

Abstract

Improving Government Hiring Practices [REDACTED]

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

[REDACTED] University

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## Abstract

Due to many factors, companies often have a hard time hiring and retaining white-collar professionals. This problem is widespread in the workforce and includes government agencies. Human resource (HR) professionals routinely “steal” professionals from one another, causing numerous problems, including high HR costs, loss of workforce continuity, and evaporating corporate knowledge and history. Governmental agencies, which desperately need highly qualified personnel, are at the bottom of the hiring food-chain when the issue of acquiring educated professional employees is involved. In particular, the United States (U.S.) federal agencies are often the last place many workers look to for employment due to low salaries, stifling working conditions, antiquated databases, and generally outdated and unsympathetic managerial practices. There are numerous ways to combat loss of talent and these methods will be explored in this paper.

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## Table of Contents

Section 1: Foundation of the Study .....	1
Background of the Problem.....	1
Problem Statement.....	2
Purpose Statement .....	3
Nature of the Study.....	4
Research Question .....	5
Operational Definitions.....	7
Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations .....	8
Significance of the Study .....	10
Contribution to Business Practice.....	11
Implications for Social Change .....	12
A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature.....	13
Transition .....	20
Section 2: The Project.....	21
Purpose Statement .....	21
Role of the Researcher .....	21
Participants .....	22
Research Method and Design.....	22
Research Method .....	23
Research Design .....	25
Population and Sampling .....	26
Ethical Research .....	27
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change .....	29
Implications for Social Change .....	29
Conclusion.....	30
References.....	31

## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Although this problem is decades old, it remains unresolved. The government has been experiencing the problem of acquiring and employing professionals since its inception. This includes local, state, and federal agencies. Low salaries, outdated management techniques, and a lack of other modern incentives have accentuated the problem of acquiring and retaining employees within the ranks of government. Accordingly, the U.S. federal government tends to attract the lowest denominator of white-collar professionals compared to their private sector counterparts like Verizon, Facebook, and Google.

### **Background of the Problem**

The problem of attracting quality employees is further exacerbated when dealing with the Department of Defense (DoD), which is a military arm of the federal government. The DoD tends to have obsolete and inefficient databases, low salaries, stuffy work environments, lack of incentives to stay onboard, and managers who are unable or unwilling to enact positive change. For example, a DoD agency within a 50-mile radius of St. Louis has had, and is having, an incredibly difficult time finding and attracting professionals due to outdated HR practices, unattractive salaries, and archaic work-environments. To date, the agency employs approximately 100 persons in the Information Technology (IT) field, with between one to five slots being contracted out to civilian agencies while the remaining slots went to government employees. Given that most employees performing such jobs work for outsourced agencies does not enable managers to have the necessary oversight required to ensure optimal performance levels

compatible with government specifications. Additionally, there is a lack of loyalty among the contractors, which does not factor into favorable continuity of government (COG).

Now that the context for the problem has been identified, our attention shall now concentrate on the *Problem Statement*.

### **Problem Statement**

Private sector human resource (HR) managers are bound by nothing other than the pool of applicants from which they have to choose. Historically, the respective pools of applicants tended to experience little variation in the fundamental knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) from one generation to another. Millennials, however, are different. They have seemingly changed the landscape of the human resources function from reactive to proactive. While certain precursors like formalization and top management traits have been identified in prior research as influencing market orientation (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Qu, 2012), current research is concentrating on innovation and *organizational culture* (Felix, 2015). The logic is to ascertain whether innovation and organizational culture also influence market orientation. Indeed, Deshpande & Webster's (1989) study identified organizational culture to correlate strongly with market orientation. Nevertheless, Felix's (2015) study posits the possibility of organizational informality (internal arrangements of social discourse and communication), rather than such formal relationships, could influence market orientation. This study seeks to build on the work of Felix (2015) and Deshpande & Webster (1989) but with a focus on how Millennials have changed organizational culture and the resultant HR process and framework. Millennials currently make up approximately 33% of the UK workforce and

about 50% of the United States workforce and are expected to reach 50% of the global workforce by 2020. Accordingly, the general business problem is that HR managers at TBD, Inc. fail to acquire enough qualified employees to adequately meet organizational goals due to perceived problems with hiring individuals from the Millennial generation. Hence, the specific business problem is how to acquire enough qualified Millennials to adequately meet organizational goals. In the absence of effective hiring protocols for Millennials, this study posits, negative perceived consequences to organizational performance (i.e., profitability) become more prevalent.

### **Purpose Statement**

The underlying focus of this qualitative case study is to investigate the perceptions and experiences of DoD management of OPM's hiring process of a DoD agency in the St. Louis metropolitan area for civilian personnel. Such inquiry is designed to identify the degree to which the DoD hiring protocols are perceived to be effective and the opportunities for improvement. To ascertain an organization's ability to maximize the probability of hiring the most qualified employees and thus, to ensure optimal levels of organizational performance, such inquiry is necessary. Then, to consider attitudinal perceptions as the cornerstone of the analysis formulating and directing the conceptualization framework of the measurement for DoD hiring effectiveness. The specific target population used in this study is a federal government office in the St. Louis metropolitan area. The impact for social change is that hiring professionals who are natives of, and reside and work in, the St. Louis area will inherently strengthen the local

economy when they invest their time and resources into civic activities that will benefit the local social infrastructure.

### **Nature of the Study**

The qualitative research method applied to this case study allows for research into the examination of ‘why’ and ‘how’ decisions are being made when hiring professionals for the DoD agency under study, and not simply the what, where, when, and who is being studied (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, a qualitative evaluation will allow for the study of the social body of the demographic under review (Alasuutari, 2010). Contrasting quantitative methodology, qualitative researchers examine information through inductive methods and by building patterns and themes and utilizing inductive reasoning methodologies to ascertain the meaning behind the data (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Mixed method researchers combine quantitative and qualitative elements into their study (Creswell & Poth, 2017) and so, due to the quantitative factor, will not work when exploring reasons why the federal government is having difficulty in attracting and retaining quality white-collar professionals in the St. Louis Metropolitan area. The qualitative method forces the researcher to keep an open mind on a problem by not entertaining preconceived ideas of outcome, thus removing researcher bias from the study. Of the three available methods from which to choose, qualitative analysis is best suited for finding solutions to the identified problem in this study.

The case-study design of the ensuing research enables concentration on one specific organizational problem for a precise period. This emphasis consequently addresses the degree, rather than the duration, of the problem. This design structure



enables an all-inclusive interpretation of the immediate issues rather than any remote influences involved. Accordingly, the case-study design designated for this study offers several advantages over quantitative and mixed method studies as well as phenomenological, correlation, and sequential explanatory methodologies. Among the various approaches to academic research, the most common methods include a quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method (Williams, 2011). While each research method has its strengths, but not all methods are appropriate concerning any given research objective. They are each distinct, and each has its advantages depending on the scope of the research to be conducted. While quantitative research is associated with the collection of quantifiable data and statistical analysis, qualitative research is rather holistic (Williams, 2011).

### **Research Question**

The fundamental research question this study seeks to answer is to ascertain what strategies frontline managers of federal agencies can utilize to hire suitable employees. The focus of this study will be to evaluate strategies managers of federal agencies use to hire employees. For that matter, the following questions will be employed to effectuate the study objectives:

1. What DoD HR processes, controls, or policies and procedures are either most or least helpful to hiring enough qualified employees to meet organizational goals?
2. Why are such HR processes, controls, or policies and procedures most or least helpful to hiring enough qualified employees to meet organizational goals?

3. What associated advantages or barriers (challenges or problems), if any, do you perceive in the current DoD system that affect or influence your ability to hire enough qualified employees to meet organizational goals? Why do you think that?

### **Conceptual Framework**

Selection of government employees, if founded upon Weberian (1922) principles of selection for employees, should be based on the potential employee's intrinsic qualifications. That is, to ensure efficient and optimal outcomes. Nevertheless, the selection of many, if not most, federal employees are largely based on factors other than inherent qualifications for the job. Ultimately, this impacts the selection of higher-level positions and could lead to negative consequences of (government) organizational performance.

Organizational performance is often characterized by the degree to which either an individual or a corporation meets or exceeds (*e.g.*, financial) goals and expectations. A foundational component of organizational performance is the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. According to Ostroff and Schmitt (1993), although there exists ample research on organizational performance, no universal agreement exists with respect to the definition, or for that matter any universal understanding of performance criteria used to measure such performance. While it is possible for effectiveness and efficiency to co-exist in top performing organizations, there is not necessarily a direct correlation. In other words, a company could be highly efficient but not effective. Alternatively, a company could be highly effective, but not efficient (Ostroff and Schmitt, 1993).

Hence, the concept of performance has been widely debated. According to Ployhart (2015), firm performance refers to operational measurements like productivity. Others are more simplistic, like Giauque, Anderfuhren-Biget, and Varone (2013) who contend that organizational performance is based more upon perspective as to organizational efficiency. According to Katsaros et al. (2015), organizational performance is a complicated construct, especially given there is no universal definition or means of measurement. Accordingly, they support the proposition that firm/organizational performance must concentrate on operative goals (Katsaros et al., 2015). “It should be also noted that the terms ‘effectiveness’ and ‘performance’ are used interchangeably because problems related to their definition, measurement and explanation are nearly identical” (March and Sutton, 1997, p. 57).

### **Operational Definitions**

*Corporate social responsibility:* the concept of an entity’s adoption of discretionary behaviors and actions intended to benefit the overall well-being of society at large (Korschun, Bhattacharya, and Swain, 2014) to attain competitive advantage (Mishra and Modi, 2016) by maximizing organizational performance (Cottrill, 1990). Accordingly, CSR is, in both form and substance, a self-imposed and self-regulated construct whereby the organization integrates such values internally to benefit all internal and external stakeholders to the fullest extent possible.

*Firm performance:* Refers to operational measurements of an organization’s productivity (Ployhart, 2015), efficiency (Giauque et al., 2013), and operative goals (Katsaros et al., 2015). “It should be also noted that the terms ‘effectiveness’ and

‘performance’ are used interchangeably because problems related to their definition, measurement and explanation are nearly identical” (March and Sutton, 1997). For the purposes of this paper, i). The terms effectiveness and performance will be considered synonymous with one another in their intrinsic meaning within the context of organizational performance as contemplated herein; and ii). Firm performance shall be construed as the extent of a firm’s accomplishment as a factor of its attainment of strategic goals (Long, 2015).

*Market orientation:* This study adopts the definition from Slater (1990), that “market orientation is the organization culture . . . that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business” (p. 21)

*Organizational performance:* See “Firm performance”

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

The interwoven dynamic of the human resources environment and function is an integral part of virtually every company and entity regardless of its size. Arguably, choosing the right employees for the right jobs is more in Porten for smaller entities than their large corporate counterparts, given that each employee and a smaller organization has a greater probability of affecting the performance of the overall organization, but larger enterprises have more at stake, at least from a functional and financial standpoint.

The rules and regulations of most human resource departments, and the respective decisions made by them, are typically well structured and designed for the greater good of the entity in question. The private sector and the government sector are similar in such

respects. However, the government sector is unique with regard to the centralization of human resources practices. This is by design. This system is governed by a separate organizational entity (*i.e.*, a governing body) that dictates policies and practices regarding the hiring government employees throughout all government entities. Nevertheless, it acts in unison with these separate governmental divisions for the greater good of the government sector in the hiring of civilian personnel.

It remains in an organization's best interest to both maintain and update its hiring practices to optimize resources and functionality, thus maximizing the probability of effectuating corporate objectives, sustainability and effectiveness. The policies and procedures associated with hiring personnel would be well served by implementing best practices and assessing the extent to which their policies and procedures most adequately achieve such corporate objectives. In theory, organizations within the government sector should mirror these ideals most frequently associated within the private sector. Nevertheless, sound theory does not always translate into the realities of the real world. Investigation as to the likelihood of the government sector's adoption of best practices concerning the hiring of civilian personnel is beyond the scope of this study.

Accordingly, a threshold consideration is that there exists no universally accepted methodology to accurately measure organizational performance. It is unclear that any of the current methodologies serve the task well. For example, it could be done through purely financial performance, increasing market share, competitive advantage (Ployhart, 2015) or output volume (Du Gay, 2015). Indeed, Du Gay (2015) proposes that the notion of what constitutes organizational performance alone should be an area of future research

in itself. Additionally, given that research has established that employee attitudes may be tied to financial performance (Ployhart, 2015), perhaps employee attitudes should have its turn at the stand of determining organizational performance. Accordingly, this paper considers attitudinal perceptions as the cornerstone of the analysis formulating and directing the conceptualization framework of measurement for DoD hiring effectiveness.

For that matter, self-reporting will be relied upon for the underlying data relating to perceptions thereof. Despite this reliance, certain limitations of self-reported data, such as self-deception and subjectivity (Yannakakis & Hallam, 2011), are possible. Further, since this study was focused on a single governmental agency (*i.e.*, the DoD) and the survey methodology was directed towards identification of agency-specific factors within the DoD, it could be argued that the survey results may be limited in scope with respect to application for other organizations.

The life cycle of this study was relatively brief, as was the totality of resources available for utilization. More specifically, this study was formulated, designed, implemented, and completed within approximately six months by a single researcher. The scarcity of resources also translated into a limited population sampling, which could be considered a secondary delimiting factor.

### **Significance of the Study**

There exists a significant void in the academic literature concerning the effectiveness of the OPM's talent management regime to choose applicants for permanent positions within the federal government (Martinez, 2015; Casey, 2017). While Martinez (2015) identified shortcomings of the talent management for the Department of

the Army's civilian workforce and Casey (2017) studied the ineffective management of the U.S. Air Force's internal practices, no studies were identified linking the DoD, or any government sector talent management initiatives, within the ambit of CSR or market orientation modalities.

This study contributes to the existing body of research by verifying the influences and impacts of CSR and market orientation on organizational performance through empirical analysis of the resultant outcomes. Since managers in the federal government sector fail to acquire enough qualified employees to adequately meet organizational goals, it is believed that associating this enterprise function with the widely accepted principles of CSR and market orientation will not only contribute to the discourse but also facilitate more global adoption of such principles in the government sector. This would arguably have significant positive impacts on the entire civilian workforce in the government sector, but also to all government stakeholders both inside and outside the government and military sectors of the United States.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

This study may be of value to organizations in both the private and public sectors within certain contexts. Specifically, it is anticipated that such a system will necessarily create a more effective mechanism by which businesses can implement their internal HR functionality to facilitate the attainment of organizational goals and benchmarks. Accordingly, it is proposed, any organization could conceivably benefit from the requisite improvement of the HR business platform. However, larger companies and

organizations that remain susceptible to increased competition and turnover would be particularly well-suited for this performance enhancement mechanism.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Based on the totality of the literature review, it is apparent that CSR has not been adequately contemplated, if at all, within the context of maximizing organizational performance of governmental entities. As a result, this study may prove to be the conduit for sweeping reform, especially among larger organizations looking to become more competitive in the marketplace. In the long-term, this study may enhance overall corporate performance, increase efficiencies, save time and money, reduce turnover, and increase organizational performance. This is accomplished by maximizing the probability of each job function being filled by the right employee at the right time, and with minimal turnover concerns or negative ramifications associated therewith. However, this study has even broader potential ramifications and implications.

Given the government sector's unique focus and potential societal impact, the typical governmental entity affects a broader array of constituents than a more traditional organization in the private sector. For that matter, the stakeholders associated with the DoD include not only employees, vendors and clients but also society at large. The DoD budget is so massive that even short-term economic stimulus is expected. For example, it remains responsible for paying over five million people and contractors. Indeed, most companies cannot claim among their stakeholders to be every U.S. citizen or the safety and security of all citizens as their implicit purpose. Quite simply, the DoD affects all U.S. citizens by equipping the military with the ability to safeguard the United States



against military or terror attacks. As America's biggest employer, with approximately 2.5 million active duty and reservist personnel and nearly 900,000 civilian personnel and a total spending budget of almost \$830 billion, even incremental increases in efficiency could necessarily produce significant cost savings, a trickle-down reduction of our budget deficit and ultimately the U.S. national debt.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

Preliminary research in market orientation and CSR revealed a relatively healthy body of research. In a concomitant research stream considering the associations of CSR and market orientation, insightful results have been noted in the area of connecting market orientation and CSR (Han et al., 2013).

#### *Corporate Social Responsibility*

CSR analysis has been conducted through two primary schools of thought, the agency theory (Jensen and Meckling, 1976) and stakeholder theory. Given that substantive analysis of agency theory is beyond the scope of this paper, I shall only note that it is a rather antiquated theory that posits managers, as agents for the firm, are the beneficiaries of certain firm-specific information which can be used to their advantage and to the detriment of stakeholders (Mishra and Modi, 2016) with a resultant reduction in stakeholder wealth (Friedman, 1970). On the other hand, the stakeholder theory (Friedman, 1984) and the resource-based view (e.g. Barney, 1991; Brik et al., 2011) encompass the adopted views of the majority of academics today (Mishra and Modi, 2016). The essence of stakeholder theory is that the totality of an organizations's

stakeholders should be considered to attain competitive advantage (Mishra and Modi, 2016).

While primarily studied with respect to its relationship to performance (Cottrill, 1990), CSR has been plagued by a lack of uniformity as to how to define the construct (Mihalache, 2013). However, CSR has been characterized as encompassing an organizations's discretionary behaviors and actions intended to benefit the overall well-being of society at large (Korschun, Bhattacharya, and Swain, 2014). Accordingly, CSR is, in both form and substance, a self-imposed and self-regulated corporate governance structure whereby the company integrates values into internal operations, for the greater good. This is not only for company shareholders but all internal and external stakeholders. Such stakeholders include but are not limited to, employees, customers, the community, and investors.

### *Market Orientation*

Kotler and Levy (1969) set the stage for organizational marketing and research theory nearly fifty years ago, and their theories still resonate today. They posited that “marketing is a pervasive societal activity,” going well beyond the selling of traditional goods and services (p.44). Organizational marketing, they surmised, is deliberate in its intended outcomes of producing *favorable attitudes* and *satisfaction* among its consumers.

It was not until 1990 that two landmark studies (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990) identified and instituted the concept of market orientation, which both studies found to be positively correlated with performance. According to Narver and

Slater (1990), “market orientation is the organization culture . . . that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business” (p. 21) which encompasses three primary dimensions: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination. Accordingly, the collective contribution to strategic marketing of these studies is significant, to say the least. Indeed, they have been instrumental in informing our understanding of the interplay between how companies can maintain competitive advantage by meeting the needs of their collective internal and external stakeholders (Brik et al., 2011).

Market orientation has three fundamental behavioral dimensions: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination (Narver and Slater, 1990). In their study, Narver and Slater (1990) formulate an empirical measurement framework of market orientation, the first of its kind, and the resultant profitability effects for the business. They theorized that higher firm levels of market orientation lead to correspondingly higher levels of profitability, *ceteris paribus*. Regarding the constructs of an organization, the implementation of the marketing concept is referred to as its market orientation (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990).

In their study, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) address the perceived void of academic literature in marketing orientation. They believed there was virtually a wholesale absence of literature on the implementation of the marketing concept. Accordingly, they sought to resolve such void by identifying and defining operationally the market orientation concept and framework (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). They posited that, despite the

absence of a universal definition for the marketing concept, there exist three fundamental components: customer focus, coordinated marketing, and profitability. Upon the conclusion of their independent field research, they streamlined concepts of market orientation into three core issues: intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination, and responsiveness to market intelligence (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990).

Fundamentally speaking, the totality of the market orientation constructs and considerations is an organization's external focus on external factors affecting the entity (Jaworski and Kohli, 1996). Despite the historic popularity and adoption of market orientation, not all research looks upon market orientation favorably (Gromark and Melin, 2013). In their isolated study, Gromark and Melin (2013) consider market orientation to be overly customer-centric. Additionally, it is viewed by others (Tarnovskaya, 2007) to be: "1) *reactive*, since the essence of the orientation is satisfying current customer's expressed demands; 2) *narrow-minded*, because too much consideration is given to the customer at the cost of other important stakeholders; and 3) *tactical*, since market orientation has become synonymous with a number of behaviours and activities in the organisation" (Gromark and Melin, 2013).

#### *Market Orientation and CSR*

Simply put, market orientation is a systematic informational gathering and dissemination process with respect to the attainment of information (of customers and competitors). Upon acquisition of such information, it is then disseminated to multiple internal business units in preparation for appropriate responses regarding said information

(Gopalakrishna and Subramanian, 2004). According to Narver and Slater (1990), “market orientation is the organization culture . . . that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers and, thus, continuous superior performance for the business” (p. 21) which encompasses three primary dimensions: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination. Further, Slater and Narver (1995, p. 67) were clearly advocates of the criticality of other stakeholders by further conceptualizing market orientation as “a culture that (1) places the highest priority on the profitable creation and maintenance of superior customer value while considering the interests of other key stakeholders; and (2) provides norms for behavior regarding the organizational development of and responsiveness to market information.” Research has either implicitly or explicitly acknowledged the evolution of the marketing concept (Ferrell et al., 2010), as evidenced by several of the more recent definitions of marketing from the American Marketing Association (AMA). In 2004, the AMA definition explicitly referenced stakeholders (Felix, 2015), while the current definition, adopted in 2013, considers that “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (American Marketing Association, 2013).

Given that it now includes “value for . . . partners, and society at large” in the foundational constructs of the marketing concept, it implicitly underscores the impetus of current academic research to focus on its relation to such external modalities. In light of the inherent interrelationship between CSR and the stakeholder theory (Hildebrand et al.,

2011), marketing orientation has gradually emerged in stakeholder dialogue and thus, CSR dialogue (Felix, 2015). While it is important to keep in mind, however, that CSR and market orientation are mutually exclusive—in both theory and practice, the evolutionary paths of marketing orientation and CSR have begun to merge (Felix, 2015). While this is not a commentary on where such theory will develop in the future, it is a fact of the present, which deserves further exploration.

#### *Market orientation precursors*

While certain precursors like formalization and top management traits have been identified in prior research as influencing market orientation (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Qu, 2012), current research is concentrating on innovation and organizational culture (Felix, 2015). The logic is to ascertain whether innovation and organizational culture also influence market orientation. Indeed, Deshpande & Webster's (1989) study identified organizational culture to correlate strongly with market orientation. Nevertheless, Felix's (2015) study posits the possibility of organizational informality (internal arrangements of social discourse and communication), rather than such formal relationships, could influence market orientation.

Additionally, it has also been shown that innovation is positively correlated to organizational culture (Hurley and Holt, 1998). In particular, informality has been shown as a characteristic of innovative companies (Siguaw et al., 2006; Teece, 1996).

#### *Market orientation and CSR outputs*

Both academics and marketing managers have eagerly awaited a consensus as to the resultant outputs of market orientation and CSR (Felix, 2015). It has been established

that market orientation is a systematic informational gathering and dissemination *process* with respect to the attainment of information (of customers and competitors). Upon acquisition of such information, it is then disseminated to multiple internal business units in preparation for appropriate responses regarding said information (Gopalakrishna and Subramanian, 2004). Accordingly, it harmonizes the business with various externalities so as to improve overall performance (Gopalakrishna and Subramanian, 2004). Further, previous research has demonstrated strong correlations between CSR and a firm's financial performance (Brik, et al., 2011; Long, 2015; Mahmoud et al., 2014). Notwithstanding the foregoing, the extant body of research on market orientation largely fails to account for the firm performance dimension within a human resources hiring perspective regarding Millennials.

#### *Gaps in Literature*

While numerous researchers have undertaken the initiative to examine multiple dimensions of market orientation, one may be tempted to consider the area fully explored. However, there are notable gaps in such literature. For example, precious little research exists with respect to market orientation within the government sector.

Similarly, while there have been many substantive studies on CSR and/or market orientation, most are from the academic or private sector. This paper seeks to address such gaps in the extant literature. Preliminary research in market orientation and CSR revealed a relatively healthy body of research. In a concomitant research stream considering the associations of CSR and market orientation, insightful results have been noted in connecting market orientation and CSR (Han et al., 2013).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the extant body of research on market orientation largely fails to account for the firm performance dimension within the government sector. Such equivocality suggests the need for further research to investigate the possibly synergistic roles market orientation and CSR have on firm performance among governmental entities.

### **Transition**

Collectively, Section 1 has introduced the critical and foundational components of this study. Specifically, the link between theoretical constructs and real world application was first identified by providing a concise context for the problem to be studied and the purpose thereof. The assumptions, limitations, and do you limitations of the study were then articulated. This section also clarified the nature, scope and significance of the study to establish a framework for the literature review, which concludes the section.



## Section 2: The Project

### **Purpose Statement**

The underlying focus of this qualitative case study is to investigate the effectiveness of OPM's hiring process of a DoD agency in the St. Louis metropolitan area for civilian personnel. Such inquiry is designed to identify the degree to which the DoD hiring protocols are perceived to be effective and the opportunities for improvement. To ascertain an organization's ability to maximize the probability of hiring the most qualified employees and thus, to ensure optimal levels of organizational performance, such inquiry is necessary. Then, to consider attitudinal perceptions as the cornerstone of the analysis formulating and directing the conceptualization framework of the measurement for DoD hiring effectiveness. The specific population used in this study is a federal government office in the St. Louis metropolitan area. The impact for social change is that hiring professionals who are natives of, and reside and work in, the St. Louis area will inherently strengthen the local economy when they invest their time and resources into civic activities that will benefit the local social infrastructure.

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher can be a varied and complex endeavor. Great care must be taken to avoid not only ethical implications but personal bias. A researcher must also be cognizant of how questions are asked of participants to circumvent a solicitation of desired answers, which the resultant of leading questions. In this study, the researcher governed himself accordingly and made a concerted effort to prioritize the validity and credibility of the survey process and the conclusions and implications of the study based

on analysis of the data collected. This is perhaps best achieved through the context whereby the interviewees are not at all influenced by personal background or potential bias of the interviewer. For that matter, the researcher must be fully aware to avoid any understanding or interpretation of the data that merely comports with one's desired outcomes, if any. Quite simply, the researcher must be neutral and unbiased within the context of each phase of the research process. To do so, he must first be aware of such pitfalls.

### **Participants**

This will be an in-depth case study to evaluate how managers of federal agencies can employ strategies to hire suitable employees. The duration of the study will be six months and will focus on federal government employees whose employment ranks fall between GS11 and GS13 and civilian employees in contractual federal government positions covering comparable work in DISA CONUS for IT positions. Respondent anonymity will be guaranteed, and reading and/or difficulty levels will be addressed to correspond with the expected requisite levels of knowledge and experience of those taking the survey.

### **Research Method and Design**

To adequately address the objectives of the study, the researcher conducted a survey study, the primary purpose of which was to identify the optimal survey approach based on the nature of the study and the study objectives. For that matter, a survey methodology appeared to afford such opportunities through the use of questionnaires or interviews as the instrument to acquire data (de Vaus, 2013).

The genesis of the data for this case study research was developed using comprehensive qualitative responses to open-ended survey questions. It closely followed the approach utilized by Beynon et al. (2002), who employed both surveys and interviews in conjunction with a case study approach to evaluate the internal organizational management of changes in employment. A systematic process was implemented to identify the objective, synthesize the data, and articulate the findings (Williams, 2011). The purpose of this research study was to evaluate how managers of federal agencies can employ strategies to hire suitable employees and focused on managers of federal agencies whose responsibility it is to hire employees within those federal agencies.

### **Research Method**

This section describes the research methodology. First, the rationale for research is outlined. Then, the assumptions underlying the study are discussed, and the reasons for choosing a case study approach is explained along with a delineation of how it was employed.

This is a study of the organizational hiring system within the United States federal government DoD sector. Accordingly, the criterion for participation in this study included only those in management positions (*i.e.*, those with first-hand knowledge who could provide meaningful insight into their current and actual experiences within the DoD). This study is aimed at addressing the current state of the internal employment hiring processes and the extent to which such federal managers experience the hiring process (the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of it) within the federal government sector. The acquisition of research data in this study will be aided by the nature of face-to-face interviews, which

will overcome problems associated with the potential for uncertainty in the terminology or perceived intention of the questions (Berghout, 2011).

Among the various approaches to academic research, the most common methods include a quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method (Williams, 2011). While each research method has its strengths, but not all methods are appropriate concerning any given research objective. They are each distinct, and each has its advantages depending on the scope of the research to be conducted. While quantitative research is associated with the collection of quantifiable data and statistical analysis, qualitative research is rather holistic (Williams, 2011).

The aim of this study was to evaluate how managers of federal agencies can employ strategies to hire suitable employees, based on their first-hand experiences and personal perspectives. Accordingly, the focus of the research explored the experiences and attitudes of government managers to find suitable employees.

A descriptive research methodology was utilized for this study, which is comprised of applied research and basic research. The implementation of basic research will be conducted pursuant to the literature review. This process is expected to inform and refine our study objectives. Comprehensive personal interviews will provide the opportunity for applied research. These personal interviews will be administered with strategically selected government employees.

#### *External Reliability*

When conducted with the appropriate level of safeguards and attention to detail, case studies are considered to be equally as valid as quantitative data (Zivkovic,

2012). According to Morgan and Drury (2003), qualitative research must be thoroughly documented within the context of each iteration of processes, controls, and activity in the various stages of data collection to ensure external reliability. Such an outcome, they maintain, must coincide with an appropriate degree of concomitant analysis as to strategy and framework methodology of the study to include the justification for the researcher's selection of participants and the full and complete extent to which he or she has association with each participant.

### **Research Design**

The researcher developed the research methodology by focusing on the study objectives. The constructs and items of the open-ended survey questions were determined from a review of the existing literature, which was thoroughly evaluated, as they had been previously tested within the context of earlier studies (Duan et al., 2010). Such efforts were implemented to ensure the quality, integrity, and validity of the study (Denscombe, 2014).

To the extent one seeks clarification of the 'how' and 'why' questions, and when the focus is engrained in a real-world policy or practice context, then the case study method is proper (Yin, 2013). Case studies are used to discover the how and why of an implementation process (Yin, 2014). Case studies also give insight and meaning for future research. The researcher aimed for readers to gain knowledge and learn through the cases studied. Once having read the results, the reader could then decide how much or little one could apply the results to their instruction. It was the researcher's role to present information.

Accordingly, this study utilized a case study format design. This method was chosen, in part, due to the case-study approach adopted by Block (1995), which was the only study found to have been based on CSR within the context of a federal agency. Although the study objectives were different than ours, Block (1995) successfully adopted the case-study approach to examine the benefits of encouraging proactive CSR initiatives by federal contractors. The case-study approach is a subset of qualitative research that is commonly utilized to identify research problems (Zivkovic, 2012).

### **Population and Sampling**

The population of a research study refers to those certain individuals who encompass the study group, the results of which either confirm or disprove one's hypothesis (Fink, 2012). The specific population used in this study included DoD managers in a federal government office in the St. Louis metropolitan area. The researcher needed this population to draw a sample for the study to generalize the overall employment hiring process in the DoD sector population (de Vaus, 2013). Managerial level government employees were identified under the requisite criteria guidelines for the current study as appropriate participants given their first-hand knowledge of the underlying governmental work environment. This knowledge is critical for identification of the underlying problem.

Accordingly, a qualitative methodology was utilized to gain a more robust recognition of the attitudes and experiences of the perceptions of the selected participants (Wideman, 2016). This representative and purposive sampling methodology was conducted through the selection of a representative subset of managerial workers in

the government sector. The purposive sampling technique was utilized to most effectively benefit from the unique and distinct knowledge and perspectives of the participants (Zhang et al., 2017; Yegidis & Weinbach, 1996; James and Hudek, 2017) based on the researcher's pre-defined criteria (Kamalludeen, Hassan, & Nasaruddi, 2017). The research criteria utilized in the present study was comprised of those individuals who exhibit personal and first-hand knowledge of the internal government infrastructure as well as the policies and procedures associated with such an environment. All participants met this study criterion.

Regarding the research segment of this study, considerations were also made relating to the rationale for ascertaining the most appropriate venue for data collection (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Berg and Lune, 2012). Accordingly, it was determined that ISA Global dining facility would be an optimal setting for data collection purposes due to the ease of access by the chosen participants, thus maximizing the participation rate. Approximately three people met the participant criteria of this study, out of whom three were selected among the broader group of volunteers. Their position titles and roles included but were not limited to Managers for Information Technology.

### **Ethical Research**

According to Fontana and Frey (1994), the overriding impetus of ethical considerations within the context of a scholarly academic study when interviewing people is to ensure great care is taken to avoid and the harm to the interviewees. Fundamental ethical considerations include such matters as seeking and obtaining proper informed consent, ensuring the privacy of all survey participants, and preventing or

mitigating the potential for any harm. It should also be noted, and the abundance of caution, that nothing in the realm of deceit, trickery or lack of full and fair disclosure will be utilized within the context of any data collection techniques. Accordingly, all subject participants will be acutely aware of how and why any and all information will be to be collected, utilized, and disseminated (Fontana and Frey, 1994).

Prior to conducting this study, IRB approval will be acquired from the University's Institutional Review Board, and I will adhere to all IRB policies and procedures to ensure the integrity of this study, including but not limited to briefing all participants as to the voluntary nature of the study, the informed consent process (briefing each participant as to prevent consent form and ensuring each participant provided written consent that clarified, among other things, that they understood fully their respective roles within the context of the study), the ability of the participants to withdraw from study, and confirming that none of the participants received any related incentives to participate in the study. Accordingly, all participants will sign the requisite consent forms (*see* Appendix "A") and have full disclosure and clarification of the (scope of the) study and their participation therein before their participation in the study. Further, each participant will be instructed as to their rights to withdraw from the study in anytime without any negative repercussions (*see* Appendix "B").



### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Implications for Social Change**

This study could prove to be the conduit for sweeping reform among organizations looking to become more competitive. In the long-term, this study may enhance overall corporate performance, increase efficiencies, save time and money, reduce turnover, and increase organizational performance. This is accomplished by maximizing the probability of each job function being filled by the right employee at the right time, and with minimal turnover concerns or negative ramifications associated therewith. However, this study has even broader potential ramifications and implications.

Given the government sector's unique focus and potential societal impact, the typical governmental entity affects a broader array of constituents than a more traditional organization in the private sector. For that matter, the stakeholders associated with the DoD include not only employees, vendors and clients but also society at large. The DoD budget is so massive that even short-term economic stimulus is expected. For example, it remains responsible for paying over 5 million people and contractors. Indeed, most companies cannot claim among their stakeholders to be every U.S. citizen or the safety and security of all citizens as their implicit purpose. Quite simply, the DoD affects all U.S. citizens by equipping the military with the ability to safeguard the United States against military or terror attacks. As America's biggest employer, with approximately 2.5 million active duty and reservist personnel and nearly 900,000 civilian personnel and a total spending budget of almost \$830 billion, even incremental increases in efficiency

could necessarily produce significant cost savings, a trickle-down reduction of our budget deficit and ultimately the U.S. national debt.

### **Conclusion**

Employment selection criteria is critical for many reasons, not the least of which is that it has direct implications to the organization. Indeed, such implications certainly extend to stakeholders as well. To the extent government sector organizations could overcome their dominant ideologies and embrace Weberian principles in the workplace, it could benefit their country's economy overall and is an area worthy of further exploration. This paper will examine selection criteria under the lens of organizational performance; and proposes that the degree to which selection criteria can confine themselves to the central qualifications of the applicant, and without blind adherence to bureaucratic regulations, then such an organization will maximize the probability of increasing its overall organizational performance.

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