

**PUTTING THE REAL BACK INTO REALISTIC JOB PREVIEW:
AN ANALYSIS OF REALISTIC JOB
PREVIEW METHOD AND FUNCTION**

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ABSTRACT

Realistic Job Previews (RJP's) have developed out of a requirement for some form of voluntary turnover intervention. Most of the literature examines the processes which mediate RJP effectiveness but has recently begun to investigate the contents of RJP's and the methods of presenting them. As much of the research has been characterised by inconsistent results, this study hypothesises that a closer examination of the methods of presenting RJP's will assist in clarifying some of the unresolved issues. Intensional Simulation (Roleplay) method is proposed as a more suitable format for RJP presentation than either brochure or audio-visual RJP's. Sixty stage one psychology students were placed in one of three preview groups: brochure, video or roleplay. After the presentation of the preview, subjects were required to complete a small test and questionnaire, and to participate in a short interview.

The roleplay method was found to be more realistic overall than the brochure format, contain a greater amount of information and be more personally relevant to the subjects. There was no support for the hypotheses suggesting that, compared to other methods, roleplay subjects would retain more information from the preview, make fewer job acceptance decisions and be more likely to change any decision to accept a job offer. These results are examined in light of previous RJP research and discussed in relation to the current employment climate in New Zealand. The limitations of this research are noted, along with a discussion of its practical implications.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There are many aspects of employee behaviour in the work place which still interest and intrigue us. What makes people choose certain careers over others and what determines how long they stay in each job are questions that have puzzled human resources and psychologists researchers for decades.

In direct relation to the second question, a focus has been placed on the job survival issue. Out of this examination, the idea of providing a job applicant with an overall view of the job that goes further than a simple job description, namely the Realistic Job Preview (RJP), was born. The basic concept of an RJP is quite simple. A job analysis of the advertised position is performed and extra information about organisational staff, practices and the task itself are added to this analysis, and then made available to the job candidate.

In practice, the evaluation of RJP's is not simple. There are a variety of issues that impact upon the RJP itself and numerous others that direct their attention to its function. What information to add to the preview is a question with high priority for many human resources practitioners. Once the preview is developed, how should it be communicated to the candidate? This is, of course, the objective of the exercise - to communicate information to a select group. Who that group should be is another issue.

Once issues such as these have been resolved, the preview must then be evaluated to see if it has retained any form of face validity. That is to say, has the

preview actually been realistic? What were the aims of the RJP intervention and have they been met? In the past, previews have been utilised to lower voluntary turnover, increase job satisfaction, increase job commitment and performance and to facilitate better intra-organisational communication (Breugh and Billings, 1988).

This research is designed to address some of these questions. In particular, three issues are focused on. Which method of RJP presentation allows the preview to be seen as realistic? What factors will impact upon the way a job preview is seen by job candidates? Are job previews actually of use in the current employment climate of New Zealand?

The literature that examines some of the issues raised above is reviewed in the following chapter. Chapter three outlines briefly some methodological considerations and provides a rationale for the current research. The fourth chapter describes the methods used to gather data while chapter five provides an account of the results. The final chapter discusses the research findings and their implications as well as limitations of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

From the moment the management team of an organisation perceives a requirement for recruitment of personnel until a new incumbent is in place, an overt matching process is in action. Traditionally, much of the literature dealing with recruitment practices has concentrated solely on activities which assist the organisation and its human resources staff to select the most appropriate applicant for the position in question, such as interview method and objective assessment.

Organisational research during the 1950's started to focus specifically on the job behaviour of new members of organisations. It was from a fresh examination of this critical recruitment period that several empirical studies began to show interest in the effects of specific job preview "treatments". Weitz (1956) was the first to use the phrase "Realistic Job Preview" to describe the information given systematically to new organisational entrants who were then compared with those entrants who had not received such information. Results from this research, and others like it, indicated that there was still much to know about the processes intervening between job preview realism and subsequent job survival.

The literature to be reviewed in this chapter will fall into two main sections. The first section will discuss the development of the Realistic Job Preview (RJP) research and attempt to place this within a theoretical framework, while the second section will briefly address methodological considerations with

respect to the concept of Intensional Simulation (Roleplaying).

For the purpose of clarity, the RJP literature has been divided into six main research areas. The first section refers to the "outcome" studies, that is, research that has been mainly concerned with the organisational outcomes from RJP interventions: turnover, job satisfaction, job performance, communication/recruitment. The second, and possibly most prolific area of study, is the literature concerned with the actual processes the RJP utilises to reach outcome goals, in short, "how RJP's work". Section three discusses the development of models that relate directly to these processes. The fourth section discusses the issue of what kind of information RJP's should contain and which target groups they are best directed at. The various methods of presenting a job preview are evaluated in the fifth section and a discussion of two meta-analytic studies comprise the final section of this review.

2.2 Research in RJP Outcomes

2.2.1 Turnover

According to Wanous (1973), RJP research should primarily be concerned with results that can be assessed in terms of subsequent lower turnover or job survival. The expectation which had been shared by most writers in the recruitment field was that any form of intervention would serve to increase the likelihood of new staff retention. Wanous' research therefore was one of the first to attempt to empirically identify the link between job previews and job survival. Drawing on the advice of authors such as Campbell (1971) and Gomersall and

Meyers (1966), who identified the requirement for preview research beyond the realm of training, Wanous (1973) presented telephone operators with either traditional job information or a realistic job preview. Disappointingly, the results of this first study demonstrated quite weak effects, which were nonetheless statistically significant.

Without reference to the Wanous (1973) study, Ilgen and Seely (1974) also attempted to establish a positive link between previews and a reduction in turnover by examining new cadets entering the United States Military Academy. Problems with fluctuating numbers in the control group appeared to plague this research and this feature may well have assisted to flatten the results which indicated a weak support for the turnover-reduction hypothesis.

Raphael (1975) and Wanous (1975) both took the opportunity to take stock of what RJP's were known to be able to achieve. Raphael (1975) reported several private insurance industry studies where RJP's had been utilised as interventions during training of new sales staff. He reported that this work, and the literature before it, indicated that job previews provide "an effective means" of increasing job survival rates. Wanous (1975 and 1977) reviewed his own research and that of others and indicated his assurance that RJP's would continue to show their worth in achieving the goal of reducing turnover.

Reilly, Tenopyr and Sperling (1979) and Schwab (1981) provided the first formal indications that turnover research could not continue to support the conclusions of Wanous. Reilly et al. (1979) presented previews to 325 new employees in various telephone companies and compared survival rates for each. The results demonstrated that the RJP intervention did not categorically reduce

turnover and the authors conclude that their research and that of others "complete a picture of inconsistency".

Schwab (1981), in his review of Wanous' (1980) book *Organisational Entry: Recruitment, Selection and Socialisation of Newcomers*, questions how the author can continue to describe the relation between RJP's and turnover as positive. Schwab noted that much of the literature is weak in its support of this relationship and to hope for much more may well be "wishful thinking".

Zaharia and Baumeister (1981) saw the results of Reilly et al. (1979) as little more than an exception to the rule and proceeded to employ videotaped RJP's in their research with 278 hospital technicians. They concluded that although the overall effects were small, the magnitude of the differences were generally consistent with those reported by others. Dugoni and Ilgen (1981) were also unable to demonstrate more than a small, albeit statistically significant, effect.

Further research over the last ten years has continued this trend of contradictory and inconclusive results. Krausz and Fox (1981) and McEvoy and Cascio (1985) have drawn similar conclusions to those of Reilly et al. (1979). Several researchers have reported a positive relationship between RJP's and lower turnover, but consistent with previous work, the effects have been weak (Avner, Guastello and Aderman, 1982; Caldwell and O'Reilly, 1985; Dean and Wanous, 1984).

A continuing theme in discussion of these weak effects has been a call to look at difficulties in the experimental procedures. The bulk of the turnover research is performed in field settings, and while this has contributed to improved external validity, changing group dynamics and subject number fluctuations appear

to have confounded the results of most repeated measures research. Reilly et al. (1979) also go as far as to state that subject numbers have been too low generally to demonstrate a significant effect.

2.2.2 Job Satisfaction

According to Lawler (1973), much research has attempted to discover what factors are related to job satisfaction, but the causal basis for these relationships have usually been ignored. Dugoni and Ilgen (1981) attempted to demonstrate that RJP's will produce higher levels of job satisfaction among those exposed to them. The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) was used to measure satisfaction in both the experimental and control groups, but after two months on the job, the two groups did not differ significantly in their overall levels of job satisfaction.

Krausz and Fox (1981) and Dean and Wanous (1984) were also unable to demonstrate a clear positive relationship between RJP's and job satisfaction. It is unclear, therefore, how a review of RJP literature by Premack and Wanous (1985) could state that RJP's can be of use in increasing subsequent job satisfaction.

2.2.3 Job Performance

It is curious that little research has focused on the possible relationship between job previews and subsequent measures of job performance, given the latter's importance to the employing organisation. Wanous (1978) presented one of the first accounts to discuss the impact of RJP's on performance. He noted that

no research up to that date had examined RJP's as a possible moderator of the ability-performance relationship.

Later, however, Dean and Wanous (1984) were unable to find any significant results linking the two, and several conclusions were drawn. Firstly, the RJP itself may not have contained sufficient task information and may well have focused mainly on career goal information. Secondly, and perhaps more intuitively, three weeks intensive on-the-job training prior to measuring performance may well have overwhelmed any possible effects due to an RJP booklet. It appears measuring performance is easier than isolating the causes of it.

2.2.4 Intra-Organisational Communication and Recruitment

Templer and Tolliver (1983) argued that in recruitment issues, especially that of affirmative action, the public sector personnel manager may face a dilemma: oversell management jobs to minority groups and run the risk of giving biased information; or accurately describe these jobs and face intense public pressure because an insufficient number of minorities express interest and few are employed. They suggested that

"the use of RJP's conceivably makes it possible to incorporate target groups into management hierarchies while reducing those casualties- that is target members who underestimate resistance, or overestimate the benefits of managerial jobs and are consequently forced out during the necessary re-education of traditional managerial groups" (p.214).

Schweiger and DeNisi (1991) advanced the role of RJP's even further in their examination of the impact of a realistic merger preview for employees of an organisation that had just announced a merger. The preview appeared to acquit itself well in this role and results indicated that dysfunctional outcomes of the merger were reduced. An interesting effect was also discovered; the effect of the preview continued over the duration of the study and in some areas, continued for a lengthy period of time. Significant preview effects were still able to be observed at some work units over six months after the intervention.

Although this new tangent in outcome research for RJP's is encouraging and interesting, it seems that while the basic outcome literature remains inconclusive, it is somewhat premature to "take as read" the effects of RJP applications. The literature on turnover is the most difficult to assess as it contains a great number of conflicting results. Whether turnover can be reduced by RJP's remains a matter of opinion. Fewer studies have focused on the relationship between RJP's and job satisfaction and job performance, but these still fail to demonstrate a clear link between these variables. The new trend in the literature to extend the use of RJP's to intra-organisational issues appears to achieve tentative empirical support.

2.3 Processes that Mediate RJP Effectiveness

In his critical appraisal of research directions for RJP's, Breugh (1983) commented that when attempting to make sense of the inconsistent results in RJP research, it is important to keep in mind the basic psychological processes that

have been hypothesized to mediate the effectiveness of RJP's. Breaugh noted that four distinct, but not totally independent, factors have been suggested as possible causes for the effects of RJP's. These are: met expectations, ability to cope, air of honesty and self selection. In this part of the review, two additional factors, caring and fadeout, that have been identified in the literature (Miceli, 1986; Schein, 1968) will be briefly discussed.

2.3.1 Met Expectations

The met expectations explanation is nearly always the first to be considered in any research concerning mediating processes affecting RJP's (Dunnette, Arvey and Banas, 1973; Katzell, 1968; Porter and Steers, 1973; Wanous, 1973, 1977; Weitz, 1956). Dugoni and Ilgen (1981) provided a good explanation of this hypothesis. It is suggested that RJP's lower initial expectations and that these expectations are more easily met on the job than higher ones. As a result, those holding lower expectations should be more satisfied with their jobs, assuming that unmet expectations are less satisfying or more dissatisfying than met expectations.

Probably the most work in this area has been conducted by Wanous (1973, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980). Softening the "reality shock" has an inherent "rightness" about it; it seems as if, intuitively, this should be the factor that determines RJP function. Suszko and Breaugh (1986, p. 521) showed how much they wish to believe this when they comment,

"Although systematic empirical evidence is not available, we believe that RJP's did result in expectations being met".

The tendency for researchers to draw medical analogies when discussing the met expectations hypothesis is interesting, but somewhat misleading. Wanous (1973) discussed RJP's as a form of screening device, but when summarising the current knowledge of RJP's, he begins to describe the "inoculation" of individuals against disappointment in the work place (Wanous, 1975).

Met expectations research typically involves self reports by subjects. Experimental and control groups are required (post-preview) to rate their beliefs about the job on some form of Initial Expectations/Satisfaction scale (Avner et al., 1982; Dean and Wanous, 1984; Dugoni and Ilgen, 1981; Saks and Cronshaw, 1990; Wanous, 1973, 1976). Including the initial work by Wanous (1973), the bulk of the literature supports the met expectations hypothesis in some form or another. Dean and Wanous (1984) related that their research clearly demonstrates that the specific RJP "vaccinated" (lowered) expectations as intended. They claimed also that because the RJP information was selectively received, the resultant effect was quite durable.

Dugoni and Ilgen (1981) and Dilla (1987) cautioned against the blanket acceptance of the met expectations hypothesis. Laboratory-based research was utilised by Dilla (1987), who required his subjects to complete a simple clerical task. Similar to most other research, an expectations scale was completed along with other measures. Dilla concluded, however, that his correlational analysis had revealed a key problem with the met expectations model. Concurring with Dugoni and Ilgen (1981), he stated that the model requires that: (1) RJP's lead to lower initial expectations; (2) these revised expectations produce greater job satisfaction; and (3) higher job satisfaction results in lower voluntary turnover. While

correlational data appeared to support the first and third relationships, the crucial middle link between expectations and satisfaction was in fact significant in the direction opposite to that predicted ($r = 0.30$; $p < 0.01$).

One of the most simple and troubling criticisms of expectations research comes from the summary by Breugh (1983). He found that it is not enough to administer Initial Expectations scales during research; Job perceptions and the accuracy of them should be evaluated prior to any RJP intervention. Any contamination or expectancy effect would then be effectively controlled for.

2.3.2 Air of Honesty

Breugh (1983) suggested that another explanation for the possible effects of RJP's is they communicate an "air of honesty" to applicants, who then feel a greater degree of freedom in their organisational choice. To the extent this occurs, dissonance theory predicts there will be a greater commitment to the decision to join the organisation. Breugh suggested it is this greater commitment that induces a more positive work attitude which in turn may reap benefits such as lower voluntary turnover.

Wanous (1977) had been the first to moot such an explanation, but he also noted that, to that date, no study had been able to isolate the air-of-honesty factor as a probable cause for increased job survival. Research at various times over the last 15 years has attempted to rectify this situation and results have been weakly positive (Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood and Williams, 1988; Reilly, Brown, Blood and Maletesta, 1981; Saks and Cronshaw, 1990; Susko and Breugh, 1986).

The research by Meglino et al. (1988) is typical of most in this area. United States Army platoons were used as subjects and several forms of previews were shown to them. A balanced form of preview (containing equal amounts of negative and positive information), was found to be effective, increasing perceptions of trust and honesty, although not all reported mean values for the groups were significantly different. Suszko and Breugh (1986), after providing RJP's to prospective incumbents at a national inventory service firm, provided strong confirmation for the air-of-honesty hypothesis.

Dugoni and Ilgen (1981) also examined the air-of-honesty hypothesis and were unable to obtain any significant results between groups. They did note, however, that the difference observed in the perception of supervisors by subjects may have affected this result. The authors speculated that their RJP treatment may have caused subjects to view supervisors in a positive manner, one which was artificially inflated. When the supervisor did not meet these expectations, judgements of honesty may have suffered. Gaugler and Thornton (1990) were also unable to achieve significant results. They commented that the presentation of realistic information did not lead applicants to perceive the organisation as more honest.

2.3.3 Ability to Cope

Ilgen and Seely (1974) suggested that a knowledge of what to expect from a new work situation may better prepare individuals to cope and thus reduce frustration. According to this theory, a RJP can provide individuals with better

information about the workplace, and thereby increase the ability to cope with new information input, and adaptation to the new setting.

Research in this area is still minimal but results to date are encouraging. Wanous (1978) presented coping mechanisms as one of several possible mediating effects on RJP's but at that stage, few of the links in his model of psychological effects of the RJP had been empirically examined. Ilgen and Seely (1974), in their early exploratory study, appear to have achieved satisfactory results in attempting to confirm a link between these factors. Suszko and Breugh (1986) hypothesised that RJP recipients will report a greater ability to cope with job demands than those not receiving RJP's. Use of a composite Ability-to-Cope Index (Suszko and Breugh, 1986) resulted in RJP recipients reporting that they were consistently less upset by stressful job demands and feeling that they had handled them better when they had occurred.

Once again, it was Dugoni and Ilgen (1981) who had offered a dissenting opinion. Their examination of the coping data they collected revealed conflicting findings. There was a significant difference between groups in their reported ability to handle difficult situations, but this difference was opposite to the one predicted, control group members reported handling these situations better than did those in the experimental (RJP) group. What is also important to note, however, is that when examining each *specific* stressful situation, the experimental group members reported encountering significantly fewer problem situations. "For coping, one set of data contradicted the hypothesis whereas another set offered some tentative support for it" (Dugoni and Ilgen, 1981, p. 588).

2.3.4 Self-Selection

Breaugh (1983) hypothesised,

"...that RJP's will lead to self-selection on the part of the recipients. Thus, if the job is described as not meeting their needs, they will not accept it. Henceforth, those who do accept the job are more likely to be satisfied with it and less likely to leave it voluntarily" (p. 613).

A study by Zaharia and Baumeister (1981) presented two forms of preview (neutral and realistic) to developmental technicians in a large residential institution for the mentally retarded. Neither form of preview intervention were useful in producing significant improvements to survival rates. The researchers concluded that the impact of the previews was on the expectations of entrants. They suggest that considerable self-selection did occur and that this was evidenced by low acceptance and hire rates.

The main proponents of many of the proposed psychological mechanisms for RJP utility, Suszko and Breaugh (1986), also produced support for the self-selection hypothesis. Of 15 applicants who were presented with RJP's, four rejected job offers, and of the 13 applicants in the control condition, no one refused a job offer. In their discussion of this result, Suszko and Breaugh (1986) do note that the effects of a job preview may well be less pronounced if individuals are less able to self-select out of jobs.

2.3.5 Caring

As noted by Schein (1968) the "caring" hypothesis proposes that, *"...individuals should increase their commitment in order to repay the time, effort and resources spent by the organisation in developing and presenting the RJP"*.

The resulting increase in commitment is predicted to be accompanied by the perception that the organisation "cares" about its employees. Meglino et al. (1988) were unable to find any evidence to support the caring hypothesis, but it must be noted that the post-preview questionnaire given to subjects measured the caring factor with only a single item. Gaugler and Thornton (1990) gave previews to 79 mechanical engineering students and measured the dependent variable "caring" on a four item scale. Consistent with their previously mentioned result relating to the air of honesty hypothesis, the researchers were unable to claim that the presentation of an RJP made the organisation seem more caring.

2.3.6 Fadeout

As a direct result of the growing literature in cognitive psychology, Salancik and Pfeffer (1978) have developed what they describe as a social information processing approach (SIPA), which suggests that individuals form perceptions of, or construct job realities based on, cues provided by co-workers. Miceli (1986) predicted that favourable cues from the recruiter may well lead to favourable reactions on the part of the newcomer. She noted that although these cues are initially strongly influential, direct experiences with the actual job setting become more powerful and the effects of the recruiter's behaviour "fade out",

hence creating the "fadeout model".

A prediction inherent in this model is that the effects of previews will lessen over time. A review of previous research (Dean and Wanous, 1982; Dugoni and Ilgen, 1981; Greenhaus, Seidel and Marinis, 1983; Wanous, 1975) compared correlations between expectations (perceptions) and affect. The results indicated preliminary support for the fadeout hypothesis and the author, Miceli (1986), presented this model as the most appropriate competitor to the popular "reality shock" (met expectations) hypotheses. She commented that, if the fadeout model offers a good representation of RJP effects, it is not difficult to understand why RJP's have not been shown to influence turnover significantly. Miceli called for further examination of this newly identified aspect of the relevant psychological processes. Thus far, no researchers beyond Miceli herself have continued with this line of enquiry.

As with the outcome research, it is difficult to provide a concise summary of the possible processes which attempt to explain the effects of RJP's. To date, the met expectations hypothesis continues to achieve the most attention and support. Work in the Air-of-Honesty area is less promising. Again, inconsistent results are characteristic of the area. Less well-examined but encouraging are the Ability-to Cope and the Self-Selection hypotheses. These mechanisms appear to explain much that has been traditionally ignored by the met expectations literature. Unfortunately, most studies have failed to present support for the Caring hypothesis and Fadeout research is too limited to make any firm conclusions about it's utility as a theory.

2.4 Models of Relevant Psychological Processes

A model of traditional recruitment procedures was compared with realistic procedures by Wanous (1975), the first time a formal model (albeit a flow diagram) had appeared in the RJP literature. The flow for typical consequences of realistic procedures begins with the requirement to "set job expectations realistically". There is a direct linear relationship through all subsequent parts of the model: a job may or may not be attractive and depending on individual's needs, some accept or reject a job offer. Work experience will confirm expectations and satisfaction - needs are matched to the job. High job survival, greater satisfaction and infrequent thoughts of quitting would then characterise the employee.

The following work by Wanous (1978) acknowledged the naivety of the original model and new factors such as coping, performance, locus of control, involuntary turnover and self-selection were introduced. While branched and more extensive, the model is still linear and suggests relationships between factors that had little or no empirical support. The idea mooted by Wanous, that prospective employees and employers are involved in an individual needs analysis, has provided the name for the third Wanous (1980) representation: the "matching model". This model generalises the concepts mentioned before and so begins with accuracy of job information. Organisation climates and individual needs both converge on this which leads directly to job satisfaction/organisational commitment. The model indicates that at this point, that the individual is likely to compare his or her present job to other ones. Actions to seek another job is the suggested outcome and the final effect is that of voluntary turnover.

Vandenberg and Scarpello (1990) suggested that RJP's are introduced into this framework as a staffing procedure for enhancing the need-reward match process. It is suggested that RJP's should increase the accuracy with which job applicants assess the degree of match between needs and rewards provided by the job in question. Vandenberg and Scarpello evaluated this model by testing two groups, newcomers and tenured employees, in nine major insurance companies. The findings were encouraging. Except for the job satisfaction - turnover intentions path, the model appeared to be a valid description of processes underlying newcomer adjustment.

Saks and Cronshaw (1990) developed a similar model that also includes variables such as honesty, expectations and commitment to choice. This model uses the RJP as the starting point, but it is evaluated in terms of RJP processes not outcomes. The RJP is hypothesised to lead to three main areas, job attitude, job acceptance intention and job knowledge. Both the job attitude and the job acceptance intention lead to the mutual goal of job acceptance decision. Job knowledge, however, has an impact on a multitude of factors: expectations, role clarity, perceptions of interviewer and organisational honesty and commitment to choice. The authors presented various forms of RJP's to subjects and found that RJP's achieve their effects in part by acting on the subject's knowledge structure. They state that their model is based on that of Popovich and Wanous (1982) and suggest that more complex models could exist where process variables interact, but that there is little support for the suggestion that these models would be any more appropriate. Many of the relationships between factors were found to be supported by their research, but the results failed to find a significant RJP effect

for job acceptance decision and commitment to choice.

According to Wanous (1977), the dominant theory used in research on RJP's is expectancy theory. He suggests that it is important to distinguish among variables such as the attractiveness of an organisation, the amount of effort directed toward joining one and the final choice of organisation from among those that accept the individual. According to the theory, two main considerations will determine these choices: (a) expectations about the characteristics of the organisation and (b) the valence, or desirability of each characteristic. A numerical score can be computed by multiplying the expectancy of each outcome by the valence of that outcome ($E \times V$) and then summing the products. Supposedly, a person will choose the behaviour with the highest attractiveness score (Wexley and Yukl, 1984).

Although this theory provides a possible view of the process by which the job applicant weighs up what he or she knows of the job, the theory provides no ground for consideration of external issues (i.e. unemployment). There are two other theories that stem from the literature on decision making which are more likely to assist us in conceptualising the results of the current study.

Satisficing models such as that of Bounded Rationality (March and Simon, 1958) explicitly recognise the cognitive limitations of human decision makers. The central proposition of satisficing models is that the decision maker simplifies the decision and selects a satisfactory solution rather than the optimal one (Wexley and Yukl, 1984). Bounded rationality makes central the use of "heuristics" that reduce the number of alternatives that are considered. March and Simon suggested that a search is normally only a way of examining variations on existing policies

and coping mechanisms. Janis and Mann's (1977) Decisional Model also describes a variation of this "satisficing" theme. The model suggests five ways that a person can respond to a decision making problem and the second of these methods is that of unconflicted change. In brief, this response is described as a crude satisficing strategy for behavioral change. Few alternatives are examined and one that appears to be "ok" is chosen without careful evaluation of possible consequences.

2.5 Research into the Contents of RJP's

Much of the RJP research throughout the 1970's was aimed primarily, as mentioned above, at outcome and process research. When the results from such studies demonstrated frustratingly inconclusive results, authors such as Wanous (1975, 1977) began to make recommendations concerning the contents of RJP's.

Krausz and Fox (1981) aimed to refine the realistic-preview concept by examining dimensions relating to both the amount and favourability of information. Favourability generally refers to the positive/negative ratio of information, i.e. a more positive tone in the preview gains a higher favourability rating. The results indicated that the favourability dimension had an impact upon initial expectations, but the amount of information contained within the preview was not significant. Meglino et al. (1988) formalised favourability into two kinds of preview: reduction previews to reduce overly optimistic beliefs, and enhancement previews designed to enhance overly pessimistic beliefs. Contrary to their prediction, the reduction preview produced the highest level of subsequent turnover.

The favourability dimension also received some attention by Popovich and

Wanous (1982). They suggested that the presence of negative information in a preview is unexpected by job candidates and it is possibly best to present positive information before negative to reduce anxiety. They also concurred with the findings of Reilly et al. (1981) who suggested that there are significant differences among types of job and RJP effectiveness in reducing turnover; that is, RJP's seem to work better in complex jobs.

Caldwell and O'Reilly (1985) and Dilla (1987) have also made contributions to the RJP contents research. The form and accuracy of the information has been found to influence the way the typical subject views the job preview. Dilla predicted that a preview that focuses on task content (i.e. descriptive RJP) should facilitate performance. The results indicate that a descriptive RJP was effective at enhancing initial adaptation to the new job, which appears to be useful even if the effect cannot be demonstrated to be lasting (Dilla, 1987). A prescriptive approach was also examined (where "coping" suggestions are made in the RJP, i.e. "disregard hallway gossip"), but this approach was not found to have any significant effect over most of the major outcome factors.

Breaugh and Billings (1988) have commented that, rather than viewing an RJP as a theoretical construct, it makes more sense to view the name as a title for a recruitment-oriented intervention that has certain information properties. They suggest that the five key attributes of an RJP are (1) accuracy; (2) specificity; (3) breadth; (4) credibility; and (5) importance. Wanous (1989) produced a detailed work in prescribing the most appropriate forms of RJP's. He provided an analysis of the literature relevant to RJP content and made recommendations for different forms of previews and what they should contain: descriptive or judgemental

information; extensive or intensive previews; high or medium negativity.

The most recent suggestions for RJP content were those made by Gaugler and Thornton (1990) and Weisner, Saks and Summers (1991). The former work focused on creating personalised previews, which were hypothesised to make the applicant "feel good" about the organisation. Unfortunately, the personalised previews significantly raised the applicants' expectations about some work factors, and the findings did not support the existing literature which suggests that the applicants' decisions were based on their analysis of how well the organisation fitted their needs. Weisner et al. (1991) commented that previous research had failed to measure whether subjects had alternative job offers when shown an RJP and it is unclear whether this will affect any job acceptance decision. Their study attempted to improve upon previous RJP methodologies. Differing amounts, formats and favourability of information were presented to subjects as either traditional or realistic job previews. It was found that the RJP did not lead to differential job acceptance rates and that the information value of the job previews was not different under the two conditions.

2.6 Methods of Presenting RJP's

A concluding comment by Wanous (1973) noted that there were at that time questions to be answered that could dictate the path of further RJP research. He suggested that future study could focus on the techniques of job previews (e.g. films, written material, speeches, interviews, and mass media) to assess which are most effective in relation to cost. Similar recommendations have followed in the subsequent literature, but it wasn't fully examined until the study by Zaharia and

Baumeister (1981) compared written previews with those presented in a videotape format. The results were evaluated in terms of their effects on job survival rates, and although neither intervention produced dramatic improvements, the written format produced stronger results.

Reilly et al. (1981) also utilised a videotape preview and compared this to job visit and control groups. The authors concluded that it was difficult to find strong significant differences between the types of job preview and stated that, in view of the greater cost and time involved in producing a film or videotape, their results support a recommendation for using booklets as RJP vectors.

Colarelli (1984) reviewed the outcome studies literature and stated that a factor which might improve the effectiveness of RJP's was the method by which realistic information was communicated. He noted that in almost all RJP studies, information was presented by a one-way medium (brochures, videotapes, one-way oral presentations). Colarelli introduced a more interactive form of preview to the literature, that of an interview with a current incumbent. The results clearly indicated that there was a significant difference between incumbent previews and those given by brochure in terms of outcome factors and psychological process questions. The interactive preview showed reduction in turnover, increased perception of trustworthiness and personal relevance but both interventions had a similar effect on expectations. Colarelli cautioned that it is difficult to standardise the presentation of information in different forms of preview and also that a simple halo effect with the incumbent alone could not be ruled out.

Breaugh and Billings (1988) and Wanous (1989) formalised their recommendations for the methods of presenting job previews. These authors

reiterated the recommendation that previews should incorporate two-way communication so that the applicant could be provided with more specific information and so that the use of time could be fully maximised. Wanous (1989) felt that videotaped (audio-visual) previews have several advantages. First, one can be certain that the candidate has seen and heard the preview information and second, comprehension of the preview is less constrained by reading skill level. He also recommended however, that little research had been done on interactive methods such as interviews and knowledge of two-way communicative formats was quite limited. Recent research on persuasion tends to indicate that these forms may be worthwhile methods for the future (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986).

Saks (1989) developed the interactive format of recruiter-previews and compared their performance to those of a written brochure and general job information. He concluded that,

"Subjects who received an RJP from the recruiter had more favourable and positive perceptions of both the recruiter and the interview than subjects in the other two groups" (Saks, 1989, p. 158).

The recent research by Weisner et al. (1991) unfortunately appear to take a step backwards in RJP research and present both their RJP and a traditional preview in a written format. Of all the research to date, this method appears to be the least persuasive of the currently utilised media (Breugh and Billings, 1988; Wanous, 1989).

2.7 Meta-Analyses of RJP Research

Glass (1976) noted that,

"as...researchers, we find ourselves in the mildly embarrassing position of knowing less than we have proven. The proofs reside in a vast literature that is often superciliously scorned and insufficiently respected. Extracting knowledge from accumulated studies is a complex and important methodological problem to which I commend your attention" (p. 8).

This comment could very well have been made specifically about RJP research.

Two meta-analyses have been published to date on RJP research. An examination of them brings up some interesting issues that would almost certainly concern Glass. McEvoy and Cascio (1985) appear to have combined approaches from several meta-analysis methods (Hunter, Schmidt and Jackson, 1982; Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1984) to develop their research. The second of these analyses, that of Premack and Wanous (1985), was very critical of the methodological line taken by McEvoy and Cascio, and claimed that there are important differences between the two studies. The latter work contained seven extra studies not examined in the former, and examined all studies "first hand", an apparent failure of the McEvoy and Cascio work. Finally, Premack and Wanous maintained that their meta-analysis was approximately 40% larger and significantly more comprehensive than was the previous work.

The most interesting outcome from a comparison of these two meta-analyses concerns their conclusions with regard to turnover. McEvoy and Cascio concluded that the low correlation ($\phi = 0.09$) found in their work between RJP's and a reduction in turnover, should direct managers in organisations to look

elsewhere for an appropriate intervention. Premack and Wanous were far more positive, and stated that RJP's increase job survival modestly ($\phi = 0.12$) and that they do so consistently. Any variance apparent in the literature is, they claim, "essentially all sampling error rather than "true" variance" (Premack and Wanous, 1985, p. 715).

In terms of methods used for presenting RJP's, Premack and Wanous noted that there is support for audio-visual methods being more persuasive forms of communication, but generally only when the message is not overly long and complex. But, they also noted that this result was based on too few studies, with too few subjects. The McEvoy and Cascio work limited its examination to the job survival issue and so is not useful to provide a comparison.

2.8 Summary of Literature Review

The overwhelming tone of the realistic job preview literature to date is that of confusion and inconsistency. The research is characterised by insignificant results and weak effects that stand side-by-side with interesting and what is claimed to be useful research. One of the pleasing factors of RJP literature to date is that it does not suffer from the "file drawer" phenomenon, that is, both significant and insignificant results have been reported in the literature (McEvoy and Cascio, 1985; Premack and Wanous, 1985).

The research into outcomes of RJP interventions is the most disquieting. Since a reduction in voluntary turnover is traditionally considered to be the main purpose of RJP's, the mixed results on this outcome are an area for concern.

Of the hypothesised processes that mediate RJP effectiveness, the met

expectations explanation continues to receive the most support. Continuation of research into the cognitive aspects of decision making may well assist the creation of a more cogent and general model of mediating processes.

A greater degree of agreement is noted in the issue of what should be contained in RJP's. Several summary works (Breugh and Billings, 1988; Wanous, 1989) have presented recommendations for the creation of RJP's and an indication of which groups are best targeted for such an intervention. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the research into the utility of RJP methods. Brochure and audio-visual methods have been used in field and laboratory research alike, and little notice has been taken of "realism-of-job-preview" issues. Further research is required to develop a method of communicating RJP information to a target group that is both believable and persuasive.

CHAPTER THREE

RATIONALE

3.1 Intensional Simulation (Roleplay) Research

Intensional simulation has been developed and utilised mainly in counselling, instruction and assessment. This appears to be the major extent of its development. Greenwood (1989) advanced the view that roleplay techniques may well be extremely useful as an experimental strategy, the rationalisation being that roleplay provides "isolation without alteration". That is, the phenomenon under observation may be examined without changing the social context within which this phenomenon usually exists. For example, Greenwood (1989) suggested that an analysis of the accounts of participants in a simulation such as an employment interview can determine which conditions cause the interview to be seen by the interviewee as a hostile interrogation.

Aronson and Carlsmith (1968) dismissed intensional simulations because of their "inevitable" lack of realism, but research such as the Stanford Prison study (Hanay, Banks and Zimbardo, 1973) had to be halted early because the subjects became too engrossed in their roles. The classical and arguably most infamous roleplay experiments were carried out by Milgram (1963) where subjects were requested to administer shocks to research confederates under the guise of a learning situation. Although Milgram's obedient behaviour conclusions have been challenged, a finding which stems from this work notes that script wording is vital to how the subject (participant) internalises the instructions. For example, the words "Imagine you are a teacher..." induces the actor to behave as if they

were actually the teacher. If instructions are only slightly changed, i.e. "Imagine you are a person who is a teacher...", a component of anonymity is introduced and possibly causes an acceleration of disinhibition processes where aggressive behaviour is increased and guilt feelings are repressed (Kipper and Har-Even, 1984). As this behaviour change causes the whole phenomenon under examination to be altered, extreme caution must be taken when developing any form of script for either instructional or experimental roleplays.

Goldstein and Sorcher (1974) suggested that in the work environment, roleplaying could be useful in a variety of contexts: *experimental* (trying out new behaviour); *diagnostic* (searching for problems and solutions); *practice* (developing job techniques); *decisional* (developing skills in decision making); *solutional* (solving specific problems already defined); *attitudinal* (changing viewpoints); and *evaluational* (assessing skills through roleplay performance).

Brannon (1985) noted that the effects of roleplays in terms of attitude and behaviour change are most prominent in roleplay participants. Participation is therefore the vital component; to observe is not enough. Brannon (1985) also suggested that four steps must be performed in any valid roleplay: (1) thoughtful planning of roles, interactions and context; (2) initial briefing of participants; (3) roleplay and responses; and (4) participant's debrief and discussion on attitudes and reactions to role.

3.2 Methodological Considerations

Although the focus of this thesis is an examination of the methods utilised in presentation of RJP's and the factors which impact upon them, an important

note must be made of the methodological issues involved in presenting both RJP's and the research into them.

The first section of this rationale outlined the current knowledge of intensional simulation method. There are two levels of use for the roleplays. The first and most specific level is a direct consideration of this method as a format for the presentation of realistic job previews. The second, more general level is that of intensional simulation as an alternative experimental method in social psychological research.

In many forms of psychological research, especially in investigations of social psychological phenomena, traditional laboratory techniques tend to dislocate behaviour from its normal context and prevent its subjects from functioning as participating agents. Greenwood (1989) noted that this creates situations where the research is notoriously difficult to reproduce and where the results are unlikely to generalise well to any given external population. The traditional view is that field experiments possess greater generalisability than laboratory experiments.

According to Greenwood (1989), to ensure the explanatory relevance of experiments to real-life situations, it is not necessary to reproduce actual instances of social phenomena, but it is sufficient to reproduce the participant agent representations that constitute these phenomena. The key objective here is to achieve isolation without alteration, that is to say, that the behaviour or situation under observation is not isolated from its usual social context by bringing it into the laboratory. The phenomenon is not altered in this process if its causal agents accompany it.

To achieve this goal of isolation without alteration, the researcher must

create an "intensional simulation" where he or she reproduces the intensional contents of both participant behaviour and context that constitute actions and social practices (Greenwood, 1989). This can be done in two ways: the deception experiment which attempts to deceive the subject into presenting certain behaviours; and the simulation experiment where subjects are directly instructed to present certain behaviours.

Experimental simulation has several other advantages over other possibly more traditionally acceptable empirical methods. It is free of two major experimental artifacts, namely evaluation apprehension and demand characteristics.

With reference to the former condition, Greenwood (1989) illustrates his point by suggesting that the participant who cannot perform in an effective simulation either lacks the power to do so or the experimenter's presence acts as an interference condition. The latter possibility can simply be determined by the participant's ability to perform in real-life situations. For the teacher who can communicate effectively in the normal classroom situation, but cannot in an experimental simulation, the experimenter's presence clearly acts as an interference condition.

In the latter condition, Greenwood notes that controlling for demand characteristics is part of the point of experimental simulations. The rationale of the simulation of real-life contexts is to determine precisely what demands of the context promote and impede various forms of action.

Laboratory-based research has been utilised in several instances of RJP research (Dilla, 1987; Miceli, 1985) but the bulk of RJP interventions have been

evaluated in field-based studies. There appears to be tacit agreement among authors that, although sampling problems are a consistent flaw in the research, the field is the best site for RJP development.

Greenwood (1991) has also examined this issue and notes that

"Many theorists also object to the apparent distinction between the artificiality of the laboratory experiment and the reality of the outside world outside the laboratory. It is protested that the laboratory is also part of the real world, and that the folk that populate it are real people. Of course this is true, but the critical distinction is not between the artificial and the real, but between the closed experimental and open systems of the real world, and the difficulties of preserving the identity of actions and practices under conditions of experimental closure" (Greenwood, 1991, p. 120).

It is exactly this ability of intensional simulation that maximises the likelihood of retaining external validity. As in natural science, external validity in an experiment is directly proportional to its internal validity. The adequacy of inferences we make about real-world open systems are directly proportional to the adequacy of experiments that provide support for the inferences. (Greenwood, 1991). Put simply, the better the study, the better the explanation of the phenomenon, the better it will help us to understand the real world.

3.3 Objectives of the Current Research

Given the state of much of the literature relating to outcomes, there are several studies in the literature where recommendations have been made regarding

possible ways these inconsistencies could be reduced. It has been suggested that further consideration of the method of presenting job previews and an attempt to isolate variables that impact upon how different previews are viewed, may provide a more appropriate form of preview to be used in the future in both applied and experimental settings (Premack and Wanous, 1985; Wanous, 1989).

The main aim of this study is to examine methods of presenting realistic job previews and to in particular to evaluate RJP's presented in three formats; as a roleplay, as an audio-visual presentation and as a brochure.

To this end, several hypotheses have been developed for this study that are similar to and expand upon previous hypotheses discussed in the RJP method literature:

Hypothesis 1. The subjects who participate in a roleplay RJP will deem this to be more realistic overall than either the brochure or audio-visual preview groups.

Specifically:

- a) The roleplay RJP will appear to be a better representation of the job than either the brochure or audio-visual previews.
- b) The roleplay RJP will appear to be a better information source than either the brochure or audio-visual previews.
- c) The roleplay group will experience a stronger change in their perceptions of the job over the course of the

experiment than either the brochure or audio-visual preview subjects.

d) The roleplay will appear to provide more personally relevant information than either the brochure or audio-visual previews.

Hypothesis 2. The roleplay group will retain information from the preview to a greater extent than either the brochure or audio-visual preview subjects.

Hypothesis 3. A roleplay RJP will result in fewer job offer acceptances than either the brochure or audio-visual previews.

Hypothesis 4. Overall, a job preview will be likely to alter a subject's decision to accept a job offer.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHOD

4.1 Subjects

The research subjects were female and male stage one psychology students who were enrolled at the University of Canterbury, and who volunteered to take part in the study. As an integral part of the research design was to ensure that the information to be provided to the subjects was new to them, an original pool of 103 volunteers was pretested. Ten of these subjects were rejected on the basis of too great a knowledge of the area. A final sample of 60 subjects was chosen from those remaining on the basis of the subject's own availability. This group consisted of 36 females and 24 males aged 18 to 36 years, with a mean age of 19.9.

Subjects were randomly assigned to groups in the following manner. Each subject's name was printed on a sheet of paper and given a number from 1 to 60. A computer-generated list of random numbers was split into three groups and subjects were placed in groups according to their position in the random number list.

Each subject participated individually in an experimental session which averaged 30 minutes in length.

TABLE 1. The Experimental Design

GROUPS	¹ INTRODUCTION	PRE-TEST	² PREVIEW	POST-TEST
1. N = 20	Explain procedure and gain consent.	"Consulting Psychologist Job Questions"	Brochure Method Christchurch Consulting Company	* Post-test Job Questions (Recall). * Job Questionnaire. * Job Preview Structured Interview
2. N = 20	"	"	Audio-Visual Method Christchurch Consulting Company	"
3. N = 20	"	"	Roleplay Method Christchurch Consulting Company	"

¹ Introduction and Pre-test occurred during same contact time with subject.

² Preview shown to subjects after 2 week delay.

4.2 Design

A three-way factorial design (experimental groups x tests x sex) and content analyses of qualitative data were used to examine the hypotheses relating to the methods and some aspects of the perceived utility of job previews.

The general aim of the current research was to present three forms of realistic job preview to subjects and to collect data from them that related to their attitude to the preview.

There were three treatment groups utilised in this study (See Table 1). All subjects had pre- and post-test measures taken, and then viewed a job preview presented in either brochure, video-tape or role-play format. As there is always the possibility of pre-test information contaminating the post-test results, this potential effect must be recognised and either measured or controlled for (Wexley and Latham, 1981). As designs such as the Multiple Time-Series (Campbell and Dunnette, 1968), or the Solomon Four-Group (Wexley and Latham, 1981) would complicate the design of this research and be very time-consuming, a two week delay between pre-testing and experimentation was employed. This time delay was intended to act as a desensitising period in an attempt to control for this possible contamination.

4.2.1 Pilot Studies

In preparation for this study, four small pilot studies were carried out. A summary of each of these studies follow:

Pilot Study 1.

The pre-test, "Consulting Psychologist Job Questions" was

presented to 20 stage one students (12 female, 8 male) and 5 post-graduate Industrial/Organisational Psychology students (3 female, 2 male). Post-graduate students were included in the sample to ensure that the questions had retained face validity. The "Consulting Psychologist Job Questions" were designed to be used as a method of ensuring that all subjects to be used in the main study had little knowledge of what a consulting psychologist is required to do. Subjects were required to complete the pre-test and at the same time, indicate any wording or questions that seemed unclear. Pre-testing this form ensured that the questions asked were likely to be of a difficulty level that "guessing" was unlikely to allow subjects to score well. Items a, i, l and n were found to be ambiguous, and were therefore altered to clarify meaning.

Pilot Study 2.

Fifteen stage one student subjects (6 female, 9 male) were randomly assigned to one of three RJP pilot groups: brochure, video or role-play. The relevant RJP was then shown and post-test measures applied. The "Consulting Psychologist Job Questions" sheet was originally intended to be used as a post-test, specifically to examine the amount of actual information retained from the R.J.P. It was found, however, that all subjects were still achieving very low scores (mean = 3.60). This mean score is almost the same as the mean score for the pre-test (mean = 3.62). Even

though the job preview may have assisted the subjects in providing a strategy for correctly answering the post-test, the actual information in the test was not specified in the preview. On the basis of this, the post-test was changed to the "Job Questions" sheet where four explicitly stated points were required to be recalled after the subject had experienced the job preview. This changed post-test was found to be unambiguous and a more direct test of knowledge acquired from the job preview.

Pilot Study 3.

Much of the research examining the appropriate contents of an RJP suggest that an equivalent amount of positive and negative information is appropriate for an RJP (Wanous, 1989). In order to ensure that the information contained within all forms of job preview was even in this regard, the preview was carefully scripted to contain ten positive, ten negative and ten neutral statements. The purpose of the third pilot study was to ensure these levels were recognisable. Five stage one students (2 male, 3 female) were required to rate the statements made in the brochure as either positive, negative or neutral, and to state the total number of each in the preview. Results from each of the five subjects were averaged to find the resultant mean number of statements rated in each category. Positive statements were defined as those representing what would be pleasant tasks or attributes of the

organisation or things the incumbent would find enjoyable in the job. Negative statements were defined as the opposites of the above. Neutral statements were deemed to be those that simply provided information on the job or organisation. On average, subjects rated the preview as having 10 positive, 11 negative and 9 neutral statements.

Pilot Study 4.

In order to retain the same information in all three forms of job preview, the brochure was used as a script for the video and role-play methods. The third pilot study required 10 stage one students (5 male, 5 female) to separately observe all three forms of job preview and to rate how equivalent they were in: a) content of information and b) communication of meaning. Seven-point Likert scales were used, with 1 = equivalent in all previews and 7 = not equivalent in all previews. The scores were averaged over all reviewers ratings and it was found that in information content, the mean was 1.20 and the communication of meaning scale had a mean score of 1.70. The result of this pilot study ensured that differing amounts or forms of actual *content* could not contaminate the ratings of the preview methods themselves. See Appendix for a copy of scripts.

4.2.2 Independent Variables

There were three treatment groups with twenty subjects in each:

- [a] Brochure Method Realistic Job Preview.
- [b] Audio-Visual Method Realistic Job Preview.
- [c] Role-Play Method Realistic Job Preview.

The form and content of each of these three methods was based on the recommendations made by Wanous (1989) in his "ten tough choices" for installing a realistic job preview. It was decided to provide an intensive information content as utilised by Royal Canadian Air Force RJPs (Flynn and Ellis, 1984). Although this form of preview runs the risk of excluding some information, it does prevent important facts from being lost amid other information and aids retention of those facts (Wanous, 1989). Equivalent amounts of positive and negative information were included as examined in Pilot Study 3. Equivalency was decided upon so that respective amounts of positive or negative information did not overly impact upon how the preview methods were viewed.

4.2.3 Realistic Job Preview

The position of "Consulting Psychologist" was chosen as the sample job for the RJP for two main reasons. As the subjects were stage one psychology students, it was felt that this position would be inherently interesting to them while still specialised enough to be novel. The other advantage of using this position is that it is a complex role, and the tasks performed within it are

sufficiently unpredictable to the lay-person and therefore an RJP would still be valid. This differs from previous research, where relatively non-complex, predictable or well known positions such as bank tellers (Colarelli, 1984; Colarelli and Stumpf, 1990; Dean and Wanous, 1984), hotel desk clerk (Saks, 1989; Saks and Cronshaw, 1990) and check-out operators (Dugoni and Ilgen, 1981) were utilised.

Two large accounting/employment consultant organisations, Deloitte Ross Tohmatsu and Price Waterhouse, were approached to provide the base information for the RJP. A job analysis was performed in the manner suggested by Robinson (1981). This form of job analysis focuses on job objectives and goals as a basis for generating task statements. This procedure requires the following five main steps to be taken:

- a] Convene a panel of experts (usually supervisors and/or job incumbents).
- b] Ask the panel to identify all the broad objectives to be met by an *ideal* incumbent on the target job.
- c] List specific behaviours required to meet each objective.
- d] Identify "critical" tasks. These are tasks critical to effective job performance. They are rated 0,1 or 2 on the basis of frequency, importance, cost of error etc. This step can be recognised as "content sampling" and it will be valid to the extent that the critical tasks reflect actual job performance requirements.
- e] Determine inter-judge agreement as to the importance of

major dimensions of the job.

In this instance, only two employment consultants were available for the expert panel. Although this provided a limited expert sample, each consultant's specific area of expertise was sufficiently different that a good variety of tasks were included in the analysis. Determination of inter-judge agreement was greatly simplified because only two experts were involved and this was always found to be 100% with the exception of ratings for the person specification. Although the actual qualities required for the job were easily identified, it was not possible to gain any standard of agreement on a ranking of these qualities. A reason for this might be that each expert would tend to refer back to his or her own organisation when ranking the personal qualities of any job incumbent. As organisations must necessarily differ in their organisational cultures and climates, each organisation's requirements for incumbents will probably be different.

Flanagan's (1954) Critical Incident Technique (CIT) provided the next step in gaining a full RJP that included both task and organisational climate/culture information. DiSalvo, Nikkel and Monroe (1989) suggest that this methodological process, where qualitative, descriptive data are provided, is far better for the researcher who requires real life accounts of organisations and events than many other forms of survey or questionnaire. The most important rationalisation for such a method is that "rather than leading with our own bias or perspective, we rely on viable self-report" (p. 555). CIT is also able to provide reports of incidents that have made a "significant impact" upon the success or failure of an operation (DiSalvo et al, 1989; Downs and Conrad, 1981; Stano, 1981).

After both task and political/cultural information were collected, the information was combined into an RJP containing 16 paragraphs describing the fictional position of consulting psychologist at Christchurch Consulting Company. An imaginary company was used as an example primarily to protect the identity of the actual consultancies involved. It was also ensured that either company could not be identified by any specific task or cultural aspect. The RJP was then rated for negative and positive content (see Pilot Study 3).

4.2.4 Brochure, Video and Roleplay Creation

As mentioned previously, the final form of the RJP was used unchanged as the brochure RJP. It was presented to the subjects as "Job Preview, Christchurch Consulting Company". There were two and a quarter A4 sheets of single spaced type, broken into 16 paragraphs.

The bulk of the script for the video RJP was the brochure read out by the experimenter and recorded onto audio tape. A male actor presented the rest of the script, and this was filmed on VHS video in an interview mock-up with the interviewer off camera. The script was divided so that the actor presented all of the political/cultural information in an informal manner. The actor was instructed to read the passage to be filmed and then to present the material in his own words to add to the realism of the video. The actor was carefully monitored to ensure that he did not divert from the script and that the intended meaning of each passage was not changed or lost.

Both scenes of offices and people working and interacting with other workers were filmed on campus at the University of Canterbury Registry

building³. Confidentiality issues prevented these scenes from being filmed at either of the two consulting companies. The scenes filmed were therefore ambiguous, and meaning was provided by the pre-recorded soundtrack which was laid down onto the video during editing. The scenes filmed with the actor were edited into the body of the video at the same stage as the relevant paragraphs appeared in the brochure. The final form of the video was approximately seven and one half minutes long.

The role play scripts were presented in a similar fashion to that of the video. The "supervisor" presented all of the actual task information, while the "co-worker" presented all of the political/cultural information. The part of the supervisor was played by a female actor, the co-worker by a male. The actors were required to memorise their scripts but present them in their own words. During the training session, the actors were warned not to change the meaning of any information, nor add/detract from it in any manner. Any questions asked by the subject had to be answered in terms of the information provided. All biographical information and the background to Christchurch Consulting Company was invented by the experimenter.

The three RJP's were examined after their development and tested to see if they were consistent (see Pilot Study 4).

³ Both male and female workers were featured to prevent any sex bias in presentation. Consistent with this, the female commentary on the video was complemented by the male actor.

4.2.5 Dependent Variables

The present study utilised two different forms of dependent variable measures. Quantitative measurement was provided in the form of a questionnaire based on four main dimensions: the realism of the job preview, the amount of information contained within the job preview, the subjects change of perceptions about the job, and the personal relevance of the information. The questionnaire also required subjects to provide standard biographical information such as age and gender.

The realism of job preview dimension consisted of items similar to those manipulation checks utilised by Saks (1989) who recorded a coefficient alpha of 0.83 for this dimension. Subject's perception of the realism of the job preview presented to them was measured by the following two items: "I believe that the job preview told me the "real story" about the job" and "During this study I seemed to be given a very realistic picture of the job of a consulting psychologist". These items were anchored (1) Agree Strongly to (7) Disagree Strongly. These items were combined to form a composite measure and a coefficient alpha measure was found to be 0.82 for this study.

The subjects perception of the amount of information provided in the job preview was assessed by three items: "I don't think I found out much information about the job of a consulting psychologist"; "The job preview provided the best overview of the job that I could ask for" and "All of the task requirements were clearly outlined to me in the job preview". Again, these items are similar to those manipulation checks developed by Saks (1989) who found a coefficient alpha of 0.86. The items were anchored (1) Agree Strongly to (7) Disagree Strongly. The

first item has also been phrased negatively to prevent any standard response effect. Internal consistency reliability of the scale with the present sample was adequate with an alpha of 0.71.

Whether the subject had experienced a change of perceptions about the job was measured by two items: "I found out a lot of things about the job of a consulting psychologist that I never knew before" and "My view of the job of a consulting psychologist hasn't changed much since the beginning of this study". The second item has been phrased negatively to prevent any positive response effect on the part of the subject. This scale was newly developed for this research and had a coefficient alpha of 0.77. The items were anchored (1) Agree Strongly to (7) Disagree Strongly.

Personal relevance of information to the subject was examined by three items: "As a job applicant, all of the questions I had about working as a consulting psychologist were answered"; "As a job applicant, I don't think I received the information I wanted about working as a consulting psychologist" and "As a job applicant, all of the major issues that concerned me about working as a consulting psychologist were addressed in the information I received". Items were anchored (1) Agree Strongly to (7) Disagree Strongly. Again, the second item has been phrased negatively. This scale is similar to that used by Colarelli (1984), and had a coefficient alpha of 0.81 with the current sample compared to Colarelli's (1984) alpha of 0.76.

The four scales were combined to create a single questionnaire designed to examine the overall realism of the RJP. Internal consistency and reliability of the scale with the present sample was relatively high (coefficient alpha = 0.87).

Qualitative data was also collected from the subjects by means of a structured interview. Although some authors (e.g. Crano and Brewer, 1973) warn against utilising the interview method as a form of dependent variable, this method can still be of use if the researcher acknowledges the difficulties inherent in it. The major difficulty lies with the biases an unsuspecting researcher can introduce into the data. By standardizing the interview conditions, ensuring that the interview is tightly structured and by being aware of the possible effects of these conditions, this method can then reveal some interesting data on subject's attitudes. The list of questions utilised in the structured interview are found in Appendix Ten. These questions were developed in accordance with the questionnaire, and were designed to elaborate both on the questionnaire and on several issues mentioned in the literature.

4.3 Experimental Setting

Each of the three forms of RJP were administered in the same psychology laboratory. Subjects sat at a bench to the left of the experimenter to read the brochure, watch the video and complete the Post-test Job Questions, Job Questionnaire and participate in the Job Preview Structured Interview. Subjects in the role-play condition were required to sit opposite a desk in the centre of the room where the other role-play participants also sat. At the conclusion of the role-play, the subjects shifted to the seat at the bench to complete the other post-test procedures.

4.4 Procedure

The initial step of this research required gaining the approval of the University of Canterbury Department of Psychology Ethics Committee to utilise human subjects for research. To this end a proposal of the study was submitted, and approved.

Introduction of the research, gaining consent and consequent pre-testing was achieved during subject's introductory psychology laboratory classes. The voluntary nature of the exercise was emphasised. After a two week delay, subjects were rung to confirm testing times. At the pre-arranged testing time, subjects were issued with the following instructions:

"Hi, I'm Caroline Atkinson. Thanks for coming along to help me today. In this study, I want you to imagine that you are a psychologist who has applied for a job with Christchurch Consulting Company, a human resources consultancy. They deal with many different aspects of people in the work-place.

You are about to (read a brochure/watch a video/participate in a role-play) which will tell you about this job. When you are finished, I'll need you to answer a few questions for me".

The subject then viewed either the brochure, video or participated in the role-play. The Post-test Job Questions sheet was administered first, followed by the Job Questionnaire and finally the Job Preview Structured Interview. At the completion of these questions, the subjects were then told:

"Christchurch Consulting Company doesn't really exist, but all the information you have seen today is true apart from that. It is all based on what actually happens at real consulting companies⁴.

From your answers and those given by other subjects, I hope to find out a bit more about Job Previews, that is, information about the job like the one you saw today.

I would ask you not to discuss what we have done today with anyone. As you can imagine, my results might be affected if other subjects knew what was going to happen. There is a \$50 prize draw that all 60 subjects are eligible for, and this will be drawn early in the third term. The draw will occur in your stage one psychology lecture and I will take the opportunity to advise all my subjects of the results from this study.

Thanks once again for your help today, I really appreciate it".

⁴ Subjects who saw the video were informed that this was acted, but still based on interviews with actual incumbents.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Data were analyzed in the following manner:

- i) Data from the Job Questionnaire were examined using a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The mean scores were then subjected to post-hoc analysis using the Scheffe test.
- ii) The subjects' attitudes to both the RJP that they were given, and to the utility of RJP's generally were analyzed by using descriptive statistics.

The Analysis of Variance and Scheffe post-hoc tests were computed on IBM network utilising SPSSx software.

From a personal preference for results that are easy to read and comprehend, I have followed the advice of several authors who suggest a simple graphical representation of interview data is best (Bolles, 1988; Kidder and Judd, 1986). The results section presents data that are illustrated both in tables (Analyses of Variance) and frequency histograms.

5.2 Analyses of Variance

One-way Analyses of Variance were conducted. The first of these treated the whole of the Realism scale and the effect of the previews was significant, $F(2,57) = 4.21, p < 0.05$. A conservative post-hoc analysis, the Scheffe test, revealed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between means for the brochure ($M = 40.40$) and

the roleplay ($M = 31.65$). The audio-visual method was not significantly different from either the brochure or the roleplay ($M = 36.30$). These results are reported in Table 2. There is partial support for Hypothesis 1 in this result.

The individual sections of the realism scale were also subjected to ANOVA and the results of these tests along with the Scheffe test contrasts are reported in Table 3. The amount of information perceived to be contained within the previews was significantly different ($p < 0.05$), providing support for Hypothesis 1b. Scheffe contrasts showed that this difference was between the roleplay RJP ($M = 9.90$) and the brochure ($M = 12.55$).

Subjects who experienced a roleplay RJP ($M = 8.80$) believed that this form of preview contained more information that was personally relevant to them than either the brochure ($M = 12.80$) or the video ($M = 12.95$) RJP's, thereby giving support to Hypothesis 1d. These differences were found to be highly significant ($p < 0.001$).

Contrary to Hypothesis 1a, the three RJP groups did not differ significantly in their estimate of the realism of the job preview. The trend of the means, however, was in the hypothesised direction; the roleplay ($M = 5.40$) was perceived as slightly more realistic than both the brochure ($M = 6.95$) and the video ($M = 6.55$). None of the three job previews was found to have significantly altered or changed the perceptions of the subjects during the course of the experimental procedure and so Hypothesis 1c was also not supported.

Table 2 Results of analysis of variance for overall realism scale.

<i>SOURCE</i>	<i>D.F</i>	<i>SUMS OF SQUARES</i>	<i>MEAN SQUARES</i>	<i>F RATIO</i>	<i>F PROBABILITY</i>
Between groups	2	794.63	397.32	4.21	0.019 **
Within groups	57	5384.35	94.46		
Total	59	6178.98			

** p < 0.05

Scheffé contrast reveals difference between brochure (m=40.40) and roleplay (m=31.65)

Table 3 Means and standard deviations for individual sections of realism scale.

VARIABLE	BROCHURE		VIDEO		ROLEPLAY		F	M CONTRASTS (SCHEFFÉ)		
	M	Sd	M	Sd	M	Sd		B vs V	B vs RP	V vs RP
	Realism of job preview	6.95	2.09	6.55	2.48	5.40		2.28	2.47	6.95
Amount of information	12.55	3.23	10.95	3.43	9.90	3.23	3.28 **	9.90	12.55 **	10.95
Change of perceptions	8.10	3.11	7.05	3.22	7.55	2.98	0.57	8.10	7.55	7.05
Personal relevance of information	12.80	3.16	12.95	3.69	8.80	4.23	8.02 ***	8.80	12.80 ***	12.95 ***

** p < 0.05

*** p < 0.001

n = 60

B = Brochure RJP; V = Video RJP; RP = Roleplay RJP

5.2.1 Results of Pre/Post-Test Manipulation

The pre-test of "Consulting Psychologist Job Questions" had several functions. The first of these was to prevent those people who already had a realistic idea of the job of a consulting psychologist from becoming subjects in this research. The second of these was originally designed to be a repeated measures format to examine if the preview had increased the job knowledge of the subject. As reported in Pilot Study 2, this did not eventuate and the resulting post-test "Job Questions" were utilised to fulfil this second function.

The scores from the post-test which directly measured information absorbed by the subject were compared for each of the three manipulation groups. A one-way ANOVA was performed and there was found to be no significant difference ($p < 0.48$) between each of the three preview groups and the scores for the post-test. Hypothesis 2 is unable to be supported by this result.

5.3 Descriptive Statistics

The results of the content analysis of the interview data are presented in this section as frequency histograms. It is important to note that each subject could make several comments that were pertinent to each question asked, so the y axis of these histograms reports the percentage of responses that relate to each item, not the percentage of subjects alone. It is for this reason that each histogram does not *in total* add up to 100%.

5.3.1 Perception of Realism of the Preview

Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate subjects responses to the question: "Why do

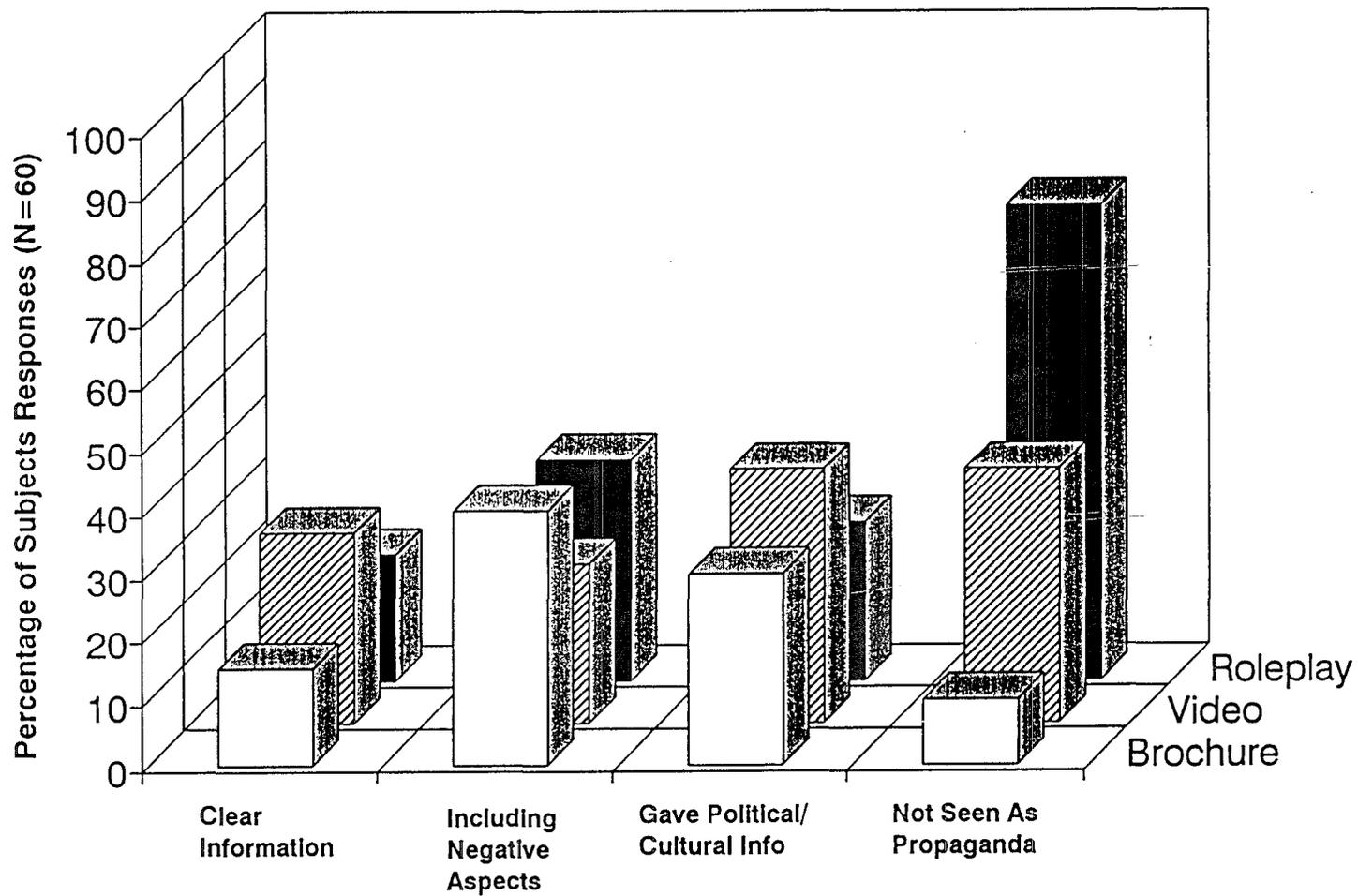


Figure 1 Reasons given by subjects for appearing to receive a realistic picture of the job.

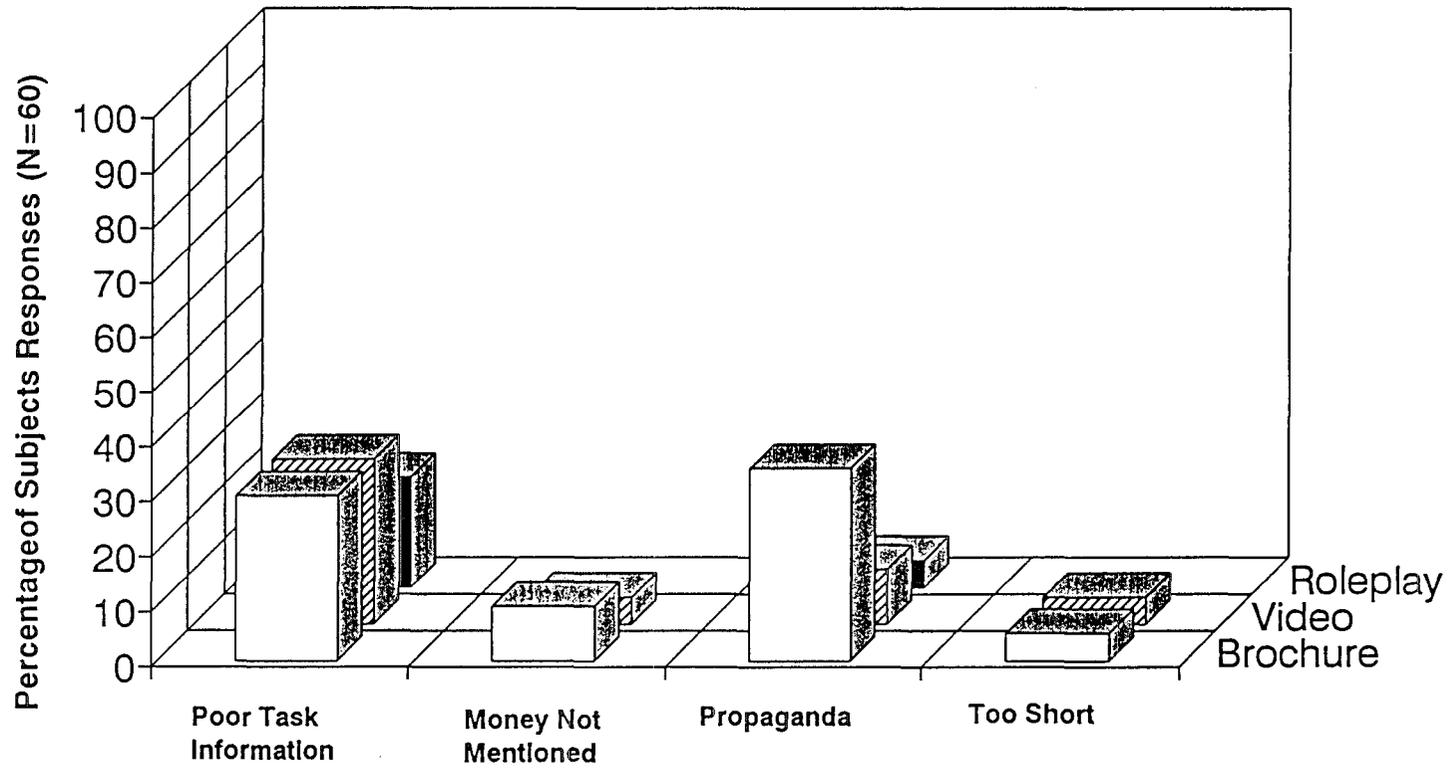


Figure 2 *Reasons given by subjects for appearing to receive an unrealistic picture of the job.*

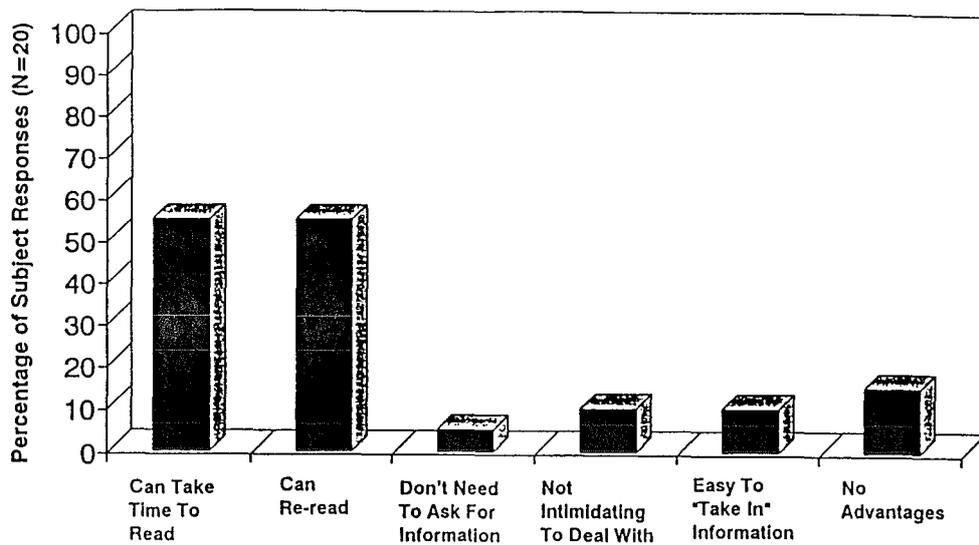
you believe that you were/were not given a realistic picture of the job?". Those that did believe they were given a realistic picture of the job seemed to have opinion divided into four main areas.

For 75% of roleplay subjects, the most outstanding reason for belief in the realism of the preview was that it was not seen as "Propaganda". Contrasted with this, only 40% of video subjects felt this way and only 10% of brochure subjects. "Propaganda" is defined as the organised dissemination of information, allegations, etc. to assist or damage the cause of a government, movement or organisation (Concise Oxford Dictionary). The use of this word by an overwhelming number of subjects suggests the firmly negative connotations commonly attached to the concept of propaganda.

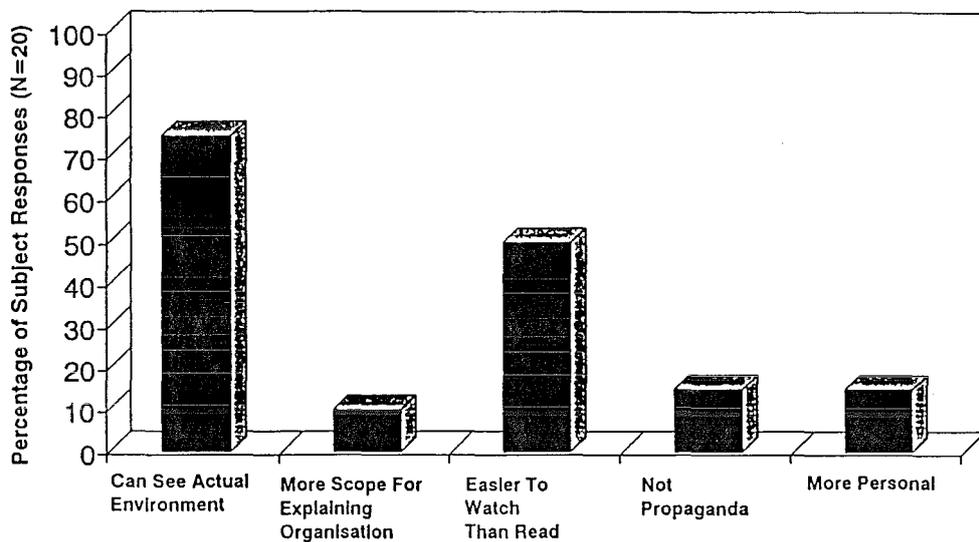
Thirty percent of video subjects believed that the form of preview they observed provided them with clear job information, as opposed to only 20% of roleplay subjects and 15% of brochure subjects.

The inclusion of negative aspects of the job appealed to 40% of brochure subjects, 35% of roleplay subjects and 25% of those who viewed a video RJP. The inclusion of political/cultural information presented a realistic view of the job for 40% of video subjects and 30% of brochure subjects, but only 25% of those who participated in a roleplay RJP.

The propaganda issue is also raised by those subjects who believed that they were not provided with a realistic picture of the sample job. As would be expected by the previous section, only 5% of roleplay subjects saw this preview as propaganda, as opposed to 10% of video subjects and 35% of brochure subjects. Poor levels of information on the tasks involved in the job resulted in



VIDEO



ROLEPLAY

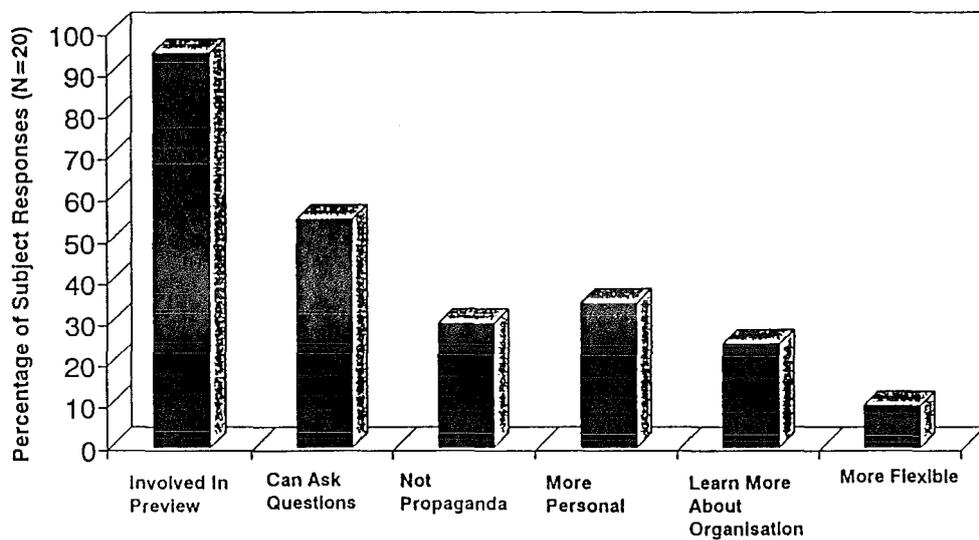


Figure 3 Comparison of preview advantages noted by subjects.

a lack of realism for 30% of both brochure and video RJP subjects and 20% of roleplay participants. The fact that money (salary) was never discussed, was unrealistic for 10% and 5% of brochure and video subjects respectively, but was unimportant for those who experienced a roleplay RJP. Likewise, brevity of presentation was an issue for 5% of brochure and video subjects but not for roleplay subjects.

5.3.2 Advantages of Individual RJP Methods

Subjects were asked to respond to the question "What advantages do you think a brochure (video/roleplay) form of job preview might have?". The responses are illustrated in Figure 3.

Brochure

Fifty-five percent of subjects who read a brochure RJP felt that both the ability to re-read and take their time over reading the information was the most important advantage to this form of preview. Ten percent responded that it was easy to "take in" information in this manner and it was also not intimidating for them to deal with. Five percent felt that they didn't need to ask for any information and 15% felt that there were no advantages at all to a brochure form of RJP.

Video

Seventy-five percent of subjects who watched a video RJP saw an advantage in seeing the actual work environment. Fifty percent felt it is easier to watch this type of information than to read about it and 15% saw a video as more personal to them. Fifteen percent of subjects did not see this form of method as propaganda

but only 10% felt that a video RJP had more scope for explaining the organisation.

Roleplay

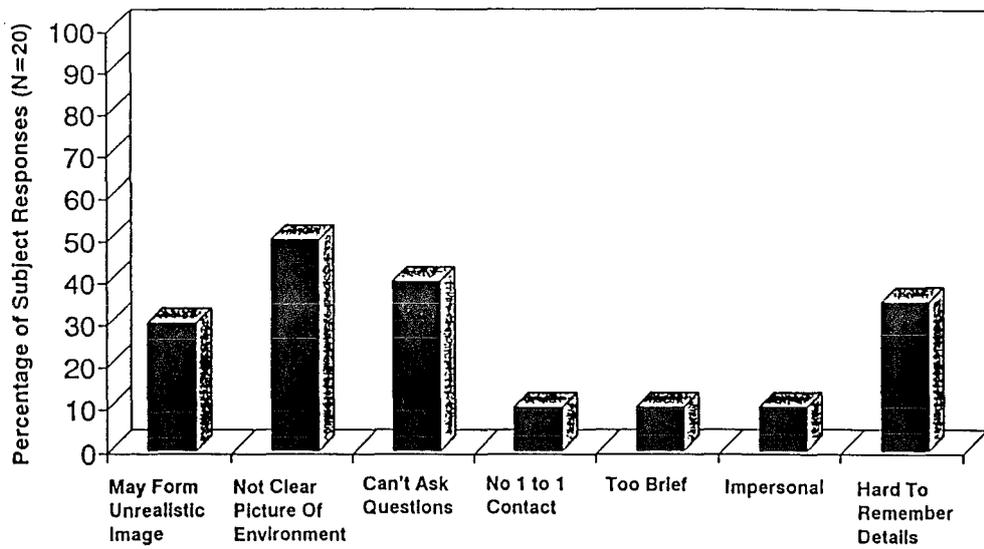
Ninety-five percent of subjects who participated in a roleplay stated that becoming involved in the preview was advantageous. The ability to ask questions during the preview was important to 55%, and 35% saw this method as more personal. The lack of propaganda was again mentioned by 30% of subjects and 25% felt they would learn more about the organisation from this form of preview. Flexibility of presentation was considered important by 10% of subjects.

5.3.3 Disadvantages of Individual RJP Methods

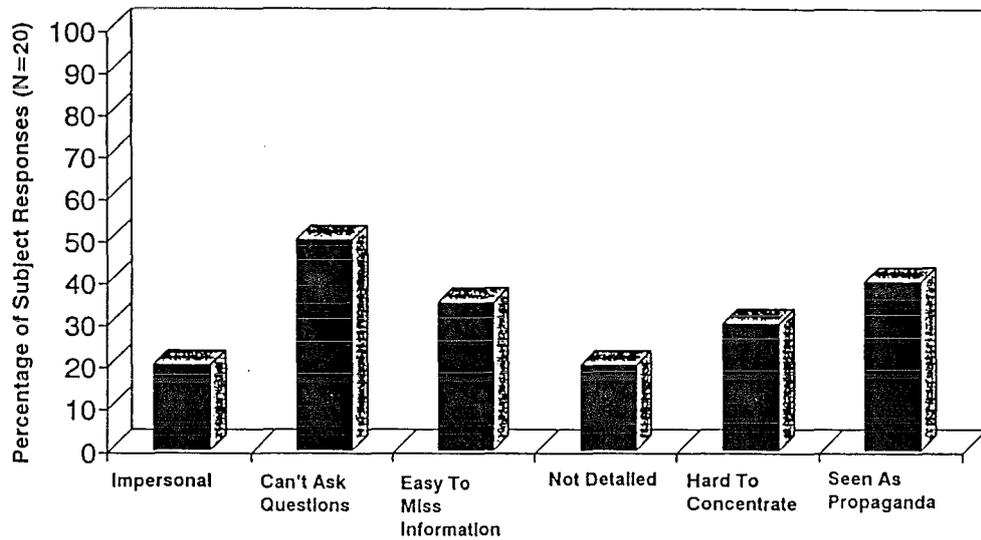
Subjects were required to respond to the question "What are the disadvantages to the preview you read (saw/participated in)?". Subjects responses to this question are shown in Figure 4.

Brochure

Fifty percent of subjects who read a brochure disliked feeling that they were not provided with a clear picture of the work environment. Forty percent were constrained by their inability to ask questions and 35% felt it was hard to remember details. Thirty percent of subjects also believed that it was possible to form an unrealistic image of the job from brochure forms of information. Ten percent of subjects found the brochure lacking because of its impersonal nature, lack of one-to-one contact and brevity.



VIDEO



ROLEPLAY

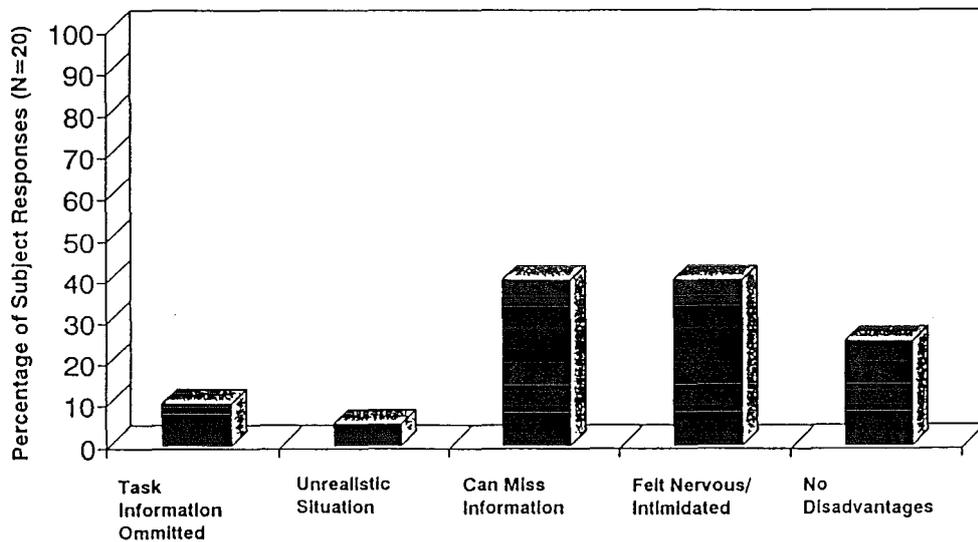


Figure 4 Comparison of preview disadvantages noted by subjects.

Video

Subjects who watched a video RJP had similar concerns to those in the brochure group. Fifty percent felt constrained by the lack of opportunity to ask questions and 35% had difficulty with details in the preview. Thirty percent found it hard to concentrate fully on the information and 20% found fault with both the lack of detail and its impersonal nature. The propaganda issue is again raised with 40% of subjects reporting that the video's main disadvantage was the feeling that they were being presented with information the company wanted them to know.

Roleplay

Forty percent of subjects who participated in a roleplay preview felt that this method's main disadvantages were that it was likely to make them nervous or intimidated and they were also likely to miss information details. Ten percent felt that too much task information was omitted in the preview and 5% of subjects saw the roleplay preview as an unrealistic situation. Twenty-five percent reported seeing no obvious disadvantages in the roleplay RJP.

5.3.4 Job Offer Acceptance/Non-Acceptance

Subjects were asked "Based on the job information you have been provided with, would you accept or decline a job offer with Christchurch Consulting Company?". Figure 5 demonstrates that 90% of roleplay subjects accepted a job offer compared to 70% of brochure subjects and 60% who watched a video RJP. This result does not support Hypothesis 3. Figure 6 presents the reasons that subjects provided for why they accepted or declined the job offer. Seventy-five percent of roleplay subjects reported that they accepted the position

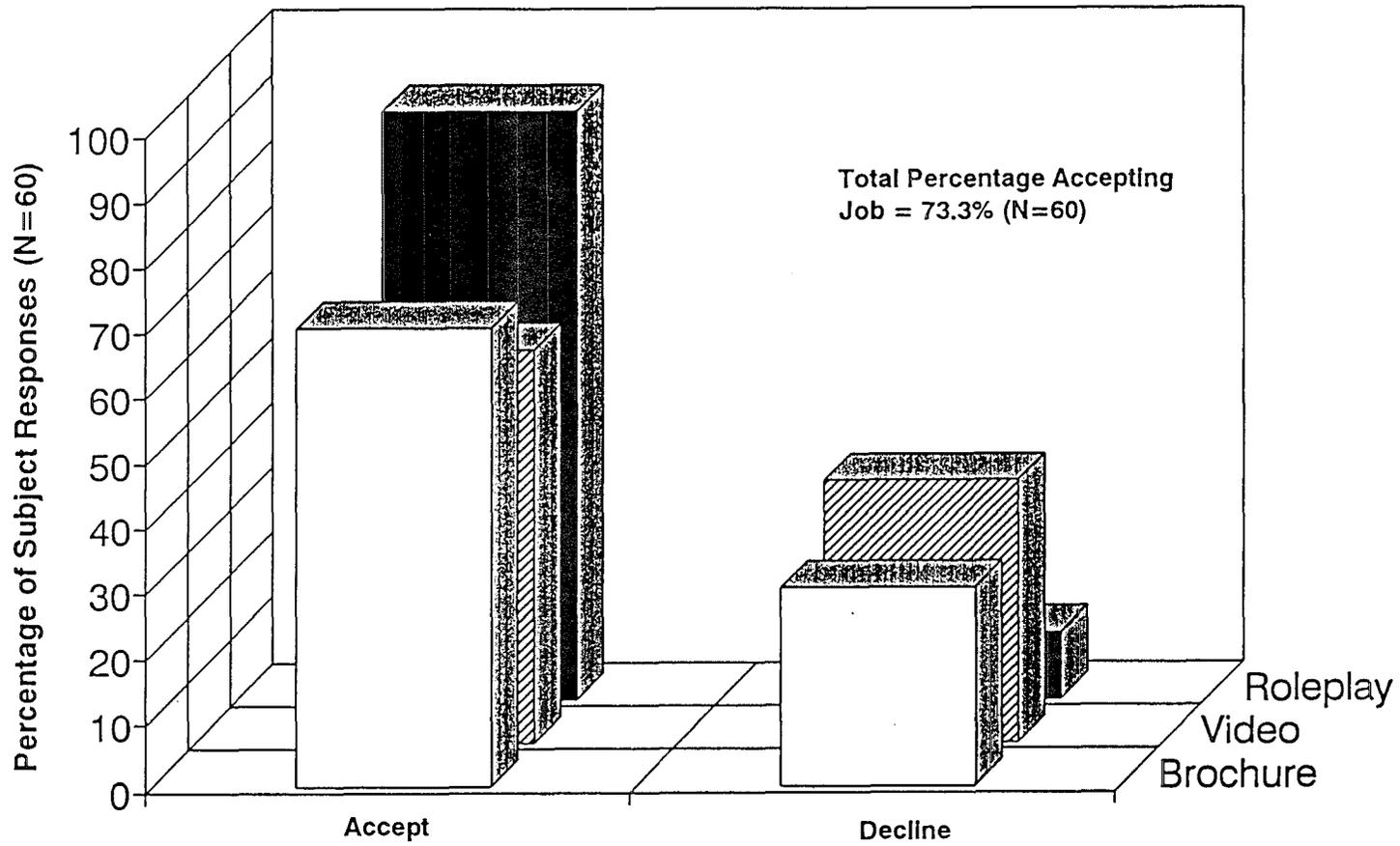


Figure 5 Percentage of subjects inclined to accept/decline a job offer.

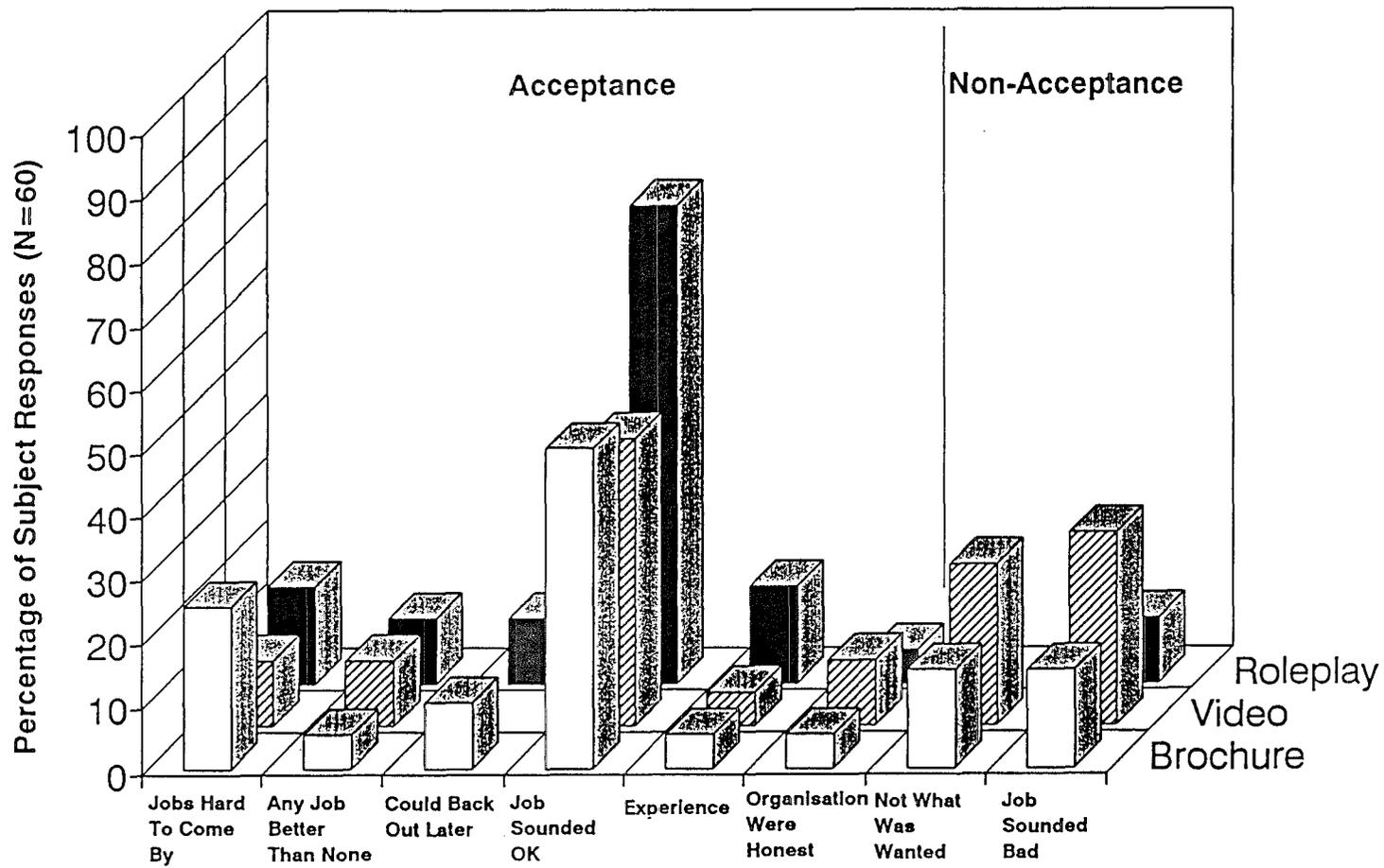


Figure 6 Reasons for acceptance/non-acceptance of job offer.

because the job sounded good to them, as opposed to 50% of brochure subjects and 45% of those who watched a video RJP. Twenty-five percent of brochure subjects as well as 10% and 15% of video and roleplay subjects respectively, stated that they would accept the job offer because jobs are "hard to come by".

Fifteen, thirty and ten percent of brochure, video and roleplay subjects respectively, reported that they declined the job because it "sounded bad" to them. Twenty-five percent of video subjects felt that this position was not what they had wanted and this was also the case for 15% of brochure subjects who declined a job offer. None of the roleplay subjects reported this as a reason for declining a job offer.

5.3.5 Ability of RJP to Alter Subject Opinion

After being provided with a job offer and questioned as to why they had accepted or declined this offer, subjects were asked the following question: "Given the current employment situation in New Zealand, is an RJP likely to change a person's mind about accepting or declining a job offer?". Figure 7 illustrates that 80% of subjects who read an RJP would not be deterred from accepting a job offer. Compared to this, 70% of subjects who participated in a roleplay and 55% of subjects who watched a video also responded in the same manner. From this result, it is clear that Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

Figure 8 presents reasons given for allowing the preview to alter job acceptance decisions. Most subjects (brochure, 20%; video, 45%; roleplay, 25%) stated that being given a realistic idea of conditions in the workplace is most likely to influence their decision. The feeling that subjects had to "take what they

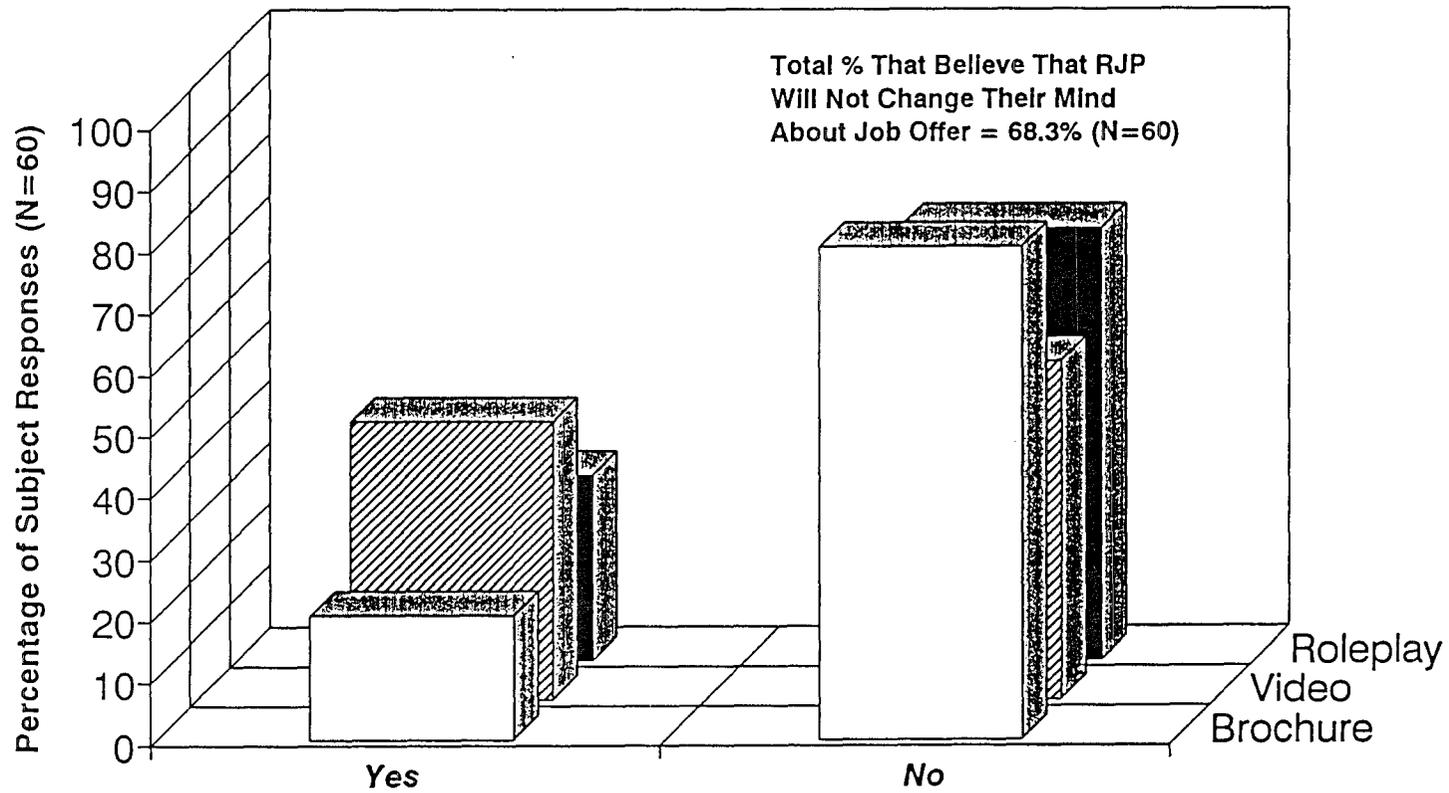


Figure 7 Percentage of subjects who believe/do not believe a job preview would alter job acceptance decision.

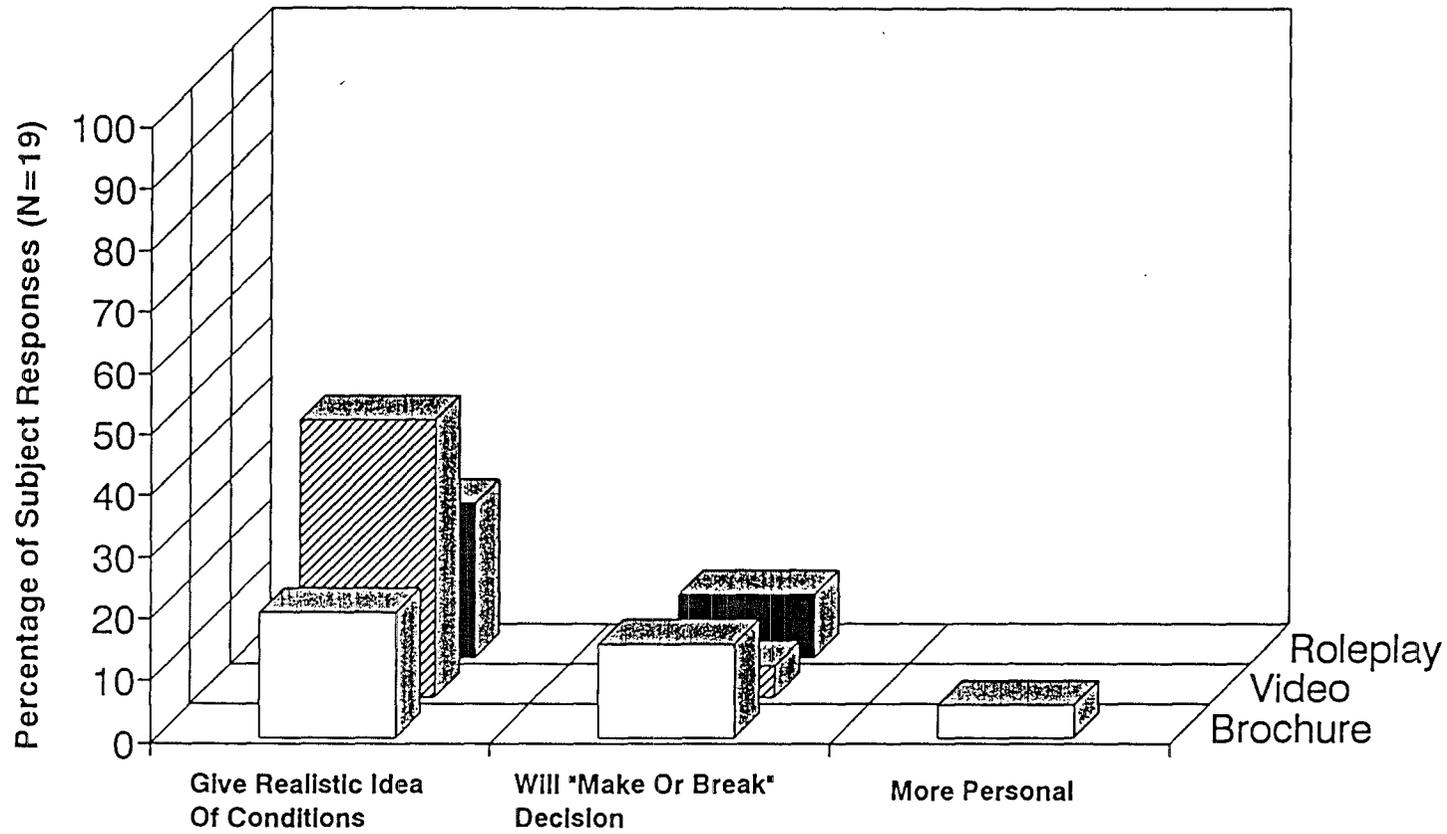


Figure 8 *Reasons given by subjects for allowing preview to alter job acceptance*

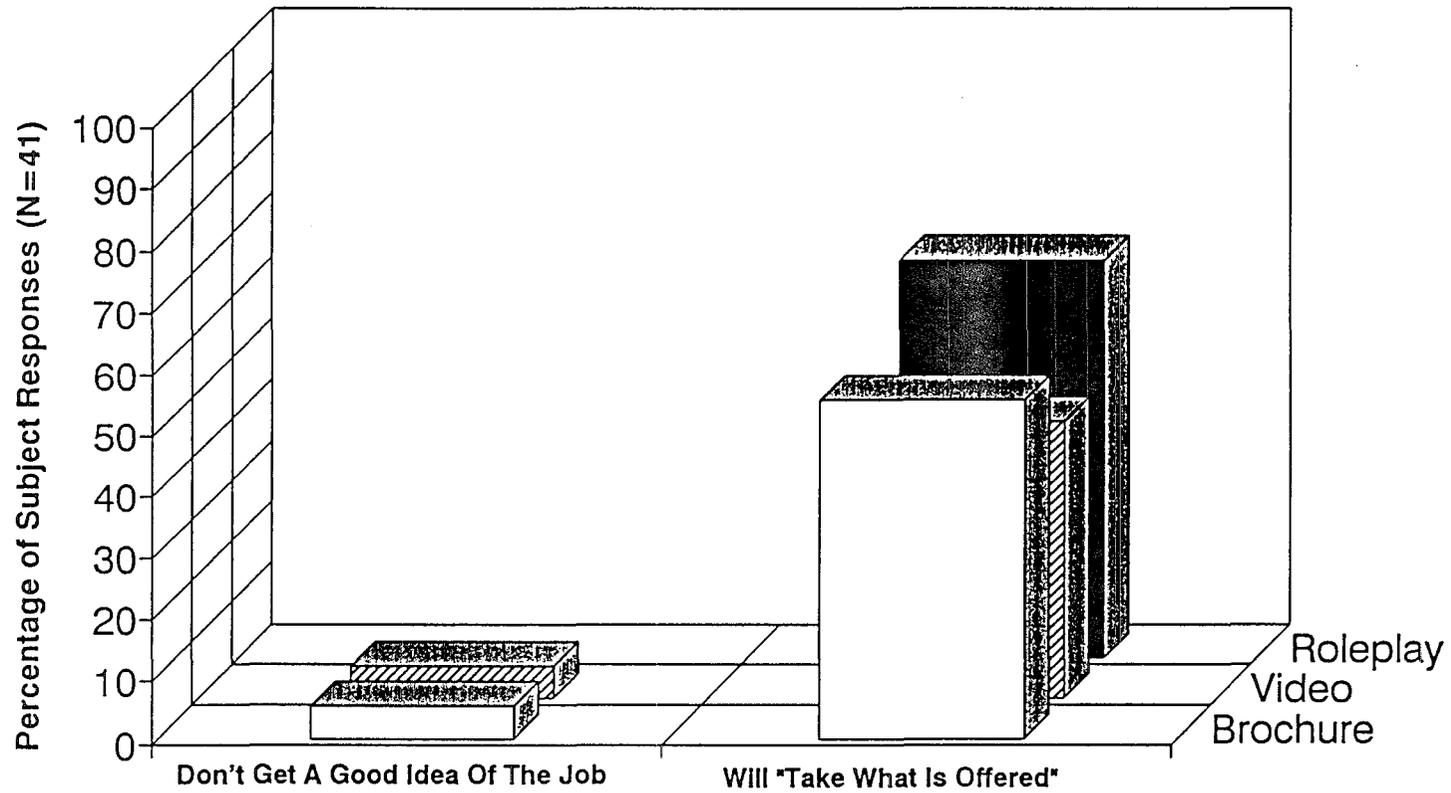


Figure 9 *Reasons given by subjects for not allowing preview to alter job acceptance decision*

were offered" was shared by 65% of roleplay subjects, 55% of brochure subjects and 45% of video preview subjects. This result is represented in Figure 9.

Overall, these results show support for Hypotheses 1, 1b and 1d. No support is provided for Hypotheses 1a and 1c, or Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the research are considered in relation to the literature on RJP's. Firstly, the results are discussed with respect to the research hypotheses and theoretical perspectives from which these results may be viewed are suggested. The next two sections consider the limitations of the research and suggest directions for future work. The final section presents conclusions from this study.

6.2 Research Hypotheses

The first hypothesis suggested that those subjects who participated in a roleplay RJP would deem that preview to be more realistic overall than either the brochure or audio-visual preview groups. The results from the ANOVA of the total scores on the Realism scale support this hypothesis. A significant difference was found for overall realism between the roleplay and brochure groups. The difference between the roleplay and video groups was not significant.

The subjects from all three preview groups reported several reasons why they believed they had been given a realistic picture of the job. Especially for those who participated in a roleplay, the fact that the preview was not seen as propaganda was very important. Any information provided by the "organisation" appears to engender an element of distrust in the subject, and the job preview, especially in the case of the roleplay, appears to have circumvented that distrust.

The kinds of information contained in the previews (negative, political/cultural) are probably a major contributor to this "lack of propaganda" attitude. Those who have reported the previews to be unrealistic again mentioned the propaganda issue, but it is generally the brochure method that is criticised for this. A greater amount of task information in the preview was obviously required by some subjects who believe that the previews suffered for this.

With regards the individual sections of the realism scale, several hypotheses were developed. The first of these (Hypothesis 1a), stated that the roleplay RJP would appear to be a better representation of the job than either the brochure or audio-visual previews. The results demonstrate that subjects reported seeing no significant differences among the forms of preview, although the resultant means did show a trend in the hypothesised direction. There are several possible reasons for this result. To find a significant difference for a subjective rating such as this, the subjects may well have required an alternative or alternatives, with which they could make a comparison with the method they observed. It is also possible that the roleplay medium was such a novel situation for many of the subjects that the representation of the job could have been somewhat overwhelmed by the unfamiliar method of presentation. This second reason could also pertain to many of the current results.

The subjects who participated in the roleplay RJP reported that there was significantly more information contained in that form of preview, compared to that of a brochure RJP. The results support the prediction made in Hypothesis 1b. This result is interesting when one considers that careful attention was paid to ensuring that each preview was designed to retain equality of information before

they were presented to the subjects.

Hypothesis 1c suggested that the roleplay group would experience a stronger change in their perceptions of the job over the course of the experiment than either the brochure or audio-visual preview subjects. This hypothesis was not supported by the results. Again, there are several possible reasons why this result may have occurred. The first of these reasons is methodological in nature. The change-of-perceptions concept was measured by two items in the questionnaire which required highly subjective reports by the subjects. Especially with the second item, "My view of the job of a consulting psychologist hasn't changed much since the beginning of the study", the meaning of the statements may have been ambiguous to the subjects. For example, it is unclear from the wording of the second item quite when the "...beginning of the study" is supposed to be. Secondly, the subjects may have desired to not appear too unknowledgeable when completing the questionnaire and therefore provided responses which bore out this impression.

Subjects who participated in the roleplay did, however, report that the roleplay provided more personally relevant information compared to the reports of subjects in the other preview groups. This result was highly significant and supports Hypothesis 1d. The fact that the roleplay method was so well supported is, to a certain extent, unsurprising. An advantage of roleplay method is the considerable amount of one-to-one communication, which would be viewed as personally satisfying to the subject.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that the roleplay group would retain information from their preview to a greater extent than either the brochure or the audio-visual

preview. No significant difference between these groups was reported in the results. This fact is interesting for several reasons. This hypothesis was tested by asking subjects to complete a pencil and paper quiz after the presentation of the preview, and required the subjects to report information that had been contained in the preview. Although the roleplay subjects had reported that their preview was a significantly better source of information than either of the other previews, they had not internalised the information to any greater extent than had subjects who saw those other previews. The roleplay in this case was perceived as a better information source but was, in fact, no better a format for remembering information than the other RJP methods.

When subjects were required to evaluate the preview that they had seen or participated in, several advantages were noted for each. The brochure's major advantages were those of convenience, and that time could be taken over it or be re-read if required. Seeing the actual environment was judged as important in a video and several subjects noted that it is much easier to watch a presentation of this kind of information than to read it. The roleplay attributes of involvement and two-way communication were strongly endorsed by the subjects who participated in it.

The disadvantages noted by subjects for each of the previews were varied, but in general related to the difficulty of internalising volumes of detailed information. Missing information was a common complaint and not being able to ask questions was constraining for both the brochure and video groups. This "amount of information" issue is an intriguing one. On the one hand, subjects have criticised the previews for not containing enough task information, and on

the other hand, have complained of "losing" information during the preview. The roleplay was seen as having significantly more information in it than either of the other two previews, but none of the subjects in this group remembered significantly more from a roleplay than the other previews. This latter result is consistent with the claim by some subjects that it was possible to miss information in the previews. One possible explanation for this confusing result is that a roleplay may well demonstrate a "gestalt effect", i.e. all of the roleplay components fit together in such a way that the participant is convinced that they have received much more information than they actually have done.

Wanous (1989) has made several recommendations with regards the "amount of information" issue. He suggests that there is one school of thought that RJP's should contain all pertinent information, so that it is not a deficient view of reality. This would be described as an extensive RJP. An intensive RJP may, on the other hand, be accused of omitting information that could be considered important to some people. Wanous recommends that it is better to use an intensive preview for a complex job which focuses on information that is most important and frequently mis-perceived by recruits. In this research, a complex job was used as a basis for the RJP on the basis of recommendations from the literature (e.g. Reilly et al., 1981), and therefore, an intensive form of RJP was presented to subjects. On the basis of this research, it appears that it is difficult to please the recipients of a job preview. Some will believe that they have been overwhelmed by detail while others clamour for a greater degree of information to prepare them for the workplace.

The issue of job offer acceptances is an important one. It has long been

recommended that an RJP should be presented to recipients *prior* to making a job offer. This allows for the applicant to properly assess all options before making a job acceptance or rejection decision. In theory, the likelihood of cognitive dissonance is heightened if a preview is presented *post* job offer (Breaugh and Billings, 1988; Wanous, 1989). If a subject has performed a match between themselves and the organisation and their unrealistic expectations have been lowered, then fewer job offer acceptances will occur.

It has been suggested that those applicants, who on the basis of an RJP do reject a job offer, would have left the organisation anyway within a short period post-employment (Reilly et al., 1981). Hypothesis 3 predicted, therefore, that a roleplay RJP will result in fewer job acceptances than either the brochure or audio-visual previews. Related to this, Hypothesis 4 predicts that job previews in general will be likely to alter a subject's decision to accept a job offer. Neither of these hypotheses were supported in the results. Although disappointing, a closer examination of the results and the reasons provided by subjects for them, is illuminating. Subjects who said they would accept the job generally stated that this decision was based on a positive perception of the job/organisation. For non-acceptance, the reverse of this was true.

Powell (1984) has demonstrated similar results that have shown that providing information on job attributes and indeed, providing a job preview, will increase the likelihood of an applicant accepting a job offer. Powell concludes that RJP's should contribute to applicants' making better decisions for themselves.

An important issue for examination and discussion, the state of the labour market, was raised by Wanous, 20 years ago. There is no evidence that, previous

to the present research, this topic had been empirically examined. Wanous (1973, p. 331) concluded that:

"A... possibility why differential job acceptance did not occur in this study is that labour market unemployment increased during the course of the data collection. When this research began, unemployment rates for the geographical labour areas involved averaged about 5%. About four months had passed, this rate had climbed to about 6%. During the final five months of data collection, unemployment was relatively stable, varying between 7.4% and 7.6% on the average. The absence of alternative jobs probably reduced an individual's freedom to reject a job offer on the basis of a job preview".

During the course of this research (July 1992), the percentage of the available work force unemployed in New Zealand was 10.0%. For the Canterbury regional area where this research was carried out, this figure was slightly lower at 8.9%. At the time of writing (December 1992), these figures have altered to 10.3% and 8.5% respectively. (Department of Statistics Data, Household Labour Force Survey). It was the aforementioned work of Wanous (1973) that prompted the interview question, "Given the current employment situation in New Zealand, is a realistic job preview likely to change a person's mind about accepting or declining a job offer?" A majority of subjects reported that the job preview would not alter their job acceptance decision. For those subjects who believed that it could, the fact that they had been given a realistic idea of conditions was arguably the most important factor.

For those who believed that a preview would not prevent them from

accepting a job offer, "taking what was offered" was the overriding concern and this result confirms the supposition of Wanous (1973). In a sense, it is this result that turns around the current beliefs about RJP's and their functions. From this result, one would predict that an employee would disregard an RJP and accept any viable job offered to them and only leave that organisation (voluntary turnover) if another firm job offer is made. An RJP produced by this second organisation would be equally irrelevant.

Although this risks being a possibly simplistic explanation or rationale for voluntary turnover, the results from this research indicate it may well be a realistic interpretation. According to Susko and Breaugh (1986), many of the apparent inconsistencies of the RJP literature may simply be due to RJP's being used in situations where they were never hypothesised to be effective, such as with applicants who have no other viable job options.

This study was not intended to focus upon the processes which mediate RJP function nor was it intended to confirm relationships in any of the aforementioned models of RJP process and effect. The issue raised above does, however, have an impact upon these areas. It appears that the economic and employment situation of the region within which a job applicant resides has a great impact upon job acceptance decisions. This has not, at this stage, been factored into the process theories and models that attempt to explain RJP function. Any future model or process theory should attempt to incorporate this factor, preferably as a global effect providing background information for the applicant *prior* to the presentation of an RJP.

The roleplay method appears to have found mixed support in this research.

In terms of overall realism, the amount of information *perceived* to have been provided and the way that it appears to be more personally relevant to subjects, the roleplay format proved to be successful. In terms of more quantifiable issues, such as actually ensuring greater information uptake by the subjects and measurably reducing the rate of job offer acceptances, the success is not so apparent. It appears, therefore, that the previously mentioned "gestalt effect" is a likely explanation of the significant data. Much of the positive effect of the roleplay has been on perceptual issues. Golstein and Sorcher (1974) appear to be correct in their assumptions that roleplays can be useful in situations where *attitudinal* change is required. For many organisations, this may well be a key factor. Put simply, it doesn't matter what the applicant *actually* knows, it is what they *think* they know that matters. For those proponents of the "Air of Honesty" and "Caring" functional processes, the roleplay could be the method of choice. As the roleplay preview was found to be realistic overall, we can also safely assume that the intensional simulation has achieved isolation without alteration.

As a real world alternative to other forms of RJP, the roleplay could acquit itself well. The format can be changed to suit any form of organisation and the content may be altered to suit any new environmental change. This second advantage is very important, especially in contrast to audio-visual methods, where changing information may be difficult or impossible to do without renewing the whole tape, for example. In contrast to another believable RJP source such as interviews with current incumbents (Colarelli, 1984), the roleplay also has a great advantage. A properly developed roleplay ought to be based on a job analysis and some form of intensive (i.e. critical incident) interview. This form of preparation

can collect a wide range of balanced information that is both positive and negative. In an incumbent interview, obviously only one view is expounded based on their experience within that organisation. A roleplay can prevent any message bias, as control can be kept over the scripts. Although in financial terms, the roleplay format is similar to the information gathering costs for all methods, it is expensive in terms of time and logistical considerations. A practitioner who is experienced in the running of intensional simulations would probably be required to oversee the creation and development of the roleplay, at least in the short-term until staff are trained in the techniques required.

It must also be noted that the subjects in this research were not real recruits facing imminent employment. As can be seen from the results, some subjects still reported feeling intimidated by the roleplay procedure, and this combined with natural nervousness during the application process may be quite unwelcome for some job candidates. It has been recognised in the past that the roleplay method appears to work best with those participants who are confident and have an internal locus-of-control (Kipper, 1988). Evaluating the suitability of a roleplay RJP in the workplace must take this issue into account.

6.2.1 Theoretical Perspectives

As previously mentioned in the literature review, the dominant theory that is used to explain the function of RJP's is expectancy theory. However, satisficing models such as Bounded rationality (March and Simon, 1958) and the Decisional Model (Janis and Mann, 1977) explicitly recognise the more complicated decision making process involved in job acceptance.

The results of the current study are generally consistent with both of these decision making theories. The majority of subjects stated both that an RJP would not prevent them from accepting a job offer and that the reason for this is that they would "take what they could get". It might be argued that an explanation such as this tends to negate the predictions of expectancy theory, where the attractiveness rating of a potential position ought to be reduced by the inclusion of a RJP, therefore reducing the number of likely job acceptances. It appears that a "good enough" decision has been made by the subjects in this study, and in accordance with this "any job is better than none". Although a poor search of alternatives and a decision based on poor rationale has probably occurred, the required outcome, an accepted job offer, has eventuated.

6.3 Limitations of the Current Research

The current study differs from previous research in RJP's in four main ways. Firstly, it focuses on the method alone and it was intended to keep all other information constant as a way of examining which form of preview is best received by subjects. Secondly, it examines the roleplay as an interactive format for attitude change. Thirdly, it acts on the advice of authors such as Wanous (1989) and included cultural information about the organisation. Finally, the design of the research expressly ensured that all subjects who participated in the study had little knowledge of the job. Although these factors were picked up and included when noted as problems with other research, this present study also suffers from some flaws.

The pre-test was initially designed to fulfil several functions, as noted

previously. Although the pre-test that was used functioned quite adequately as a means of ensuring the subjects were "naive" as to the position of consulting psychologist, a better design would have ensured that the pre-test may well have been able to be used as a post-test. This would have ensured a form of consistency in the testing procedure.

The Job Questionnaire design followed that of previous works (e.g. Saks, 1989), in terms of manipulation checks in scale development. It appears that traditionally in the RJP literature, many factors of job behaviour have been measured on scales with few items for each factor. A consistent, well constructed scale is important, but some authors (Kidder and Judd, 1986) have suggested that a more reliable scale will contain a greater number of items.

Although political and cultural information were both included in the information and stated overtly, the study did not directly examine the impact of these kinds of data on the realism of the job preview. Items such as "The preview told me the "real story" about the job" may key in to the political or cultural information issue, but have not specifically investigated it.

A research design (within and between groups) that presented all three forms of preview to subjects would allow for a greater degree of comparative information. Opinions could be polled as to the relative usefulness of each of the previews and their advantages and disadvantages in direct relation to each other. The time and expense involved in presenting the roleplay method to subjects was one of the overriding reasons why this was not used. Also, interviews of approximately ten minutes in length were conducted with subjects and it was difficult to schedule subjects in and around their respective university timetables.

Any longer experimentation time would have been logistically very difficult.

As mentioned in the literature review, criticism has been made in the past of RJP research that utilises relatively few subjects. Although significant results were achieved using powerful post-hoc tests, a future design could include a greater number of subjects. In terms of a greater variety of qualitative information gained from subjects, this increased number would be an advantage.

A lack of professional resources meant that the audio-visual RJP method was created on VHS. It is possible that the lack of "professional gloss" in the video could have reduced the video's chances of appearing to be realistic, but several subjects remarked anecdotally to the researcher that interestingly, this actually reduced the "propaganda-like" feeling for them. This was a variable which was not adequately controlled for.

As with any study that utilises a relatively small number of university students as research subjects, the results should be viewed with care when attempting to generalise to the greater population. Although students are also part of the working world to varying extents, as noted previously, the process of applying for a real job may well affect behaviour and attitudes in such a way that would be difficult to reproduce, even with careful simulation methods.

The data collected by the questionnaire was complimented well by the rich information provided by subjects in the interviews. It was from this interview data that many of the more interesting results of this study were obtained. It is difficult, however, to gather an appropriate mix of both quantitative and qualitative information. As in this case, significant relationships between variables are thrown into sharp relief by a questionnaire method which is subsequently analysed by

a statistical test. Descriptive statistics are easy to interpret and understand but establishing firm relationships among the data are more difficult. Both forms of information do have their place, however, in social psychological research.

6.4 Directions for Future Research

There are several limitations of the current study mentioned in the previous section that require closer examination. In particular, the political and cultural information input into the RJP should be examined as a factor in its own right and be evaluated as such.

Studies should also attempt to include reliable pre and post-tests and to possibly extend the scope of their research by including within as well as between groups designs.

Further attention should also be paid to theory development in this area. The utility of theories such as the satisficing models mentioned here should be evaluated more closely in terms of both RJP's and their component processes. Those researchers concerned with the "Air of Honesty" and "Caring" mediating processes would do well to examine the literature on satisficing theory.

Associated with this, authors concerned with the development of models to explain RJP function should include an evaluation of external economic conditions and the unemployment rates of the day and possibly incorporate this information into a "global" factor which will impact at all decisional stages of the model. Those practitioners who intend to implement a RJP may do well to heed this as well, and many may find that several forms of preview are required for different economic conditions. In times of high unemployment, the cost benefits

of even bothering with a RJP form of turnover intervention must be examined. While we in New Zealand are confronted by rising unemployment figures, research into other ways of reducing voluntary turnover should be taking shape. Researchers could also attempt to conduct a longitudinal study which directly examines the effect on percentages of the work force unemployed versus the rate of voluntary turnover of the presentation of an RJP.

No research to date appears to have examined biographic and demographic variables as mediators of RJP effectiveness. As it has been shown that the economic climate of a country may affect performance of the preview, it is possible that other factors such as race, gender, age and even cultural differences may impact upon RJP utility. There is at this stage no theory or model which includes such variables.

More research which attempts to provide research/experimental "closure" as Greenwood (1989) would term it, should certainly assist in clarifying the inconsistencies demonstrated in the literature. In simple terms, this will require further study to isolate the variables impacting on each of the issues in question. For example, the most appropriate method for the presentation of an RJP and the conditions which dictate this should be isolated before that RJP is required to demonstrate positive effects on turnover reduction.

6.5 Concluding Comments

A new method of presenting realistic job previews has been added to the literature although a number of practical limitations are recognised. The potential outcomes that a researcher or practitioner is attempting to achieve must be considered before a roleplay job preview, or indeed any job preview, is utilised. A requirement to make careful consideration of the economic climate the job preview is expected to work under is indicated and a rationale for the utilisation of a job preview should be addressed. If the goal of a researcher or practitioner is that of attitude change, then the roleplay presentation of a realistic job preview is an addition to the formats which have been used to date.

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JOB ANALYSIS

CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGIST

SUPER OBJECTIVES:

The ideal incumbent will generate new business for the organisation.

The ideal incumbent is required to diligently ensure completion of set tasks/H.R assignments in the following areas:

1. RECRUITMENT

a) Approach from client

- 1) Gain information relevant to clients requirements.
- 2) Perform appropriate data base search for resources.

b) Advertising

- 1) Examine appropriate EEO legislation.
- 2) Create well written and informative advertisement.

c) Responses to Advertisement

- 1) Analyze responses in view of clients person specification.
- 2) Determine which applicants are to be short listed.

d) Interviewing

- 1) Make behavioural judgements based on the applicants interview performance.
- 2) Determine applicants relevant skills and qualifications for the job.

- 3) Perform appropriate qualitative assessments and tests.
- 4) Create short list based on above information.

e) Present short list

- 1) Brief client on applicant quality and rationale for decisions made.
- 2) Perform administrative tasks required to organise applicant interviews with client.
- 3) Present client with C.V's and personal reports.

f) Follow up

- 1) Make offer of service to successful applicant.
- 2) Deal with unsuccessful candidates.

2) PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**a) Cold Calling**

- 1) Approach prospective client with offer of assistance.
- 2) Present self as appropriate ambassador for organisation.

b) Briefing of client

- 1) Present proposal of service to client.
- 2) Show excellent understanding of products provided by organisation.

c) Training

- 1) Communicate attributes of product.
- 2) Determine corporate culture of client organisation.

d) Follow up

- 1) Check standards created.
- 2) Utilise problem solving skills to further assist client.

3) REMUNERATION STRATEGY

a) Cold Calling

- 1) Approach prospective client with offer of assistance.
- 2) Present self as appropriate ambassador for organisation.

b) Briefing of client

- 1) Present proposal of service to client.
- 2) Show excellent understanding of products provided by organisation.

c) Training

- 1) Communicate attributes of product.
- 2) Determine corporate culture of client organisation.

d) Follow up

- 1) Check standards created.
- 2) Utilise problem solving skills to further assist client.

4) INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

a) Facilitation

- 1) Meet with I.R people including unions.
- 2) Have excellent working knowledge of I.R legislation.

b) Drafting contracts

5) REDUNDANCY COUNSELLING**a) Planning**

- 1) Liaise with managers to ascertain requirements.
- 2) Assist in training of managers.
- 3) Completing administrative tasks required to plan training session.

b) Implementation of program

- 1) Perform stress counselling sessions.
- 2) Establish individual client needs.

c) Individual counselling

- 1) Prepare and present counselling sessions on the following areas:
 - C.V Preparation
 - Letter writing
 - Skills awareness
 - Networking
 - Self Marketing
 - Financial Skills
 - Dealing with advertisements and agencies
 - Interview training

d) Follow up

- 1) Continue contact with client (ie: follow through successes etc.).
- 2) Provide extra counselling where necessary.

6) OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT**a) Administration of tests**

- 1) Attend briefing with client to understand assessment needs.
- 2) Ensure applicant has basic understanding of assessment procedure.
- 3) Ensure that tests are administered in a professional and standardised manner.

b) Scoring and interpretation

- 1) Score and interpret tests and write up reports in specified format.
- 2) Present report to client.

c) Provision of feedback

- 1) Provide feedback to all candidates who have undergone assessment.
- 2) Determine further needs of unsuccessful candidates (ie: career counselling).

d) Assessment centres

- 1) As above.

e) Training needs analysis

- 1) As above.

f) Graduate assessment

- 1) As above.

7) CAREER COUNSELLING

a) Establish client requirements

- 1) Prepare and present counselling sessions on the following areas:
 - C.V Preparation
 - Skills awareness
 - Knowledge of career/ job opportunities
 - Goal Setting
 - Dealing with ads and agencies

b) Follow up

- 1) Determine any extra client requirements.

8) TRAINING

a) Establish client needs

- 1) Attend briefing with client to determine training requirements.

b) Present proposal

- 1) Present individual training proposal to client.

c) Specialist training

- 1) Present training sessions on varied topics including:
 - Sales
 - Team building
 - Goal setting

d) Assessment of training

- 1) Test training applicability.
- 2) Report to client on training efficacy.

e) Follow up

- 1) Monitor further training requirements of client.

9) KEEP UP TO DATE WITH LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND PRODUCTS

- * Awareness of developments/other organisations Professional affiliations.
- * Attend seminars/conferences/specific training courses.

GENERAL PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES

- * People Skills
- * Excellent communication skills
- * Ability to be innovative
- * Have initiative
- * Have excellent confidence
- * Have excellent appearance
- * Be self motivated
- * Have ambition
- * Be able to work under pressure
- * Be well organised and have excellent planning skills

JOB PREVIEW
CHRISTCHURCH CONSULTING COMPANY

The position of consulting psychologist at Christchurch Consulting is extremely varied and interesting. There are many tasks that the job incumbent is required to complete and this will, in turn, mean that they will spend long hours both with their clients and at the office alone.

It is important to note that there is one vital objective for the consulting psychologist - to generate new business for the organisation. The main tasks and human resources assignments that are carried out to advance this objective generally fall into several main areas: recruitment and training, performance management systems and remuneration strategy, industrial relations, redundancy and career counselling and objective assessment. In order to complete these assignments, a consulting psychologist generally does four main things. Firstly, they meet with the client so that both understand what is required to be done. The psychologist needs to have excellent people skills and be able to show an in-depth knowledge of what Christchurch Consultants can offer the client.

At this stage, there is sufficient freedom for the psychologist to promote their own interests and this has happened in the past. Occasionally, clients have called in with a general inquiry and another psychologist has taken the call. This has resulted in that psychologist getting the assignment and all the "glory" as well.

The second step is generally the development and administration of whatever is to be done for the client. It usually begins with a proposal of service and is developed from there. The third step consists of the actual interviewing, training sessions or program implementation. The psychologist needs to have a whole range of skills to be able to deal with these tasks, always keeping the major objective in mind - that they are required to generate new business for Christchurch Consultants.

The consulting psychologist really needs to be able to work under pressure, as the schedule proposed by the client may be difficult to keep to. The ability to keep up with these demands is expected and may not be rewarded.

Generally, the partners at Christchurch Consulting are very busy with their own projects and assignments and this can mean that they have little time for their own staff. Consequently, formal appraisal of the consulting psychologists performance may be lacking and acknowledgement of a job well done may not occur. This can be seen by some staff as a bit discouraging at times.

The final part of most jobs completed in the consulting field is a follow-up which checks how appropriate the work done for the client has been and clears up any difficulties created by the implementation of the program.

It is during the follow-up that the consulting psychologist's diplomacy skills are most important. They may need to deal with distraught workers who have been made redundant, people who were unsuccessful in their job applications, or staff who feel that they have been cheated in their employment contracts. Counselling skills and an ability to empathise are vital. This area is often considered to be very stressful, as the psychologist has to deal with a wide range of emotions including extreme anger and deep depression. The psychologist needs to be an excellent communicator and obviously confident in their opinion and appearance.

When keeping up to date with the latest developments in human resources, the consultant has to be ready to go to any training courses or seminars that Christchurch Consulting see as important.

On occasions, the management team at Christchurch Consulting makes decisions that the staff may not agree with. Some partners are known to enjoy the power of decision making control, but this can be very difficult if an employee wants to get something done in a hurry. If the psychologist can get on well with most of the partners, then they will probably find it easier to get things done.

Recently, Christchurch Consulting has had to reduce its general expenditure, in line with the country's economic downturn. This has meant that certain conditions have been retrenched.

The company used to provide chocolate biscuits for morning and afternoon teas, but this was recently removed and plain biscuits provided. Some of the Christchurch Consulting support staff also had their working hours reduced as management thought these were both good ways of saving money. This has created negative feelings in many of the staff who believe that these decisions may lead to others that threaten their job security.

Christchurch Consulting has a generally young staff, most of whom are happy, ambitious people. Most are keen to be committed and to work through their lunch hour and at night and weekends. Several groups of like-minded people can be found at Christchurch Consulting. The older employees tend to stick together, as do the younger ones, and each group's view of the corporate culture is very different.

Christchurch Consulting wants to be known as the best medium-sized consulting firm in the South Island. This edict has really been taken to heart by their younger employees, but the older ones don't see this as important as getting the immediate job done. This is why each group tends to stick together - they all seem to agree on this point. Staff training courses have tried to change these differing attitudes but it is hard to break old habits and ideas.

Christchurch Consulting has an active social club, and staff dinners at local restaurants are quite common. All enjoy the chance to talk socially and bounce ideas off one another. Most of the staff enjoy working with a team of intelligent, committed people, where there is room for promotion on the basis of merit and plenty of chances to acquire new skills.

The position of consulting psychologist at Christchurch Consulting is a challenging one, and requires much from the person holding that position. The job is varied and interesting, and provides scope for the consultant to develop in many areas. The organisation is young and dynamic, continually changing conditions within it can be seen as both a liability and an asset.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The scene is set at Christchurch Consulting where the new psychologist is being introduced to their supervisor and another member of the staff with whom they will be working.

The new psychologist has come directly from university and has never worked in an Human Resources consultancy before. His/her knowledge is therefore mainly theoretical and the supervisor needs to outline the way things are done at Christchurch Consulting Company. The information provided will focus both on actual tasks and objectives as well as some background information on the organisation's culture.

The supervisor, Anne Ross, has been a partner with Christchurch Consulting Company since its formation in 1981. She is extremely loyal to the company and recognises that in the consulting business, a committed staff will create valuable new business for an organisation still in its formative years. Anne and her husband Roger have one child, Steven (aged 3), who is in day care.

Allen Hewson has worked for Christchurch Consulting Company since 1990. Previous to that, he had worked for one of the larger human resources consulting companies in Christchurch. Allen is a friendly, hard worker who has strong career goals, and his training as a psychologist makes him an adept people-watcher. Not much that goes on inside Christchurch Consulting escapes his notice and, without being a gossip, he is not afraid to discuss the "behind the scenes" aspects of his job. Allen is in his mid-twenties and is unmarried.

ROLE - NEW CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGIST

You are about to begin your first proper meeting with your new supervisor, Anne Ross, and later meet with one of the other members of the staff, Allen Hewson.

You are a little nervous about these meetings, as this is your first proper full-time position as a psychologist and you are keen to find out how things are really done. You have been told by your lecturers at University that you have covered all the main areas of expertise required by employers which includes:

- a) Recruitment - knowing how to select the right person for the job using special tests, interviews and reference checks.
- b) Training - how to train staff and managers in specialised areas and to be able to assess the usefulness of the training later.
- c) Performance management systems and Remuneration strategy - how to help an organisation manage its staff in the best possible way for them, in terms of what goals are set and what the company wants to achieve.
- d) Industrial Relations - you are aware of and know how to apply, the relevant legislation that governs recruiting and treatment of employees.
- e) Redundancy and Career Counselling - your knowledge in this area has mainly focused around assisting in a goal setting exercise for the client. You have no formal counselling training.
- f) Objective assessment - you are familiar with several forms of personality and intelligence tests, and you are aware of the advantages and failings of these kinds of tests.

Anne Ross and Allen Hewson both appear to be happy, intelligent and very friendly people. You find that they are trying to put you at ease and be as informative as possible.

IMPORTANT

It is not the function of this roleplay to discuss the actual tasks in detail, just pretend that you know all about the tasks as outlined above. Do converse with the supervisor and the other worker as you would in a normal social situation and respond accordingly.

Suggested questions

To Anne Ross

- What is the nature of the work at Christchurch Consulting, and how is it accomplished?
- What are the rest of the staff at Christchurch Consulting like?

To Allen Hewson

- Anne Ross mentioned some reductions in expenditure, what form did these cuts take?
- What are the partners at Christchurch Consulting like? Do they treat the staff well?
- What do you like most about working for Christchurch Consulting?

ROLE - ALLEN HEWSON

You are about to begin an informal meeting with the new psychologist who is to share your office. You have been at Christchurch Consulting Company for several years now, and you feel that you know the organisation and what goes on within it pretty well now. While you are perfectly happy with your job and its conditions, you are not blind to faults in the system that have surprised and sometimes disappointed you in the past.

The main objective of this meeting is for you to outline the nature of everyday life in Christchurch Consulting Company based on certain incidents that have particularly stuck in your mind. Try to be as conversational as possible, this is not meant to be a monologue. Respond to the other person's interest in what you have to say and provide information in the natural course of conversation. Remember - the new psychologist has just come through a fairly heavy meeting with Anne Ross and will probably still be a little nervous.

Try to present the information below in as informative a manner as possible without sounding gossippy or appearing to whinge about your job. Try not to let the new psychologist ask questions you cannot answer from the available information and do not make up any information or scenarios.

"EVERYDAY-LIFE" INFORMATION

There is sufficient freedom for a psychologist at Christchurch Consulting to promote their own interests and this has happened in the past. Occasionally, clients have called in with a general inquiry and another psychologist has taken the call. This has resulted in that psychologist getting the assignment and all the "glory" as well.

Generally, the partners at Christchurch Consulting are very busy with their own projects and assignments and this can mean that they have little time for their own staff. Consequently, formal appraisal of the consulting psychologists performance may be lacking and acknowledgement of a job well done may not occur. This has been a bit discouraging at times.

On occasions, the management team at Christchurch Consulting makes decisions that the staff may not agree with. Some partners are known to enjoy the power of decision making control, but this can be very difficult if you want to get something done in a hurry. If you can get on well with most of the partners, then you will probably find it easier to get things done.

The company used to provide us with chocolate biscuits for morning and afternoon teas, but this was recently removed and plain biscuits provided instead. Some of the Christchurch Consulting support staff also had their working hours reduced as the management thought these were both good ways of saving money. This has created

negative feelings in many of the staff who believe that these decisions may lead to others that threaten their job security.

Christchurch Consulting wants to be known as the best medium-sized consulting firm in the South Island. The younger employees really tend to get behind this, but the older ones don't see it as important as getting the immediate job done. This is why each group tends to stick together - they all seem to agree on this point.

Most of us enjoy working with a team of intelligent, committed people, and there is room for promotion on the basis of merit and plenty of chances to acquire new skills.

ROLE - ANNE ROSS

You are about to begin an introductory interview with the new psychologist. This person is a little nervous so you will need to put them at ease by providing the job information in a friendly conversational manner. This should be done without compromising your role as the new psychologist's employer.

Since the new psychologist has come straight from university, you will need to provide them with a certain amount of information about the job and lifestyle at Christchurch Consulting Company. You have ensured that Allen Hewson will work in the same office as the new psychologist, as he is a friendly and comfortable person to be with.

The main objective of this meeting is for you to outline the main tasks of the job. Ensure that the new psychologist does not ask any questions that cannot be answered from the information provided below. Do not make up any information or scenarios yourself.

JOB INFORMATION

The position of consulting psychologist at Christchurch Consulting is extremely varied and interesting. There are many tasks that you will be required to complete and this will, in turn, mean that you will spend long hours both with your clients, and at the office alone.

It is important to note that there is one vital objective for the consulting psychologist - to generate new business for the organisation. The main tasks and human resources assignments that are carried out to advance this objective generally fall into several main areas:

- recruitment and training,
- performance management systems and remuneration strategy,
- industrial relations,
- redundancy and career counselling,
- objective assessment.

In order to complete these assignments, a consulting psychologist generally does four main things.

Firstly, they meet with the client so that both understand what is required to be done. The psychologist needs to have excellent people skills and be able to show an in-depth knowledge of what Christchurch Consultants can offer the client.

The second step is usually the development and administration of whatever is to be done for the client. It usually begins with a proposal of service and is developed from there.

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The position of consulting psychologist at Christchurch Consulting is a challenging one, and will require much from you. The job is varied and interesting, and provides scope for you to develop in many areas. The organisation is young and dynamic, continually changing conditions within it can be seen as both a liability and an asset.

**CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGIST
JOB QUESTIONS**

The following is a list of tasks that a psychologist who is employed in a Human Resources Consultancy might be required to do.

Imagine you are a consulting psychologist who has been asked to carry out a recruitment assignment for your client, Big Builders Incorporated. You need to find the best person for the job of foreman.

The different tasks below have been scrambled up. All you have to do is put the tasks in order from

1 = *FIRST THING TO DO*

to

14 = *LAST THING TO DO*

- a) Determine which applicants are to be interviewed by you.
- b) Make offer of service to successful applicant.
- c) Create a well written and informative advertisement.
- d) Deal with unsuccessful candidates.
- e) Make behavioural judgements based on the applicant's interview performance.
- f) Present client with C.V's and personal reports.
- g) Gain information relevant to client's requirements.
- h) Brief client on applicant quality and rationale for decisions made.
- i) Perform appropriate database search for job information.
- j) Perform administrative tasks required to organise applicant interviews with client.
- k) Create short list based on available information.
- l) Analyze advertisement responses in view of client's person specification.
- m) Perform appropriate assessments and tests.
- n) Evaluate applicant's relevant skills and qualifications for the job.

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PRR 1

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PRR
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JOB QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire requires you to provide your opinion of the job preview you have just experienced. Read each question carefully, then circle the number that best represents your opinion.

REMEMBER: ANSWER THE QUESTIONNAIRE AS IF YOU WERE APPLYING FOR A JOB AS A CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGIST. IMAGINE THAT YOU HAVE THE APPROPRIATE QUALIFICATIONS.

AGE:

SEX:

INITIALS:

TYPE OF PREVIEW SEEN:

1. I believe that the job preview told me the "real story" about the job.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	agree				disagree	
	strongly				strongly	

2. During this study I seemed to be given a very realistic picture of the job of a consulting psychologist.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	agree				disagree	
	strongly				strongly	

OFFICE USE ONLY
LINE 1

1		2
3		4
		5
		6

OP 1		7
		8
		9
		10
		11
		12
		13
		14
		15
OP 10		16

3. I don't think I found out much information about the job of a consulting psychologist.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree					disagree	
strongly					strongly	

4. The job preview provided the best overview of the job that I could ask for.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree					disagree	
strongly					strongly	

5. All of the task requirements were clearly outlined to me in the job preview.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree					disagree	
strongly					strongly	

6. I found out a lot of things about the job of a consulting psychologist that I never knew before.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree					disagree	
strongly					strongly	

7. My view of the job of a consulting psychologist hasn't changed much since the beginning of this study.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree					disagree	
strongly					strongly	

8. As a job applicant, all of the questions I had about working as a consulting psychologist were answered.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree					disagree	
strongly					strongly	

9. As a job applicant, I don't think I received the information I wanted about working as a personnel psychologist.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree					disagree	
strongly					strongly	

10. As a job applicant, all of the major issues that concerned me about working as a consulting psychologist were addressed in the information I received.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
agree					disagree	
strongly					strongly	

JOB QUESTIONS

You are required to complete the following short list. It requires you to describe the four main things a psychologist does to complete a human resources assignment.

Place your answer in the gap underneath each question number.

1. STEP ONE

2. STEP TWO

3. STEP THREE

4. STEP FOUR

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PST 1		32
		33
		34
		35
PST 4		

QUESTIONS FOR STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. Why do you believe that you were/were not given a realistic picture of the job?
2. What advantages do you think a brochure (video/roleplay) form of job preview might have?
3. What are the disadvantages to the preview you read (saw/participated in)?
4. Based on the job information you have been provided with, would you accept or decline a job offer with Christchurch Consulting Company?
5. Given the current employment situation in New Zealand, is an RJP likely to change a person's mind about accepting or declining a job offer?