-hire outcomes.

#### **3C.4.4 Realistic Job Preview versus Newcomer Orientation**

Realistic information administered after job offer acceptance strictly speaking is a different construct from a realistic job preview since job candidates no longer have the possibility to self-select out of the application process. RJP information administered after acceptance is therefore better termed “realistic socialization” (Meglino and DeNisi, 1987; Miceli, 1983; Wanous, 1978; Wanous, 1980; Wanous and Colella, 1989).

Realistic information is often presented as part of newcomer orientation programs (Wanous, 1993). Newcomer orientation programs are designed for people who have just entered a new organization. With regard to time, “orientation programs should probably be thought of as occurring during the first week of formal employment, preferably the first day” (Wanous, 1993, p. 127). The main objective of these programs is to help newcomers cope with the stress of organizational entry (by presenting realistic information among other things; see *coping hypothesis*).

Newcomer orientation programs differ from RJPs in two ways. Firstly, as already mentioned, whereas in RJPs the emphasis is on self-selection (i.e., encouraging applicants to withdraw from the application and selection process), orientation programs are focused on helping newcomers cope with the organizational entry *transition* (Wanous, 1993; for more information on transition, see topic chapter *Transition*). Secondly, whereas RJPs are solely designed to increase job survival, orientation programs are concerned with increasing both job survival *and* performance. Several studies (Githens and Zalinski, 1983; Horner et al., 1979; Meglino et al., 1988; Novaco, Cook and Sarason, 1983), all of them conducted in the military, were able to directly compare the effects of RJPs and newcomer orientation programs. The results of these studies suggest that newcomer orientation programs produce more self-efficacy (Novaco et al., 1983), and somewhat lower attrition (Githens and Zalinski, 1983; Meglino et al., 1988) than RJPs.

### **3C.4.5 Alternatives to Realistic Job Previews**

As mentioned above, RJPs are often criticized on the assumption that pre-entry attraction decreases with the disclosure of drawbacks. Ganzach et al. (2002) proposed decision-making training (DMT) as an alternative to the RJP. “DMT is a form of training that teaches candidates how to use a balance sheet in order to identify and weigh positive and negative outcomes of a set of alternatives (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Janis and Mann, 1977)” (p. 615). According to Ganzach et al., DMT transmits an essentially similar meta-message of care and concern as that of RJP, that is, that “the organization expends effort so that candidates will independently and competently make decisions that are good for them (even if it is not ‘good’ for the organization, such as when the candidate refuses to accept a job that the organization would like to staff)” (p. 615). In their research, Ganzach et al. designed a workshop in decision making to teach applicants how to make compensatory decisions. At the end of the workshop, participants were advised to use the trained principles in their decision concerning their preference for military service. The group receiving DMT was compared to a group receiving RJP and to three control groups. The results showed that pre-entry commitment was higher among participants in the experimental groups. Yet, the effect of DMT lasted longer than the effect of RJP, suggesting that DMT is a viable alternative to RJP.

Buckley, Fedor, Veres, Wiese and Carrahar (1998) developed an expectation-lowering procedure (ELP) with the purpose of directly targeting applicants’ expectations without job-specific details. Contrary to the RJP, the ELP is a non-job specific procedure that may be useful for a wide array of job situations and that may offer an alternate route to facilitating positive organizational outcomes early in the hiring process. Buckley et al. (2002) further compared a group receiving ELP to a group receiving RJP, a group receiving RJP and ELP, and a control group. The ELP consisted of information that emphasized the importance of appropriate expectations when entering any new job. Applicants for a telemarketing entry-level position were told about the *psychological contract* and the high likelihood of developing unrealistic expectations prior to organizational entry. They were told that unrealistic expectations many times result in decreased organizational satisfaction, resulting in newcomers leaving the organization after a very short period. They were further told a fictional story to illustrate the potential negative effects of unrealistically high expectations. The results showed that participants in the experimental conditions (ELP, RJP, ELP and RJP) reported significantly lower expectations than did the control group. Yet, only participants who received both

an ELP *and* an RJP had longer tenure in terms of number of days worked. There was no significant difference in number of days worked between the control group and the RJP group.

### **3C.4.6 Realistic Job Previews: Conclusions**

Research has repeatedly demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between unrealistic information and employee turnover. Several mediating mechanisms have been suggested to explain this relationship. The most popular among these theoretical rationales is the (un)met expectations theory, suggesting that inflated job expectations lead to dissatisfaction with the job, low commitment and job performance, and ultimately to turnover. To some extent, RJPs succeed in lowering inflated expectations, yet meta-analytical studies showed that the correlation between RJPs and turnover is only modest. Furthermore, the interpretation of this relationship is complicated by the methodological weaknesses many RJP studies suffer from.

RJPs tend to vary considerably vis-à-vis context, timing, and method of presentation. In addition, one of the main problems in RJP research is that the RJP construct may differ substantially from one study to another in the amount of and type of negative information (Highhouse and Hoffman, 2001). In view of this lack of standardization in administering RJPs, Breaugh and Starke (2000) suggested to think of RJPs not as a single event, but as a process of providing accurate information at several points during the recruitment process. For example, the military could begin to convey realistic information with its job advertisements. More realistic information could be provided by career counsellors working in the military career offices/recruitment centers. During the selection process, interviewers could probe whether applicants' job expectations are in line with reality and set them right if necessary. Work samples, situational judgment tests, and assessment center exercises could be used to inform applicants about their future job. Additional information could be communicated to eligible applicants through tailored-made (e.g., entry-based) information sessions or during site visits after the final selection hurdle. In sum, the communication of realistic information goes beyond the use of RJPs. The informational value of recruitment and selection practices other than RJPs will be discussed next.

## **3C.5 THE INFORMATIONAL VALUE OF HIRING PROCEDURES**

Imagine the following situation: You are determined to apply for the military. This is what you dreamt of from childhood on. Therefore, you decide to visit the local career office to get more information on career prospects in the military. When you arrive at the office, you discover that it is closed because 'the personnel went on excursion'. Disappointed but forgivingly ("excursions are necessary to stimulate the work force"), you decide to come back later. The following visit, one week after your first attempt, turns out to be a concatenation of surprises: you have to wait more than fifteen minutes before someone serves you, although there are no other candidates in the office; you are requested to complete a whole lot of forms, which all look alike; the information you receive is impersonal and seems to be part of a 'standard package'; the counselor pushes you to apply for infantryman, whereas you give preference to engineering; and when you finally agree with his offer (although you are still sitting on the fence), he unashamedly tells you to wait until the selection will take place ... about two months later – but since the military is your childhood dream, you patiently endure this delay, concluding that sufferings are warranted to become a genuine soldier. At the selection center, three months later, the circumstances are even worse: you hear the personnel passing racist comments on allochthonous applicants; the computer infrastructure is prehistoric; the interviewer asks very personal questions that you feel are irrelevant to the job; feedback on your performance is completely lacking; and again, you are requested to wait several weeks before you will get notice on the selection outcome. Meanwhile, you seize the opportunity to reflect on the military hiring process. Based on your experiences,

you conclude that the military is not as innovative as you had expected, that it is very bureaucratic and cumbersome, that the personnel lacks training and motivation, and last but not least, that you prefer another employer after all.

Admittedly, the above description is oversimplified. It is very unlikely that all experiences someone encounters are negative. Moreover, I could have portrayed the organization as pioneering, flexible, and competent as well, thereby communicating the same underlying message. This message is that recruitment is a series of activities; any one of which is a potential source of information and can affect applicants' pre- and post-hire attitudes, intentions and behaviors toward the organization. In the following, I will present the three most important theoretical frameworks explaining this relationship: signalling theory, socialization theory, and organizational justice theory.

### **3C.5.1 Recruitment and Selection as Organizational Signals**

In the absence of other information about the organization, applicants interpret information they receive in the course of the recruitment process as 'signals' about what it would like to be employed by the organization (Turban, 2001). This assumption stems from propositions from signalling theory (Spence, 1973; Spence, 1974). Spence developed the signalling theory by applying it to the labor market. Specifically, his theory developed on the problems that employers face in the recruitment process, given that they have no prior information about people's skill-sets. His theory states that high productivity people will seek more education than low-productivity people. This will prompt employers to take higher education as a signal, and offer higher salaries to such employees. Similarly, prospects and applicants will make inferences about the organization from various aspects of the hiring process if the information is not clearly provided by the organization (Behling, Labovitz and Gainer, 1968). For example, it is suggested that *recruiter characteristics* (warmth, informativeness, competence) influence applicant attraction through influencing applicants' perceptions of job and organizational attributes (Turban, Forret and Hendrickson, 1998). Similarly, *the timing of recruitment activities* may influence applicants' job pursuit through influencing their perceptions of the job and organization (Arvey, Gordon and Massengill, 1975; Rynes, Bretz and Gerhart, 1991). Turban and his colleagues (Turban, 2001; Turban, Campion and Eyring, 1995; Turban et al., 1998) provided support for the signaling theory by demonstrating that the relationship between recruiters/recruitment activities and applicant attraction is mediated by characteristics of the job and organization. There is also some evidence that the effect of navigational ease or usability of *company Web sites* on applicant attraction is mediated through prospects' perceptions of the organization (Braddy, Thompson, Wuensch and Grossnickle, 2003). As Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005) recently noted, signaling theory has the potential to explain the role of a large number of variables in attraction, "as virtually any characteristic observable can serve as a signal of actual organizational characteristics and can shape perceived organizational characteristics" (p. 904). The downside is that it cannot predict which recruitment characteristics are the most important at particular stages of the attraction process.

### **3C.5.2 Recruitment and Selection as Socialization**

Traditionally, selection methods have been considered as neutral predictors of applicant suitability and subsequent job role performance ('psychometric perspective', Borman, 2001; Guion, 1998; Schmidt, Ones, and Hunter, 1992). Obviously, selection methods do act as predictors, but at the same time they are much more than that. Anderson (2001) suggested that selection methods can have a 'socialization impact', indicating that selection methods may facilitate or impede the integration of employees into the organization. Anderson further assumes that the impact of selection procedures is measurable in five domains:

- 1) First – Similar to signaling theory, a fundamental postulate of the socialization perspective is that organizations, often unintentionally, convey information to applicants through their recruitment and

selection practices (*'information provision'*). For example, in situational interviews applicants are presented a preview of the actual work environment that may influence unconsciously their attitudes/intentions toward the job and organization.

- 2) Second – Not all selection practices are equally liked by applicants (*'preference impact'*). Anderson suggested that the use of unpopular selection methods (e.g., drug testing, the stress interview) can result in an overall negative affective reaction to the organization, even when the applicant has accepted a job offer from the organization.
- 3) Third – Selection methods create expectations on a variety of issues, such as expectations of the organizational culture and climate, the future job role, and promotion opportunities (*'expectational impact'*). These expectations represent the cornerstones on which the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995) is built. A violation of the expectations implied by the psychological contract is likely to result in negative attitudes and behavior to the organization (see *The psychological contract: A big deal!*), similar to the effects of unrealistic recruitment information on employee turnover.
- 4) Fourth – Selection methods can influence applicants' attitudes and beliefs (*'attitudinal impact'*). For example, Macan et al. (1994) examined the influence of manufacturing applicants' perceptions of an assessment center on their attitudes and intentions toward the hiring organization. They found that applicants' perceptions were significantly related to job acceptance intentions, even after controlling for applicants' pre-test attitudes toward the organization.
- 5) Fifth – Anderson argued that selection methods have the potential to elicit desirable pre- and post-entry behaviors (*'behavioral impact'*). For example, in a multiple hurdle selection process for the military applicants may learn very quickly that pro-social behaviors are rewarded and anti-social behaviors are penalized. Anderson hypothesized that these 'lessons learned' may also have an impact on applicants' initial post-entry behaviors.

### **3C.5.3 Recruitment and Selection from an Organizational Justice Perspective**

Gilliland (1993) developed a justice model of applicants' reactions to selection methods. According to the model, applicants' perceptions of the selection *process fairness* (i.e., procedural justice) and *outcome fairness* (i.e., distributive justice) are significantly related to applicants' self-perceptions (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy) and several important pre- and post-hire outcomes (e.g., test motivation, recommendation intentions, job acceptance, turnover). Fairness reactions result from the satisfaction or violation of *justice rules*. Based on earlier applicant reaction models (Arvey and Sackett, 1993; Iles and Robertson, 1989; Schuler, 1993), Gilliland put forward 10 procedural justice rules, which are related to formal characteristics of the selection (e.g., job relatedness, opportunity to perform), information offered during selection (e.g., feedback, honesty), and interpersonal treatment (e.g., propriety of questions, two-way communication). Several studies (e.g., Bauer, Maertz, Dolen and Campion, 1998; Ployhart and Ryan, 1997) provided support for Gilliland's model, and more recent models of applicant reactions (Chambers, 2002; Hausknecht, Day and Thomas, 2004; Ryan and Ployhart, 2000) continue borrowing from his framework. Up to my knowledge, until now only selection practices have been studied from an organizational justice perspective. Therefore, an interesting avenue for future research may consist in applying the justice perspective to *recruitment* practices.

From these three theoretical frameworks, it is apparent that recruitment and selection procedures may influence applicants' subsequent pre- and post-entry expectations, attitudes, intentions, and behavior through the information they convey. All hiring procedures carry information and therefore have the potential to affect how applicants will relate to the organization, even after hiring.

### **3C.6 RELATIONSHIP TO THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION MODEL**

This chapter heavily focuses on the recruitment model's (see "A proposed model of military recruitment") 'informational sources' variable. RJPs and other hiring practices carry information on the characteristics of the organization (e.g., culture, values) that will influence (potential) applicants' decision to continue to pursue employment. Surprisingly, most recruitment source and RJP research has focused on *post-hire* consequences, including job satisfaction, commitment, performance, and turnover. However, recently there has been a shift in attention toward more immediate (proximal) recruitment outcomes, acting upon calls from several recruitment scholars (e.g., Barber, 1998; Rynes, 1991). Rynes (1991) argued that "we need to accord the immediate objective of recruitment – applicant attraction – higher priority" (p. 435). Barber (1998) stated that "given the tendency to focus on longer-term outcomes in the existing literature, redirection of research in the direction of attraction might be needed to develop a more balanced knowledge base" (p. 150).

The post-hire consequences of inflated expectations (resulting from misinformation) are portrayed in the turnover model (see "A proposed model of military turnover"). Unmet expectations lead to a violation of the *psychological contract* and to perceived *procedural and/or distributive injustice*. Breach and injustice perceptions are likely to influence job satisfaction and commitment through quality of life perceptions. Future studies could examine whether quality of life perceptions also influence more affective-emotional variables, such as burnout and work engagement (Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker and Lloret, 2006), in addition to more attitudinal-cognitive variables, such as job satisfaction and commitment.

### **3C.7 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

In the following section some practical recommendations are put forward. All recommendations are listed in Table 3C-1.

**Table 3C-1: Practical Recommendations**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>What the research says</b>	<b>Practical explanation of the research</b>	<b>Recommendation(s) to address the issue</b>
<b>RJPs</b>	<p>(1) RJPs have a small but significant positive effect on employee retention</p> <p>(2) RJPs are beneficial in terms of cost-savings</p>	By presenting positive and negative information the dropout rate will decrease	<p>Install RJPs</p> <p>Do not think of RJPs as a single event, but as a process of providing accurate information at several points during the hiring process</p>
<b>How?</b>	(3) RJP effects are mediated through the knowledge structure applicants develop from RJP exposure	In order to be effective, RJPs must at least have the capacity to allow recipients to comprehend and retain the message	The method of communication should be geared to the applicant population: use audio-visual and oral-interview RJPs instead of written booklets and brochures
<b>Who?</b>	(4) Information from credible sources is processed ‘centrally’ (as opposed to ‘peripherally’)	Applicants will pay more attention to the content of the recruitment message if it is communicated through credible sources	Use testimonials from current job incumbents to transmit the message
<b>When?</b>	(5) Effort expenditure builds commitment	Early self-selection results in reduced selection costs and a highly committed applicant pool	Present the RJP early in the hiring process
<b>Expectations</b>	(6) The relationship between RJP and turnover is mediated by (un)met expectations	RJPs succeed in lowering applicants’ inflated/unrealistic expectations. When employees’ expectations are met, they are less likely to voluntarily leave the organization	<p>Try to uncover motivators or reasons that individuals have for joining the organization, for example by using work value and job expectation questionnaires</p> <p>Update the information that is communicated to potential applicants</p> <p>Involve jobholders in fine-tuning and updating the recruitment materials</p> <p>Examine the views of current employees to get an indication of the ‘internal image’ of the organization</p>

**REALISTIC INFORMATION OR NOT!  
SHORT-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF (MIS)INFORMATION**



<b>Topic</b>	<b>What the research says</b>	<b>Practical explanation of the research</b>	<b>Recommendation(s) to address the issue</b>
<b>Other reasons</b>	(7) Most variance in turnover behavior cannot be explained by RJPs	Employees leave organizations for a variety of reasons, most of which are not related to unrealistic information	Use exit-interviews and exit-surveys to uncover the reasons why people leave
<b>Time delays</b>	(8) Time delays are positively related to applicant withdrawal from the hiring process	Applicants who are facing long time delays between selection hurdles are more likely to withdraw from the process	Avoid time gaps in between selection hurdles as much as possible  Try to maintain contact with applicants throughout the process
<b>Orientation</b>	(9) Newcomer orientation programs are positively related with self-efficacy and negatively with early turnover	Orientation programs can help newcomers cope with stress associated with organizational entry and result in reduced turnover	Organize newcomer orientation programs to facilitate the transition from civilian to military
<b>Selection</b>	(10) Selection methods implicitly convey information about the organization's values and culture	Applicants use selection methods to derive information on how it would be to work in that organization	Use work samples, situational judgment tests, and assessment centers to inform applicants about their future jobs

Based on the above review of the RJP literature, there can be little doubt that RJPs are associated with consistent (but small) increases in employee retention. We have also seen that despite the small increases, organizations may benefit from installing RJPs in terms of cost-savings. Finally, I recall that the RJP construct can vary heavily from one study to another, and that the RJP effect sizes are likely to vary accordingly. Therefore, practical questions may arise as how and when to install an RJP.

For example, which medium should be used, written or audio-visual? Saks and Cronshaw (1990) found that RJP effects are mediated through the knowledge structure applicants develop from RJP exposure. An important implication is that in order to be effective RJPs must at least have the capacity to allow recipients to comprehend and retain the message. Therefore, the method of communication should be geared to the applicant population. For example, “if the recipients of an RJP do not have at least a high school reading level then an audio-visual or oral-interview RJP might be more effective than a written RJP” (Saks and Cronshaw, 1990, p. 234). Phillips (1998) found that RJPs presented via a two-way communication facilitated applicant attention and comprehension even better than audio-visual RJPs. Therefore, I would recommend the military to make use of audio-visual and oral-interview RJPs instead of using written booklets and brochures.

Second, who should present the (audio-visual) RJP message, job incumbents or others (actors or other company personnel)? Job incumbents are probably the most credible source of information because they have expertise, they can be trusted and they are similar to the auditor (Wanous, 1989). Cable and Turban (2001) hypothesized that job seekers are more motivated to process information ‘centrally’ (as opposed to ‘peripherally’, Petty and Cacioppo, 1981) when it stems from a credible source. Therefore, I recommend the military to use testimonials from current recruits. In addition, it is worthwhile investigating whether credibility can be gained by using testimonials from former recruits (‘dropouts’) or whether this has an inverse impact.

Third, should the RJP be presented early or late in the organizational entry process? Both options have advantages and disadvantages. On one hand, presenting the RJP late is probably cheaper because fewer eligible applicants remain in the process. Furthermore, top management will be more likely to approve this option because fewer people will be exposed to the negative information (Wanous, 1989). On the other hand, presenting the RJP early enables applicants to self-select out of the process. Early self-selection results in reduced selection costs since less personnel and material are needed to screen a smaller applicant pool. Moreover, those who continue to pursue employment will be more committed to the organization because they have already taken a selection hurdle. Based on this argumentation, Wanous recommended organizations to present the RJP early in the process.

Fourth, how much negative information should be included? The majority of RJPs contain a medium degree of negative information. Wanous (1980) argued that the RJP should reflect the job and the organizational climate, as uncovered by an organizational analysis conducted previous to the RJP development. Although no research evidence is available, Wanous (1989) assumed that a high degree of negative information is most likely to result in a dramatic increase of the self-selection rate and may be used as evidence of management’s negligence in a lawsuit. In contrast, a medium degree of negative information could increase an applicant’s ability to cope with newcomer stress. In line with Wanous, I therefore recommend the military to combine positive information with a medium degree of negative information concluded from job and organizational analyses.

The modest relationships between RJPs and employee turnover suggest that RJPs are not sufficient to prevent recruits from leaving. To foster a true understanding of why people leave, organizations should try to uncover motivators or reasons that individuals have for joining the organization as well (Baker and Jennings, 2000).

The use of work value questionnaires and other ‘motivational’ inventories may help the military to disclose the reasons that applicants are drawn to the military. Similarly, the military may want to consider surveying applicants’ job expectations early in the recruitment process. Not only will this reveal information on how the military is looked upon, but also it creates the opportunity to tone down inflated expectations by providing additional realistic information.

It is necessary to update the information that is communicated to potential applicants. As organizations and jobs are dynamic entities, recruitment information should evolve as well. To watch over the content and level of realism of the messages conveyed, I recommend the military to involve jobholders in fine-tuning and updating the recruitment materials. In a related vein, I advise the military to examine the views of current employees to get an indication of the ‘internal image’ of the organization. The internal image represents the pros and cons of the job/organization as experienced by actual jobholders and might be very useful to monitor recruitment activities. Finally, information gathered through exit-interviews and questionnaires can be included in the RJPs. Note that these recommendations can only be successfully implemented if there is efficient and prompt communication between the recruitment/HR departments and more ‘operational’ departments.

Hiring procedures may carry organizational information beyond what is explicitly mentioned through the recruitment message. For example, work samples; situational judgment tests and assessment centers may be very revealing in addition to the information provided by recruiters and recruitment materials. By using realistic selection methods unqualified applicants may decide to self-select out from the process after all. On the other hand, some characteristics of the selection procedure may unintentionally upset and discourage applicants from further pursuing a job. For example, several studies have found that applicants are more likely to drop out of the recruitment process when there are long time gaps between phases (Arvey et al., 1975; Rynes et al., 1991). It is advisable to minimize the time gap in between selection hurdles and to maintain contact with applicants throughout the process.

### **3C.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter described the various facets of information that might have an effect on turnover during military training. Numerous studies have examined the influence of information accuracy or realism on employee turnover, with mixed results. The majority of studies indicate that the combination of positive and realistic information (usually labelled ‘realistic job preview’, RJPs) has a small but significant positive effect on job survival. Several mediators of this relationship have been proposed, of which ‘met expectations’ is by far the most popular. Expectations that remain unmet would have an adverse impact on job satisfaction, commitment, job performance, and retention. RJPs would help to lower inflated/unrealistic job expectations. The unsound methodology used in many RJP studies have thrown doubt on the met expectation theory and several scholars looked for other mediators, such as freedom of choice, coping, trust and honesty, and self-selection. These rationales are not mutual exclusive and empirical evidence for most of these theories have been found. Research has also shown that the effect of RJPs on turnover varies according to the timing, context, and method of presentation. Other recruitment and selection techniques (e.g., work samples) contain information on job and organizational attributes as well. Applicants are likely to make inferences on organizational and job attributes based upon their experiences during recruitment and selection. This inferred information might (unintentionally) influence applicants’ decision to continue to pursue employment. Based upon the available research findings, recommendations for military recruitment/selection practitioners and policy makers were discussed.