PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONALS
ON FOR-PROFIT EDUCATION

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Abstract

For-profit colleges and universities can trace their roots back to the 18th century. This sector is defined as one that operates in the interest of private gain; profiting from the financial aid monies received on behalf of their students. Recent evidence shows that students fair reasonably well at for-profit colleges and universities (e.g., higher retention and graduation rates). In contrast, a newer body of research seems to suggest that students who graduate from a for-profit institution earn less than their nonprofit peers. In order to provide more context to lower wage earnings of for-profit graduates, phenomenological research was conducted to make sense of the perceptions that human resource (HR) professionals may have about the for-profit sector. The primary question guiding this study was: *How do HR professionals make sense of how they place value on the type of institution a prospective employee graduated from in the screening and hiring process?* The theoretical framework for this study was grounded in implicit social cognition theories of mere exposure and implicit bias; suggesting a framework for understanding when a HR professional may say that the type of institution a prospective employee graduated from does not weigh in their decision, yet show a preference towards nonprofits when making their actual selections. The findings from this study suggested that high value *is* placed upon the type of institution a prospective employee graduated from when a) the position is at a higher level in the company and b) as it pertains to colleges and universities with broadly understood reputations and brand-name appeal. The research also revealed that even though education type did not always matter to the coresearchers in the study, they believed it to matter to others (e.g., hiring managers). This study adds texture to the research on for-profit graduate wage earnings from the lens of HR professionals who are making screening and hiring decisions, providing context to prospective and current students of for-profit colleges as well as for-profit institutions,
themselves and lawmakers. It also contributes to the body of literature regarding theories of implicit social cognition applied to the area of human resources.

Keywords: higher education, for-profit colleges, for-profit student employment, for-profit graduate wage earnings, human resource professionals’ perceptions, implicit social cognition, mere exposure, implicit bias, implicit bias in hiring.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my son, Gavin Bouchey. It was largely completed in the year he was diagnosed with epilepsy, among several other unfortunate events. Through it all we kept living, moving forward and finding new ways to be our normal selves. He is the bravest person I know, and as I watch him grow into a young man my heart swells knowing what a wonderful person I get to love for the rest of my days. My life and my everything is dedicated to you, Gavin.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Most succinctly stated, for-profit colleges and universities are defined as those academic institutions that are not supported by tax revenue, rather their revenue is dependent on state and federal subsidies paid on behalf of students (Kinser, 2006a). For-profit colleges and universities in the United States comprise one of the most diverse and fastest growing sectors of higher education. Fall enrollment at for-profit institutions grew a hundred times from 1970 to 2009 (Deming, Goldin, & Katz, 2012). From 2000 to 2010, enrollments in this sector grew by 235%, taking its market share from 3% to 9% of college-bound students (Douglass, 2012). The stock index that represents the 12 largest, publicly traded for-profit institutions grew by 700% between 1996 and 2009 (Douglass, 2012). Furthermore, for-profit colleges and universities now educate 3.7 million students in this country (Imagine America Foundation, 2014).

The markets served are part of that growth. Typically, curricula at these institutions have a focus on hands-on learning, aggressive student-customer service, convenient hours, and a strong emphasis on job placement upon graduation (Floyd, 2007). Compared to community college peers, for-profit institutions also tend to educate more nontraditional students (e.g., minorities, older, and financially disadvantaged); they often do so with higher first-year retention and graduation rates compared to their peers (Deming et al., 2012). Deming and his colleagues (2012) also pointed out that because of the student demographic served, students at for-profit institutions tend to receive a disproportionate amount of federal financial aid, prompting intense scrutiny regarding the quality of the education offered.

Turning attention to cost, for-profit institutions tend to charge substantially more for their programs than peer community colleges. A for-profit, associate’s degree granting institution may charge up to two times as much as a community college does for the same program. The
United States Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES], 2012a) revealed that average total tuition, fees, room, and board for a two-year nonprofit college was $14,300 compared to for-profit institutions at $23,300 in the 2011–2012 academic year.

**Problem Statement**

**Postgraduate annual income of for-profit graduates is relatively low.** With a focus on vocational and high-demand career-based training (Lechuga, 2008), one would hypothesize that this sector would excel in graduate employment outcomes. On the contrary, recent research reveals that starting salaries for those attending for-profit institutions are significantly less than or just at par with their community college peers, despite wide gaps in the cost of education (Cellini & Chaudhary, 2014; Deming, et al., 2012; Lang & Weinstein, 2012; Liu & Belfield, 2014). For example, Deming and his colleagues found that the for-profit students they identified in their study earned 8–9% less than peers graduating from other institutions did. In 2012, Lang and Weinstein found that students obtaining a certificate from a for-profit earned $5,500 less per year than did nonprofit peers with similar credentials. Similarly, they found that associate degree graduates of for-profit institutions earned $3,000 less per year than nonprofit peers did. In slight contrast, a later study by Lang and Weinstein in 2013 revealed slightly higher wage earnings for for-profit graduates as compared to nonprofit peers. They explained the mixed findings by showing nonprofit, associate degree graduates more often pursue bachelor’s degrees and thereby show lower earnings as they are enrolled in their four-year program at the time of the study. Lastly, recent data on postgraduate income in two community college systems revealed that students who exited from a for-profit institution earned between $353 and $772 less per year than did nonprofit peers (Liu & Belfield, 2014). One might wonder if some of the outcomes revealed in the aforementioned studies are due to student-based factors, but most of the studies...
also controlled for preadmission risk factors (e.g., socioeconomic level) and found that the results remained consistent (Deming et al., 2012; Lang & Weinstein, 2012, 2013).

**Employers also seem to prefer nonprofit institutions.** A working paper entitled, *Profiting Higher Education? What Students, Alumni and Employers Think About For-Profit Colleges* (Hagelskamp, Schliefer, & DiStasi, 2014), indicated that employers either had no preference or rated nonprofit institutions of higher value compared to for-profit institutions in their communities. For example, 94% of respondents rated local, nonprofit universities as good or excellent in quality, compared to 69% for local, for-profit institutions and 70% for national, for-profit institutions. Additionally, in a field experiment that involved submitting fictitious résumés that only differed in the applicant graduating from a nonprofit versus a for-profit college, researchers found that hiring companies look more favorably upon résumés with a nonprofit degree (Darolia, Koedel, Martorell, Wilson, & Coperez-Arce, 2014). Specifically, employers called nonprofit “graduates” for interviews 6% more often compared with for-profit “graduates.”

**Purpose Statement**

Though the studies demonstrating lower wage earnings varied in methodology, sample size, and overall veracity, they seem to have shown that graduates of for-profit institutions are more likely to earn less than their nonprofit peers do. I hypothesized that one of the reasons for-profit graduates have weaker wage earnings is due to the perception that the quality of education is lower, compared with the quality of education from peer nonprofits. As such, the purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of HR professionals regarding for-profit and nonprofit education at a selection of companies of various sizes in the United States. While the results of this study did not indicate causation, describing this phenomenon provided a hypothesis to
explain why employment outcomes are lower for graduates of for-profit schools when compared to employment outcomes for graduates of nonprofit schools.

**Justification for the Research Problem**

With the advent of, and a high degree of importance placed upon new regulations targeted at drawing connections between loan amounts and postgraduate earnings (e.g., gainful employment), scholars are emphasizing a new understanding of earnings of for-profit graduates (Cellini, 2012; Sipley, 2011). Additionally, since taxpayers and students are spending substantial amounts of money on the for-profit sector with limited concrete evidence to support its return on investment, researchers must conduct further studies to uncover possible explanations for lower wage earnings gained upon graduating from a for-profit college or university (Beaver, 2009, Cellini, 2012; Millora, 2010). Ultimately, if what for-profit education advocates say about for-profit institutions educating underserved students is true (Chung, 2012), then it behooves the research community to educate lawmakers, educators, and students alike as to the outcomes associated with this type of education.

**Deficiencies in the Research**

Due partly to the newness of the “modern” for-profit colleges, a significant lack of longitudinal data demonstrated return on investment for graduates of for-profit institutions (Center for College Affordability and Productivity, 2008; Chung, 2012; Zamani-Gallaher, 2004). In addition, research is deficient on the actual return on investment to the student, their later social mobility, and more specifically why the outcomes may be better or worse (Cellini, 2012; Zamani-Gallaher, 2004). In fact, Lang and Weinstein (2012) identified lower rates of return on for-profit education and addressed the possibility that employer perception of the quality of a for-profit education could be responsible for some of the lower wage earnings of these graduates.
Already common knowledge, the for-profit industry suffers from the stigma attached to the industry, emphasizing the importance of separating stigma from objective information (Fried & Hill, 2009).

At this time no other studies beyond Lang and Weinstein (2012) specifically point to the possibility that employers should investigate their perceptions as possible variables affecting the reason for-profit graduates fare worse than nonprofit community college peers. Given the inevitability of gainful employment regulations, to investigate all the reasons wage earnings may be lower among for-profit graduates and to correct any misperceptions or biases that may have sprung from incorrect information is important.

**Problem Significance and Audience**

Opening up the dialog on reasons for low employment outcomes of for-profit graduates is useful to four main audiences: (a) for-profit institutions, (b) lawmakers involved in legislation targeted at postgraduate returns on investment, (c) prospective and current students of for-profit institutions, and (d) human resource (HR) professionals. Armed with objective data, for-profit institutions can make corrections to address the disparity between tuition and wage earnings of their graduates. Lawmakers can ensure that regulations address the core issues (e.g., affordability), rather than outcomes that may be under the influence of external factors beyond the control of the institution or the student (e.g., economic changes and hypothetical employer biases and misperceptions). Also, to have all the data necessary is critically important for prospective and current students of these institutions to make informed decisions. Lastly, HR professionals can consider this research and objectively evaluate their screening practices so as not to needlessly weed out qualified employee candidates.
Research Questions

The research study goal was to describe the perceptions of HR professionals regarding the quality of candidates from for-profit versus nonprofit educational institutions. In the context of this study, the term “HR professional” referred to those that serve or have served in the capacity as a recruiter or a manager of a recruiting department. Furthermore, in this study I sought to make sense of potential unconscious decisions HR professionals make during a screening process, as it relates to the type of education a prospective employee has attained. I interviewed HR professionals from a selection of 16 healthcare- and technology-related companies of various sizes in the United States. My intention was to address the following question and subquestions to provide a detailed description of this phenomenon:

1. In the screening and hiring process, how do HR professionals make sense of how they place value on the type of institution a prospective employee graduated from?
   a. What value is placed upon the type of institution the candidate graduated from (i.e., nonprofit versus for-profit educational institutions)?
   b. What experiences and information do HR professionals use to form their opinions on the relative quality of education for candidates from nonprofit versus for-profit educational institutions?

Theoretical Framework

Recent research has demonstrated that even when employers explicitly state that the type of institution does not determine their decision, they tend to place higher value on, and assign higher quality to traditional, nonprofit institutions over for-profit ones (Darolia et al., 2014; Hagelskamp et al., 2014). Apparently, dissonance exists between what employers explicitly state about for-profit institutions (and their graduates) and upon what they ultimately value. I
analyzed previous research along with the findings of this study within a theoretical framework that informed on the reasons differences arise between what is explicitly stated, and how one behaves to the contrary. I believed this approach contributed positively to the existing body of literature and provided richer understanding of lower wage earnings of for-profit graduates.

**Implicit social cognition.** Tracing back to Sigmund Freud, implicit social cognition is a theoretical perspective with roots in social psychology and the social sciences (Gawronski & Payne, 2010). This perspective originated from the early theories of implicit learning, broadly defined as “learning without awareness” (Nosek & Bar-Anan, 2009). Key in its history, the implicit social cognition framework is helpful when researchers discern between automatic and controlled cognition. More specifically, implicit social cognition encompasses theories that show the difference between explicit memory or action (controlled cognition) and implicit memory or action (automatic cognition) (Bargh, 1994; Gawronski & Payne, 2010; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). In a seminal set of studies, Reber (1967) suggested that through this lens learning is not intentional and it is thereby difficult for someone to express how they obtained the information learned.

According to implicit social cognition theories, implicit associations lack our active awareness (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Haines & Sumner, 2012). Implicit associations are commonly defined as attitudes, perceptions, judgments, self-esteem, and stereotypes (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Haines & Sumner, 2012). Nisbett and Wilson (1977) aptly described implicit social cognition in the following way:

… there may be little or no direct introspective access to higher order cognitive processes. Subjects are sometimes (a) unaware of the existence of a stimulus that
importantly influenced a response, (b) unaware of the existence of the response, and (c) unaware that the stimulus has affected the response. (p. 231)

This lack of explicit knowledge leads to automaticity in cognition as opposed to active cognition in which one is aware of the reasons for feeling or behaving in a certain way (Haines & Sumner, 2012).

Among the most prominent researchers in implicit social cognition and automaticity, Bargh (1994) classified cognition in two ways: preconscious and postconscious. Bargh defined preconscious cognition as automaticity and claimed it is synonymous with implicit social cognition, but refined it to a process in which a person does not need to even notice a triggering event or stimulus to elicit an unconscious response. Most often, these automatic events take the form of evaluations and interpretations (attitudes, perceptions, judgments, self-esteem, and stereotypes). The second type of automaticity refers to the same outcomes, but the ones where participants have an active awareness of why they are making the evaluation or interpretation. One of the strengths of the human brain is the ability to efficiently learn and store information for easy retrieval. Experts use implicit cognition, or automaticity, to explain learning and memory of people, places, or things when an individual cannot explicitly recall the manner of learning or of observing such information (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). In these types of unconscious processes, the individual has a reduced need to attend to every detail going on in the environment, allowing focus on nonroutine yet important matters and compressing substantial amounts of information to be manageable for later retrieval (Bargh, 1994). This efficiency leads to automatic behaviors that can sometimes be erroneous. Bargh postulated that because individuals making decisions in the preconscious are utilizing automatic associations and thereby lack awareness, they find such associations nearly impossible to control.
In conclusion, in his seminal work, Bargh emphasized, “the evidence in this domain indicates that the automatic, preconscious evaluation of stimuli is a ubiquitous and constant mental process” (p. 20). Haines and Sumner (2012) further suggested that implicit associations take longer to form and are thereby more difficult to modify—perhaps in need of analytical detail later discussed in this section.

**Mere exposure effect.** Drawing upon the work of implicit social cognition researchers, people are more likely to manifest the mere exposure effect while assigning favorability to a person, place, or thing with which they have more exposure (Bornstein, Leone, & Galley, 1987; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Jacoby, Kelley, Brown, & Jasechko, 1989; Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980; Seamon, Marsh, & Brody, 1984; Zajonc, 1968). According to the mere exposure effect, when individuals perceive two stimuli, they will favor the one that is more familiar. This effect is evident even when participants are unable to recall their exposure to the favored item (Greenwald & Benaji, 1995). Rigorous scientific exploration can show the mere exposure effect, in cases ranging from the simple (e.g., geometric figures and abstract visual symbols) to complex concepts (e.g., physical attraction). In an experiment by Jacoby and his colleagues (1989), a facilitator casually reads a list of names and later asks the participants to indicate if people on a new list were famous. Dubbed “the sleeper effect” of mere exposure, participants more often identified the names they were exposed to as famous people, even though they could not recall the reason why. Based on the theory, the researchers believed the reason was prior exposure to the names. This experiment demonstrated that participants may misattribute affinity, in this case fame, to a list of names simply because of familiarity (e.g., prior exposure). Jacoby and his team explained that familiarity has an unconscious influence on human beings’ actions. Furthermore, they argued that subjective experiences (e.g., prior
exposure) have a nonanalytic influence on judgment. According to the theory, information is stored for later use and may unconsciously be influential to one’s interpretation of similar people, places, and things. Jacoby and his colleagues summarized their findings in theorizing that in the absence of analytical data (conscious information and processing), participants will use nonanalytic information (unconscious information and processing) to form judgment.

**Applying mere exposure effect to HR professionals.** Turning attention to the Public Agenda report (Hagelskamp et al., 2014), researchers revealed that employers have more experience with nonprofit institutions and are thereby more familiar with them over their for-profit peers. In the context of the mere exposure effect, if HR professionals have more exposure and experience with nonprofit institutions, they could have an affinity to them and assign priority to them over a lesser known type of institution (e.g., for-profit). Since HR professionals likely have had more exposure to nonprofit institutions, by nature of their longevity and notoriety, the mere exposure effect would suggest a tendency to prefer nonprofit institutions. Moreover, this preference would increase their likelihood of assigning more positive value to prospective employees who graduated from this type of institution over those who graduated from a less familiar type of institution (e.g., for-profit).

**Implicit bias.** The theories of implicit social cognition and the mere exposure effect are the bases of implicit bias theory. According to this theory, individuals develop implicit biases over time due to implicit attitudes and stereotypes (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Kang et al., 2012). Implicit biases can be the cause of behavior that is in direct contradiction to a person’s beliefs or principles (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). Individuals may construct implicit biases positively or negatively (Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Kang et al., 2012). A positive bias would indicate preference, such as those demonstrated by the mere
exposure effect. A negative bias could result in negative thoughts or feelings towards a person, place, or thing. According to implicit bias, people could definitively state, for example, that they do not believe a particular race is inferior to another, yet they may act in a way that would imply they actually do. Studies indicated that negative implicit biases are actionable and can lead to bias directed at people due to race and ethnicity, among other defining characteristics (Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Chao & Willaby, 2007; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Kang et al., 2012).

Implicit biases are especially troublesome in human resource legal matters because most laws created to reduce discrimination assume the behavior is explicitly demonstrated or can be proven (Chao & Willaby, 2007; Kang et al., 2012). Greenwald and Krieger (2006) boldly stated that “evidence that implicit attitudes produce discriminatory behavior is already substantial and will continue to accumulate…implicit attitudinal biases are especially important in influencing non-deliberate or spontaneous discriminatory behaviors” (p. 961). Kang and a team of co-author judges and lawyers supported this concept by saying, “researchers have provided convincing evidence that implicit biases exist, are pervasive, are large in magnitude, and have real-world effects” (p. 1126). Indeed, a growing body of research indicated focus on this area specific to employment discrimination. As stated, cognition is both explicit and implicit and so are actions associated with both types of cognition. Strong arguments included an analysis of unconscious (implicit) discrimination in legal matters. Some researchers suggested this form of discrimination is more subtle and insidious when compared to explicit forms of discrimination (Chao & Willaby, 2007).

**Applying implicit bias to HR professionals.** In the experiment conducted by the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (Darolia et al., 2014), résumés with a
nonprofit education listed were chosen more often than those with a for-profit education when all other variables were held constant. Implicit bias theory suggests that over time HR professionals are learning about for-profit institutions—unconsciously. A Google™ search for the words “for-profit college scandals” yielded nearly 43 million results as of February 2016. These negative reports are not isolated to web-based outlets—reaching newspapers, magazines, television, and radio outlets on a frequent basis. Such reports rarely included scholarly rigor or evidentiary basis; the same search on “for-profit college scandals” at the Northeastern Library website filtering for peer-reviewed journals showed no findings. Using implicit bias theory, over time people are learning and developing an implicit bias that for-profit colleges and universities are bad even when they are not actively aware of it. Furthermore, implicit bias would suggest that HR professionals would exhibit behavior related to these potential implicit biases. Indeed, Bargh (1994) suggested that a perception of a person, place, or thing (stimulus) may automatically trigger a behavior related to it, even in the absence of awareness of the stimulus or its association to that behavior.

**The use of implicit social cognition theories in research.** Implicit social cognition measures range from subtly delivered interview questions with attention paid to body language and behavior to more formal measures specifically designed for measuring implicit social cognition, such as the Implicit Association Test (Fazio & Olsen, 2003; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). The Implicit Association Test is the most popular and perhaps the most researched in terms of validity. This test includes sorting speed as a way to test implicit associations. Participants consistently sort their implicit associations faster than when facilitators ask them to sort inconsistent implicit associations. Greenwald and Banaji (1995) suggested that “investigations of implicit social cognition require indirect measures which neither inform the
subject of what is being assessed nor request self-report concerning it” (p. 5). In some cases, the participant’s desire to answer in a socially acceptable way or out of fear of retribution may be influential to the results obtained using explicit reporting tools (Chao & Willaby, 2007). In fact, Greenwald and Krieger (2006) demonstrated that explicit forms of measurement yield higher rates of neutrality towards disadvantaged groups versus implicit measures that revealed higher levels of bias towards those groups. More specifically, 64% of respondents showed a bias towards a disadvantaged group of individuals when using an implicit measure, compared to 20% when an explicit one was used.

Though most commonly measured quantitatively, the framework of social cognition has also been studied qualitatively in the field of medicine. For example, researchers utilized theories of implicit social cognition to explain rater perception of workplace-based assessments of new physicians using verbal protocol analysis (Govaerts, Wiel, Schuwirth, Vleuten, & Muijtjens, 2013). Govaerts and his colleagues identified several implicit frameworks that raters used in evaluating the physicians subjectively (outside of the technical rubrics provided). Researchers have also qualitatively derived bias by reviewing treatment recommendations, richness of communications and other subjective outcomes for discrete sets of patients who are identical in every other way but for race or ethnicity (Chapman, Kaatz & Carnes, 2013; Govaerts et al, 2013). When distinct differences in treatment recommendations can be found by race or ethnicity, the theory of implicit bias can be used to explain the results as an unconscious bias.

**Conclusion**

In summary, the effects of mere exposure and implicit bias are useful to explain findings in which employers stated that the type of institution does not have an impact on their decisions, yet they later demonstrated their preferences when showing favor towards nonprofits. Though
many studies relied on quantitative measures, ample qualitative studies were conducted that utilized implicit social cognition to explain unconscious decisions and actions of study participants. Moreover, theories of implicit social cognition (linking mere exposure and implicit bias) indicated the reasons why HR professionals would do the following:

1. Explicitly state that the type of institution a prospective employee graduated from would not weigh on the screening and hiring decision.

2. Rate nonprofit institutions more highly or choose candidates from nonprofit institutions more often than those from for-profit institutions.

The remaining chapters of this thesis address the main threads of literature around this problem of study, the research methodology, as well as the findings and implication of the research conducted.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

In order to inform my research into HR perceptions of for-profit graduates utilizing a framework of implicit social cognition, a thorough literature review was conducted. Three threads from the literature informed this inquiry, including an overview of the for-profit sector, public disgraces of for-profit institutions, and employer’s seeming preference towards nonprofit institutions. Though the second and third threads of literature could ostensibly collapse into the thread described as “an overview of the for-profit sector”, they are described discreetly to emphasize their importance in relation to the findings of this study. Each thread is discussed in detail in the following narrative.

Overview of the For-Profit Sector of Higher Education.

Members of the academe have defined higher education, since its inception, within the context of upright public service. Most traditionally, such definition has meant that stakeholders of a college or university met no personal gain from the success of the institution. On the contrary, in his thorough volume entitled, From Main Street To Wall Street: The Transformation Of For-Profit Education for the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), Kinser definitively defined for-profit education as the sector of higher education that operates in the interest of private gain (2006a). The author defined for-profit institutions as the “third sector,” distinguished from public, nonprofit institutions and private colleges and universities that operate as nonprofit entities. Kinser further defined the for-profit sector as lacking support through tax revenue but supported by student-based subsidies paid to the school on behalf of the student. Unlike nonprofit peers, for-profit colleges and universities are able to utilize profit obtained from their services in any way their stakeholders see fit (Kinser, 2006a).
Often thought of as a new development in the maturation of higher education, for-profit institutions began in the 18th century, though were more widely understood in the late 1800s and early 1900s when organized business schools obtained authorization to take financial aid on behalf of students (Kinser, 2006a; Beaver, 2009; Chung, 2012; Sipley, 2011). Table 1 shows the evolution of the for-profit sector.

Table 1

**Development of For-Profit Higher Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formative Era</td>
<td>1494–1820</td>
<td>Individual instruction, first textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneer Era</td>
<td>1820–1852</td>
<td>First organized schools, curricular development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expansion Era</td>
<td>1852–1890</td>
<td>Dominant role in business education, national visibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition Era</td>
<td>1890–1944</td>
<td>Federal- and State-subsidized schools become primary providers of business education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Student Aid Era</td>
<td>1944–1994</td>
<td>For-profit schools participate in federal student aid programs, regulations established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall Street Era</td>
<td>1994–Present</td>
<td>Publicly traded corporations drive the expansion of for-profit higher education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *From Main Street To Wall Street: The Transformation Of For-Profit Education* by Kinser, p. 14, 2006.

**Classification.** The sector as a whole is heterogeneous and is comprised of several privately owned “mom and pop” schools, as well as multimillion dollar, corporately owned entities (Kinser, 2006a; de Alva, 2010; Kinser, 2006b). As an extreme example, the Apollo Education Group, owners of the University of Phoenix, educated nearly 300,000 students in the fourth quarter of 2013 (Apollo Education Group, 2013); whereas a small, privately held, nondegree-granting institution may only educate less than 100 students a year. One unfortunate outcome of this diversity is that the larger institutions tend to be the representative sample for the sector, creating erroneous assumptions for the smaller institutions.
The large institutions that tend to impact people’s perceptions are DeVry University, University of Phoenix, and ITT Technical Institute (Kinser, 2006a; Floyd, 2007; Kinser, 2005). Despite the difficulty in classifying each institution, for-profit institutions fall into three common groups, as follows:

1. privately-held enterprise colleges that are smaller in size and scope of program offerings,
2. super systems that commonly operate in multiple states and are sometimes publicly held, and
3. Internet institutions that focus on the online modality of education without offering residential support to students (Kinser, 2006a, 2006b).

Members of the academe continue to propose new methods of classification to have a more accurate categorization of these institutions for better reporting and institutional research.

**Size of the sector.** In the year 2011–2012, an estimated 7,255 for-profit institutions with financial aid eligibility offered education to students in the United States and afar (Imagine America Foundation, 2013). Fall enrollment at for-profit institutions grew a hundred times from 1970 to 2009 (Deming et al., 2012). From 2000 to 2010, enrollments in this sector grew by 235%, taking its market share from 3% to 9% of college-bound students (Douglass, 2012). The stock index that represented the 12 largest, publicly traded for-profit institutions grew by 700% between 1996 and 2009 (Douglass, 2012). The United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES], 2012a) reports during 1998–2009 that the growth of associate degree conferrals grew by 125% and bachelor’s degrees grew by over 400% at for-profits, compared to 33% and 29% at nonprofit institutions in the same period. Furthermore, financial-aid granting for-profit colleges and universities educate 3.7 million students in the United States (Imagine America Foundation, 2014).
For-profit institutions can attribute most of their success to (a) their ability to respond to market needs quickly and nimbly and (b) their willingness to build programs and services around the student-customer (Center for College Affordability and Productivity, 2008). Despite disreputable news reports later mentioned in this narrative, as Kinser pointed out, “unlike other earlier periods…there seems to be little doubt of the for-profit sector’s survival” (2006a, p. 23). Furthermore, Tierney (2011) suggested “… the country needs the for-profit sector to ensure economic viability” (p. 30).

While for-profit institutions have similar goals of educating students, they differ from nonprofit peers in many ways. Among the most salient differences are (a) the demographics of students, (b) institutional focus, (c) regulatory environment specific to for-profit institutions, and (d) the cost to the student.

**Student demographics.** Students at for-profit institutions typically fall into the following categories, oftentimes in contrast with nonprofit peers: (a) older, nontraditional, or “adult” students; (b) students from disadvantaged backgrounds; (c) minorities; and (d) women (Beaver, 2009, Chung, 2012; de Alva, 2010). Chung (2012) investigated factors that increased the likelihood a prospective student would choose a for-profit institution:

1. Gender. Substantially more women choose for-profit institutions.
2. Income. Prospective students with incomes less than $25,000 more often choose a for-profit education.
3. Working full-time. A disproportionate number of for-profit students work more than 20 hours per week.

These factors are just a few of the results, which researchers have considered to summarize that the for-profit sector serves a student population “at risk” (Chung, 2012; Sipley, 2011).
**Institutional focus.** Catering to a riskier student population, for-profit institutions tend to focus their operations around student-based customer service, convenience of class offerings (residential and online offerings), and career assistance upon graduation (de Alva, 2010). Kinser concluded:

[S]mall classes, self-directed and active learning, practical application of knowledge, and discussion-based instruction are considered the hallmarks of the for-profit sector and are regularly cited as principles of good practice in adult learning. Given this situation, for-profit institutions ought to be—in theory at least—places where quality learning takes place. (2006a, p. 94-95)

While the historical focus of for-profit institutions was business and trade, recent eras point to a much broader academic focus on healthcare-related fields, technology, education, law, and other fast-growing industries (Kinser, 2006a; Floyd, 2007). Kinser researched several for-profit institutions in 2005 and described their academic model as follows:

1. *Narrow mission.* For-profit institutions tend to focus on programs that lead immediately to employment upon graduation (e.g., practical fields such as trades, nursing, etc.).
2. *Limited faculty role.* Faculty members focus nearly exclusively on teaching duties rather than on research or governance activity.
3. *Centrally designed curriculum.* Administrative bodies tend to make decisions about what programs to offer, how to organize them, and ultimately, how to teach them; faculty play a lesser role in this process compared to nonprofit peers.
4. *Standardization.* Academic programs are standardized across multiple campuses deliberately, with very little elective options available to students. Courses correspond to specific, standardized learning outcomes.
5. Economies of scale. Upfront investment can be high in the development of a new program, but the replication across multiple campuses substantially increases the return on investment to the institution very quickly.

According to Kinser, (2006a), faculty members are under close monitoring at for-profit institutions and their academic freedom is low, compared to nonprofit peer faculty members. Student failure is often equated to faculty failure (Kinser, 2006a). Kinser goes on to demonstrate that faculty members gain employment for their practical experience over their scholarly background to bring “real world” experience into the classroom.

**Regulatory environment.** Similar to peer institutions, for-profit colleges and universities are evaluated on standards from three main governing bodies: (a) state, (b) federal, and (c) accrediting agency. For-profit institutions more often have national accreditation, versus regional accreditation that nonprofit peer institutions more often possess (Floyd, 2007; Kinser, 2005; Millora, 2010). Millora stated that while standards differ, national accreditors have the reputation of being “less exacting” than regional accrediting bodies. The most common national accrediting bodies are the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) and the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS). Taken together, these two organizations accredit nearly 90% of the sector (Millora, 2010).

While the regulatory landscape of governing bodies is similar to nonprofit peers, for-profit institutions face substantial challenges in the regulatory environment within those governing bodies (Floyd, 2007). Over the years, the United States Department of Education has embarked upon legislation important to all sectors of higher education. However, one regulation, called *gainful employment*, applies mainly to for-profit institutions. This regulation specifies that for-profit colleges and universities must be able to demonstrate that graduates can make enough
average wage earnings to pay back their educational debt incurred while pursuing their degree (de Alva, 2010; Miller, 2010). Academic programs that cannot demonstrate enough “payback” to students upon graduation will be subject to the loss of financial aid eligibility. The loss of financial aid eligibility will ostensibly render these programs defunct since the majority of the student demographic attracted to for-profit institutions and these entry-level vocational programs do not have the means to pay with private debt or cash (Miller, 2010). Gainful employment regulations represent the first time the federal government has taken an interest in wage earnings of citizens pursuing higher education—though it mainly applies to for-profit institutions. However, gainful employment regulations have attracted much attention and negative commentary about its fairness (de Alva, 2010; Miller, 2010). Based on early calculations, Miller estimated that nearly 5% of programs offered at for-profit institutions would become ineligible immediately, another 8% placed on restrictions, and 48% of programs would require notification to a prospective student that their debt may exceed their earnings—leaving only 39% of programs as eligible in their current state.

**Cost.** For-profit institutions tend to charge substantially more for their programs than peer community colleges. A for-profit, associate’s degree-granting institution may charge up to two times as much as a community college does for the same program. NCES (2012b) revealed that average total tuition, fees, room, and board for a two-year nonprofit college was $14,300 compared to for-profit institutions at $23,300 in the 2011–2012 academic year. As well, NCES revealed that for-profit institutions raised tuition an average of 22% between school years 2007–2008 and 2012–2013 whereas nonprofit peers raised tuition by 40% at four-year institutions and 37% at two-year institutions during the same time period (2012b). This data indicates that
nonprofits will soon catch up to for-profits institutions in terms of tuition if they continue to increase at this rate.

Thorough knowledge exists about the emergence and composition of the for-profit industry. However, knowledge about the students’ experience is minimal, while attending a for-profit institution, along with their experience once they graduate. Most commonly, the for-profit sector measures the following student outcomes to determine efficacy pertaining to (a) retention, (b) graduation, and (c) placement rate. Recently a new body of research has also emerged related to the wage earnings of for-profit graduates. These outcomes are discussed in the following narratives.

**Retention rates.** The Imagine America Foundation (2013) reported the following with respect to student retention at for-profit institutions: (a) full-time retention is higher at two-year for-profit colleges and universities as compared to nonprofit peers at 69% and 58%, respectively, and (b) part-time retention rates are higher at for-profit institutions at 52%, compared to nonprofit peers at 42%. They further reported that the positive trend does not extend into four-year programs where for-profit institutions retain full-time students at 55% and part-time at 37%, compared to nonprofit peers at 66% for full-time and part-time at 41%.

**Graduation rates.** Similar to the retention statistics reported at the bachelor’s degree level, Millora (2010) reported that only 24.5% of students from for-profit institutions graduate with their bachelor’s degree compared to nonprofit peers whose rates where over 50% and over 60% at private, nonprofit institutions. In contrast, students pursuing a two-year degree graduate from for-profit institutions at a rate of 60% as opposed to nonprofit peers at 22% and 50.2% at private nonprofit institutions.
Placement rates. Placement rate calculations are based on the graduates that obtain a job in the field of study they pursued academically. Nonprofit institutions do not consistently track this statistic; thus, comparisons are lacking, but the frequently reported results are impressive at rates as high as 96% across a for-profit institution’s campus locations (Ruch, 2001). At Harrison College, the institution where I was most recently employed, annual placement rates averaged to 81% in the year 2013-2014, with some programs including veterinary technician at 95% and nursing as high as 98% (Harrison College Annual Report, 2014).

For-profit institutions seem to be better at retaining and graduating students at the two-year level than their nonprofit peers, though they seem to struggle to maintain the same performance for four-year degree programs. Furthermore, for-profit institutions seem to be able to assist students in finding a job upon graduation and within their field of study. This report seems to be good news at the two-year level in all respects, prompting some researchers to take the next step in a student’s lifecycle of outcomes and also measure wage earnings upon graduation.

Wage earnings of graduates. Due to the demographic most often served by for-profit institutions (e.g., minorities, women, and disadvantaged students), some researchers consider it of critical importance to research whether positive labor market advantages are present with a for-profit education (Cellini, 2012; Chung, 2012). In fact, Cellini (2012) mentioned in an assessment of cost and benefits of the for-profit sector that “economic theory suggests that the best measure of education quality is the labor market return, or the growth in earnings, that can be attributed to a student’s education” (p. 159). Starting salaries for students who graduated from a for-profit institution are significantly less than or just at par with community college peers.
(Cellini & Chaudhary, 2014; Deming et al., 2012; Denice, 2015; Lang & Weinstein, 2012; Liu & Belfield, 2014). This section is a new area of measurement and study; the following narrative is a review of studies related to this outcome.

In 2012, Lang and Weinstein found that students who start their education at for-profit institutions have significantly lower postcollege income. In fact, students obtaining a certificate from a for-profit earned $5,500 less per year than their nonprofit peers did with similar credentials. However, neither a for-profit nor a nonprofit certificate earner realized increased wage earnings upon obtaining the credential compared to their preadmission wage earnings estimates. They also found that associate degree graduates of for-profit institutions earned $3,000 less per year than nonprofit peers did. Lang and Weinstein used the Beginning Post-Secondary Student Survey (BPS) from 2004; data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), an agency of the United States Department of Education. BPS describes this survey as the following:

[BPS] currently surveys cohorts of first-time, beginning students at three points in time: at the end of their first year, and then three and six years after first starting in postsecondary education. It collects data on a variety of topics, including student demographic characteristics, school and work experiences, persistence, transfer, and degree attainment. (NCES, n.d.)

Though the researchers specified the research cannot show the differences in wage earnings as causal, they did control for ability bias and determined that ability is relatively consistent at the certificate and associate’s degree levels at for-profit institutions and community colleges (Deming et al., 2012; Lang & Weinstein, 2012). The researchers pointed to selection bias inherent in using BPS data for students who do not have wages associated with them due to
unemployment or because they are still enrolled in school. To control for missing data due to unemployment, the researchers conducted imputation of means and quantile regression to account for the omissions in the data. Lang and Weinstein (2012) also controlled for several other possible biases in the data and covariates, such as economic changes, choice of major, time in the program, and time in the labor market. The researchers stated their conclusions cautiously, but also concluded that “even after controlling for an extensive set of background variables, students at for-profit institutions do not benefit more and often benefit less from their education than apparently similar students at not-for-profit and public institutions” (p. 25). Lang and Weinstein pointed out that the dataset represented a time during an economic recession and that they could not rule out the possibility that students at for-profits experienced more negative effects of a recession than nonprofit peers. Lang and Weinstein did not clarify this statement. However, presumably, they made an educated guess that a recession would more negatively affect the populations generally served at for-profits (minority, low income, and female). Some researchers do support this fact with respect to ethnicity, where the wealth gap widened for African American and Hispanic households at greater rates during the most recent recession than Caucasian-headed homes (Lowrey, 2013). One other possible limitation to this study is that BPS only provides data on first-time, beginning students. Their data do not account for transfer students coming from nonprofit institutions to for-profit institutions—a common occurrence. Most poignantly for this study, Lang and Weinstein also pointed out that the study could not address how employers may perceive the quality of graduates coming from for-profit institutions and if this may have influenced the wage earnings outcomes.

In slight contrast, a later study by Lang and Weinstein in 2013 revealed slightly higher wage earnings for for-profit graduates, as compared to nonprofit peers once they analyzed
transcript data that provided more detail about the students in the survey (within the same year’s survey as their previous study). Lang and Weinstein found instances where the survey data conflicted with the transcript data, so the results of this study were richer in texture. In this study, they utilized a different statistical method, but they noted that neither method was more robust than the other (ordinary least squares regression versus propensity score weighting). Lang and Weinstein continued to control for the same background variables that the original study did. They concluded in their study that nonprofit and for-profit students can have large returns in obtaining an associate’s degree, and that “some evidence” indicated that for-profit graduates had a larger return. They found no significant returns in students obtaining a certificate credential, nonprofit or for-profit. They explained the mixed findings between their two studies by pointing out that nonprofit, associate degree graduates more often pursued bachelor’s degrees and thereby show lower earnings as they were enrolled in their four-year program at the time of the study.

Lang and Weinstein also pointed out the limitations in using BPS data. Additionally, they emphasized several other limitations to the data:

1. the fact that the data were collected during an economic recession,
2. some of the majors were underrepresented in the for-profit sectors that were analyzed, and
3. the data provide a viewpoint of short-term wage earnings because the last collection period is only six years after the beginning of their education (for an associate’s degree program that would be four years after graduation and for a bachelor’s degree it would be two years after graduation).

Deming and his colleagues (2012) found that the for-profit students they identified in their study earned 8–9% less than peers graduating from other institutions even after factoring in
students who were unemployed at the time of the study. Similar to Lang and Weinstein, Deming et al. used the BPS data for the study. Unlike Lang and Weinstein however, Deming et al. were quick to point out that BPS data can only address a subset of for-profit students, leaving out the large fraction of for-profit students who are commonly older, nontraditional and returning to school after other attempts. Deming’s team controlled for several background variables that might skew the data. In line with stated statistics, Deming et al. revealed that students at for-profit institutions are more likely to persist in their programs during the first year and that this persistence leads to greater degree obtainment in the for-profit sector. Turning their attention to vocational outcomes, the researchers concluded that for-profit students were more likely to be unemployed six years after starting college and, as mentioned, they earned 8–9% less than did their nonprofit peers.

Data on postgraduate income in two community college systems indicated that students who exited from a for-profit institution earned between $353 and $772 less per year than did nonprofit peers (Liu & Belfield, 2014). Though the earnings differentials are not substantial, if viewed through the lens of the increased cost of a for-profit education, the return on investment on a for-profit education quickly diminishes.

Lastly new research by Denice (2015) regarding wage differences among employees who had attended for-profit and nonprofit institutions, compared to those who did not have any post-college experience showed similar results. Denice used data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth from 1997 which is a “set of surveys designed to gather information at multiple points in time on the labor market activities and other significant life events of several groups of men and women” (Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d., line 1-2). Denice based her data analysis on survey respondents from 2009 and further restricted her dataset to those that met the following
criteria: (a) those individuals who were not enrolled as students at the time of the survey; (b) those who had earned a minimum of a high school diploma; (c) those who had earned up to a bachelor’s degree; (d) those who were not serving active military duty and; (e) those who supplied information about their education and/or employment outcomes in the survey. Denice’s study revealed the following findings:

- There were no wage earning benefits for employees who attended a for-profit college at the sub-baccalaureate levels as compared to those with only a high school diploma.
- Associate’s degree holders who attended a for-profit institution made 20% less than peers who attended a nonprofit one.
- Individuals who obtained a bachelor’s degree from a for-profit institution earned wages similar to those who graduated from a nonprofit institution.

In a more empirical view of return on investment, Cellini (2012) conducted a study to calculate the net return a for-profit student would need on their education as compared to community college peers. She calculated net return as a function of cost, which consisted of (a) federal and state-based financial aid; (b) direct public expenditures such as appropriations, grants, and contracts through federal, state, and local agencies; and (c) student costs as a function of the earnings they lose while attending school. Conducting a thorough statistical analysis was facilitative in calculating the base cost to society to educate a student at a for-profit institution, which included a sensitivity analysis to test the assumptions in the model. A sensitivity analysis is useful in removing extreme cases from the dataset that unduly influence the outcome of the test.
As the second part of the analysis, Cellini (2012) calculated net benefit as a function of (a) gain in earnings, (b) social returns such as net benefit to the community of having more college-educated citizens, and (c) other benefits such as the use of a fitness facility on-campus or the use of an extensive library. Comparing the cost and benefit of attending a for-profit institution, Cellini concluded that for-profit students need to increase their wage earnings by a minimum of 8.5% per year of education, as opposed to community college peers that need to increase by only 5.3% for each year of education to yield a return over the cost. Cellini’s conclusion showed that unless her assumptions were flawed, a community college education offered better economic return to a student. Cellini’s analysis was thorough and empirical, though unsuccessful in calculating the societal benefit generated by for-profit institutions earning a profit and investing those monies into employees, buildings, and philanthropic activity. Moreover, the continued budget cuts for community colleges could prevent many students from attending community colleges. Investment of profit into a community and budget cuts at community colleges would change the statistical analysis of return on investment and potentially close the gap between the returns needed from both types of institutions.

One might wonder if some of the outcomes indicated in the aforementioned studies are due to student-based factors, but most of the researchers also controlled for preadmission risk factors (e.g., socioeconomic level) and found that the results remained consistent (Deming et al., 2012; Lang & Weinstein, 2012, 2013). Each study also calculated average wage earnings by incorporating information about earnings during periods of unemployment and underemployment. Thus, while for-profit institutions have excelled in retaining, graduating, and placing students in a job upon graduation, their students’ earnings are lower or equal to nonprofit peers despite a large gap in the cost of their education.
Public Disgraces at For-Profits

Perhaps beginning the era of scandals in the for-profit sector in the 1980s, the United States Government Accountability Office investigated a series of for-profit schools dubbed as diploma mills and published damning reports in 2002 and then later in 2004 detailing the widespread practice of selling academic credentials (Cooley & Cooley, 2009). Cooley and Cooley (2009) summarized in their review of the reports that “the perceptual link between legitimate for-profit schools and diploma mills should make this a concern of utmost importance to for-profit colleges and universities” (p. 6).

After an intense and laborious investigation that started in 2003, the Department of Justice announced in 2009 that University of Phoenix, the largest for-profit institution in the United States, would settle a comprehensive False Claim Act lawsuit for $67.5 million (United States Department of Justice, 2009). This lawsuit started as a whistleblower suit alleging that the institution was taking financial aid dollars in violation of current regulations. The original suit showed that the University of Phoenix was incentivizing enrollment personnel on a per-student basis—a practice that was prohibited due to its relation to high-pressure sales tactics and the possibility of misrepresentation.

Perhaps the most scandalous year in for-profit history, 2010, started with reports that for-profit institutions were recruiting students from homeless shelters and ended with the United States Government Accountability Office releasing their report revealing unethical and fraudulent practices at 15 for-profit institutions (Auster, 2011). This report not only made it into popular media, but undercover videos were widely released on the Internet revealing firsthand accounts of unscrupulous recruitment tactics. Auster further explained that some of the impetus behind the aggressive and, in some cases fraudulent, recruitment practices was a disproportionate
amount of funds spent on marketing and advertising—over 30% of annual budgets of an average for-profit institution. Commercials often possessed an emotional tone of a life-changing experience and speed to job obtainment. Recruitment interviewers often used the same tone with prospective students, sometimes combined with fraudulent statements about financial aid eligibility and wage earnings upon graduation.

The year 2014 continued the trend with high-profile incidents at two of the largest for-profit educational providers: ITT Technical Institute and Corinthian Colleges. In February 2014, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau sued ITT (Perez-Pena, 2014). This newly created agency of the United States government is tasked with “mak[ing] markets for consumer financial products and services work for Americans—whether they are applying for a mortgage, choosing among credit cards, or using any number of other consumer financial products” (United States Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, n.d.). This lawsuit alleged that ITT attracted students with zero interest loans that the student would eventually default on only to comply with taking out a high-interest, institutionally backed loan to stay in school (Perez-Pena, 2014). Later in the same year, after the United States Department of Education conducted an investigation, Corinthian Colleges had to terminate education services by the end of the year (Weise, 2014). This unprecedented move has resulted in a substantial loan forgiveness program ($480 million) to the students of Corinthian Colleges (United States Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2015). Most recently, on January 27, 2016, the Federal Trade Commission filed suit against DeVry University alleging fraudulent communication to prospective students about their ability to obtain employment upon graduation and at wage rates greater than peers at other, competing institutions (Federal Trade Commission, 2016).
As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, a Google™ search for the words “for-profit college scandals” yielded nearly 43 million results as of January 2016. These negative reports are not isolated to web-based outlets. They are also evident in newspapers, magazines, television, and radio outlets on a frequent basis. Bloomberg News (n.d.) even has an investigation site dedicated solely to the for-profit sector with a seemingly biased introduction:

A series of Bloomberg News articles revealed that for-profit colleges have mushroomed into a $30-billion-a-year industry at taxpayer expense by targeting vulnerable populations -- disabled military and veterans, the homeless, immigrants and minorities -- with misleading promises of low costs, online academic help, and lucrative jobs after graduation. While federal aid to these colleges, owned by such prominent corporations as Goldman Sachs Group and Washington Post Co., has increased sixfold in a decade and their executives have pocketed $2 billion in pay and stock sales, most for-profit college students drop out and can't repay their loans, the series showed, helping prompt House and Senate hearings, a scathing Government Accountability Office report, and a 24 percent decline in the companies’ stock market value.

Theories of implicit social cognition, specifically mere exposure and implicit bias could suggest that these public disgraces and continued scandals in the media could unconsciously influence negative attitudes towards the for-profit sector. Furthermore, these unconscious, negative attitudes could affect how HR professionals make selection choices when faced with a for-profit and a nonprofit graduate with similar backgrounds—perhaps resulting in a preference for nonprofit graduates.
Employers’ Preference Towards Nonprofit Institutions.

Employer preferences are critical to understand and add texture to the aforementioned studies on wage earnings. More specifically, if employer preferences have biases towards a nonprofit education, then students considering (or pursuing) for-profit education should understand and consider this in their decision. Understanding the possible impact of employer preferences on wage earnings measurements is also critical for lawmakers to analyze the impact of regulations that use wage earnings as a measure of quality. The following narrative is a review of studies related to employer preferences between for-profit and nonprofit institutions.

A working paper entitled, Profiting Higher Education? What Students, Alumni and Employers Think About For-Profit Colleges (Hagelskamp et al., 2014), indicated that employers either had no preference or rated nonprofit institutions of higher value compared to for-profit institutions in their communities. Hagelskamp and her team administered a mixed methods research study to 656 HR professionals who hire for jobs that require a postsecondary degree. Empirical research and a series of focus groups from the study’s target population were the bases for the survey design. The survey indicated that “for-profit colleges are a growing number of schools that operate as profitmaking businesses. Many for-profit colleges are small, private, vocational schools. Some are large, national enterprises such as …” The blanks constituted three names from the top 12 for-profit institutions in the United States (e.g., University of Phoenix, ITT Technical Institute, and Kaplan University). Other survey questions purposefully avoided the use of the term “for profit” to more subtly assess if HR professionals perceived the value differently than the value of nonprofits. Demographically, the survey respondents differed only significantly in gender, which is indicative of the human resource professional field; disproportionately, more women responded to the survey and this disproportion aligns with the
make-up of the HR field in general. Specifically 74.4% of all HR managers are women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).

The study indicated that 75% of respondents did not recognize the names of the for-profit institutions or they did not know enough about them to judge their quality. In contrast, only 41% of the respondents said the same of community colleges listed in the survey. A minority of respondents familiar with for-profit institutions rated them as excellent or good education providers; though they also rated nonprofit institutions higher than for-profits consistently. An estimated 69% of respondents familiar with for-profits rated them as excellent or good, as opposed to 95% for a public university. Evaluations included three key measures of quality: (a) “teaching important knowledge and skills,” (b) “preparing students to work at your company,” and (c) “providing professional development opportunities.” Results showed 51–52% perceived no difference between for-profit colleges and community colleges, and 41–46% perceived no difference between for-profit colleges and public universities. However, those who did view them differently showed substantial preference for community colleges and public universities.

During the interview phase of the study, respondents were more open to discussing their perceptions towards for-profit institutions. Samples of comments indicated beliefs that for-profit colleges were not reputable as compared to nonprofit institutions and that advertising and recruitment practices were distasteful.

Another study in the area of wage earnings was a field experiment conducted by the Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (Darolia et al., 2014). It involved the submission of fictitious résumés that only differed in the applicant graduating from a nonprofit institution, a for-profit college, or with only a high school diploma. Researchers found that hiring companies did not assign value to a for-profit postsecondary degree over a
community college or even a mere high school diploma (Darolia et al., 2014). The study was limited in its geographical setting to seven major metropolitan areas: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Sacramento, and Seattle. The criteria for choosing these cities involved their concentration of for-profit institutions and for the volume of job postings. The delivery of résumés was a response to job postings in six occupational categories, ranging from administrative assistance to information technology and medical office positions. The careful selection of these positions corresponded to academic disciplines that both for-profit and community college institutions offered. Half of the résumés with postsecondary experience had a nonprofit listed and half listed a for-profit institution. The basis for the selection of institution names was their presence in the communities, which received the résumés. The researchers carefully balanced work experience on the résumés to focus on employment right after graduation (if postsecondary education was part of the qualifications listed). All other variables on the résumés were constant between the types of institutions or high school diploma attainment—though the latter represented the smallest number of résumés to more carefully measure the differences between nonprofit and for-profit institutions.

The researchers performed tests to gain a better understanding of whether the educational treatments (community college, for-profit, or no college) were administered randomly; to which they concluded they were. Delivery of résumés reached over a period of one year between May 2013 and May 2014 resulting in 8,914 résumés. Positive response rates to the résumé submissions was 11.4% and 4.9% of those responses also included a request for an interview. Among the highest response rates were for résumés that listed a community college and lowest for those résumés listing no college experience, though not statistically significant. The researchers also pointed out that while the results are not statistically significant, that point
estimates on a positive response from an employer suggested that applicants with a community college background fared better than those with a for-profit listed. They found a similar result comparing no college experience to for-profit and found that while the results were insignificant once again, the applicants with for-profit college experience received less positive response than those with just a high school diploma. The opposite was evident upon comparing community colleges and a high school diploma; community college applicants had slightly more positive responses.

Conducted across the city and occupation were sensitivity analyses to rule out any one city or occupation skewing the results. While the researchers failed to find statistically significant results, point estimates did minimally suggest that a degree from a for-profit institution was no better than listing a high school diploma and that perhaps a community college is still preferred. Darolia’s team identified limitations of the study with respect to the type of occupation, geography, age of workers, work history, and other variables, which were deemed significant. Also unclear was whether the researchers were able to control for effects related to gender and ethnicity; though they did suggest they varied the résumés according to these possible covariates. With all limitations considered, this study may have demonstrated that employers do not look upon a for-profit institution favorably, when compared to a nonprofit (e.g., community college) and that they are perhaps biased against for-profit education.

Lastly, in a cross-sectional survey of nursing recruiters, RN-to-BSN programs from for-profit colleges showed a rating less favorable than programs offered at traditional, nonprofit institutions (Kinneer, 2014). This study suffered from nonprobability sampling as it related to the absence of a central database of all healthcare recruiters and also a low response rate—791 invitations were sent with 131 responses over two requests, after exclusions, the results of this
study are based on 116 respondents. Based on the results of his study, Kinneer (2014) postulated that employer attitudes towards for-profit institutions have not changed over the years despite increased enrollment in them.

Though the body of research is limited in this area, some researchers have suggested that an employer preference is evident for nonprofit institutions. The research context on wage earnings of for-profit graduates must correspond with research on employer preference to have a more accurate assessment of what is causing the seemingly lower wage earning outcomes despite good academic outcomes of for-profit institutions (retention, graduation, and placement rates).

Fried and Hill (2009) commented in their study that some detractors [of the for-profit sector] continue to argue that for-profit education will not be accepted on a large scale by the market … stem[ming] from the feeling that there is a stigma attached to for-profit education in the middle and upper academic tiers of the market. (p. 39)

Fried and Hill (2009) further stated that this stigma will dissipate over time as for-profit models of higher education continue to thrive and thereby gain acceptance, through a more regular comparison conducted between the efficiencies of for-profit education and nonprofit models.

**Conclusion**

It is this last thread of literature (employer preference for nonprofit institutions) that was the inspiration for this study. These studies seem to suggest that employers have a preference for graduates of nonprofit institutions over for-profit ones. It seemed important to add texture to this phenomenon where HR professionals may say they do not have a preference as to the type of institution a prospective employee graduated from, but later demonstrate preference in their
actual selections towards nonprofit graduates. Thus, this study sought to better understand if this preference may add context to lower wage earnings of for-profit graduates.
Chapter Three: Study Design and Methodology

The goal of this research study was to describe the perceptions of HR professionals regarding the quality of candidates from for-profit versus nonprofit educational institutions. Furthermore, in this study I sought to make sense of what HR professionals may say about how they make candidate selections based on education type versus the behaviors an HR professional may exhibit in making a decision between candidates from different types of institutions. For instance, an HR professional may state that they place little weight on the type of college someone attends, yet make decisions that show potential preferences to nonprofit institutions.

Research Questions

This study sought to address the following question and sub-questions to provide a detailed description of this phenomenon with a group of HR professionals working in healthcare- and technology-related industries:

1. In the screening and hiring process, how do HR professionals make sense of how they place value on the type of institution a prospective employee graduated from?
   a. What value is placed upon the type of institution the candidate graduated from (i.e., nonprofit versus for-profit educational institutions)?
   b. What experiences and information do HR professionals use to form their opinions on the relative quality of education for candidates from nonprofit versus for-profit educational institutions?

Grounded in the constructionist worldview, phenomenology was chosen as the research tradition to conduct this inquiry. A complete description and rationale for this methodology is discussed in this section, including the study site, participants, data collection and analysis, as well as methods to address validity and credibility of the results.
Positionality Statement

According to Moustakas (1994), to “bracket” experiences is critical for phenomenological researchers. A researcher must set aside personal experiences to ensure the objective collection of data and then later use these personal experiences to better understand the phenomenon. As a former for-profit education executive, my research into this sector was not only critical but also legitimizing, as it demonstrated that for-profit institutions have a “place” in higher education worthy of scholarly inquiry. The following narrative documents my existing biases related to for-profit institutions, experiences that I thoroughly set aside during data collection and analysis for this research study.

As inspiration for this study, I have seen for years the same trend in wage earnings among graduates I worked with in the for-profit higher education sector. At one institution, average graduate earnings were typically 16–20% less than the median wage earnings in the county where the student obtained employment, according to the United States Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics used for comparison (Harrison College, 2014). This trend has remained consistent and most often, confidential, for fear that it would dissuade students from enrolling. I have heard employers say they would rather hire students from more “trusted universities” (e.g., nonprofit competitors in the market) even though they were unable to give me objective reasons beyond that statement. Based on my observations and experiences, I believe some employers have a negative bias regarding the quality of education provided to students attending for-profit institutions. Some researchers also support this claim by saying that for-profits are unacceptable in the market due to the stigma associated with the sector, even though these stigmas may only have affiliation with a particular school system and not the entire for-profit sector (Fried & Hill, 2009).
In my opinion, instances exist where the stigma associated with for-profit institutions has been well earned. In the early 1990s, the United States Department of Education announced that three-fourths of fraud in the student loan program came from for-profit schools (Beaver, 2009). Logeland (2013) recently coined the term *dirty brand* to describe the largest and most well-known for-profit institutions that have suffered recent scandals. Among them would be the Apollo Group (owners of the University of Phoenix), DeVry University, and Corinthian Colleges (Perez-Pena, 2014). ITT Technical Institute surely should be among them after surviving in 2004 the United States Department of Justice investigation on student recruitment practices (Pulley, 2005) and now undergoing a United States Securities and Exchange Commission investigation on student loan fraud (“ITT Says Being Investigated,” 2013). As mentioned in the Literature Review section of this thesis, a major news outlet, Bloomberg, has a webpage dedicated to articles written about for-profit colleges; most instances are scandalous in nature, and they include: recruiting homeless students (Goldman, 2010), underserving veterans (Golden, 2010), and most importantly, not providing a true benefit to the students they serve commensurate with the federal financial aid dollars they receive through student revenue (Lauerman, 2010). In another damaging event, the United States Government Accountability Office (U.S. GAO) released an undercover operation in November 2010 revealing fraudulent and questionable student recruitment tactics at for-profit institutions (U.S. GAO, 2010). Lastly, from 1990 to January of this year (2016), I watched several large for-profit systems come under investigations for making false claims to their students (Beaver, 2009; Federal Trade Commission, 2016; Perez-Pena, 2014). While 2011 and 2012 seemed to be years without bad press on for-profit institutions, news of gainful employment and public remarks by former Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) denouncing the sector still prevailed (Perez-Pena, 2014). Taking
into account the past revealed in the media, I would posit that the stigma of these scandals can be considered a general statement reflective of the entire for-profit sector.

Diametrically opposed to the findings in vocational outcomes for the graduates of for-profit institutions, I see that these same institutions are performing quite well compared to nonprofit peers when it comes to student outcomes such as student retention, graduation, and job placement rate. As mentioned in the previous section of this thesis, in 2010, the Educational Policy Institute (EPI), a nonprofit research organization, conducted research for Imagine America Foundation’s *Graduating At-Risk Students: A Cross-Sector Analysis*. The results of the study showed that the for-profit sector has had an important impact on American students. The main highlights are as follows:

1. Retention rates at the two-year degree level are higher at for-profit institutions.
2. Graduation rates at the two-year level of education are also higher at for-profit institutions.

Deming and his colleagues (2012) found similar results in first-year student retention at for-profit institutions looking at beginning postsecondary students in a longitudinal study (BPS) in 2012. Furthermore, for-profit institutions (e.g., DeVry University) report placing students in jobs in their field of study at rates as high as 95% for the last 10 years (Ruch, 2001). Ironically, in January of 2016, the Federal Trade Commission has filed suit against DeVry University alleging these statistics have been fraudulently reported (Federal Trade Commission, 2016). Placement outcomes must be examined taking into account that the institutions themselves collect this data, and third-party verification is not a requirement for every student placement.

Regardless, these statistics are important against the for-profit sector’s demographics, which indicate that students at these institutions possess several risk factors, such as belonging to
a minority, being older, and that they are often first-generation students (Imagine America Foundation, 2010). Taking into consideration the higher risk population served at for-profit institutions, the retention and graduate rates of these institutions are highly compelling.

Notwithstanding these positive educational outcomes for students at for-profit colleges and universities, a significant body of information continues to strongly highlight the ills of the sector (e.g., potential fraudulent recruitment practices, federal investigations, and most recently, research regarding wage earnings of graduates). As a seasoned for-profit executive, I have worked with for-profit colleges that I consider to have the highest ethical standards. In contrast, I have worked for other for-profit institutions where I could not say the same. I was left wondering about the comprehensive value of a for-profit education in regards to overall return on investment for students as I examined three factors of critical data about for-profit graduates: (a) the cost of their education; (b) their higher retention and graduation rates; and (c) the recent data suggesting possible lower wage earnings. Furthermore, I wondered if HR professionals—by having more exposure to nonprofits and perhaps, by listening to the news on recent scandals about for-profits—have an implicit bias against for-profit colleges which affects the vocational outcomes of the graduates.

The goal of this study was to show the process by which an HR professional chooses prospective employees, with emphasis on the type of education and implicit choices influential to those decisions. I believed my personal experiences with the negative biases towards for-profit institutions were helpful in capturing the essence of the selection process and in providing greater context to its meaning once data collection was complete.
Methodology

**Qualitative.** Since the study goal was to construct meaning from the experiences of the HR professionals interviewed—a constructivist research approach that allowed the researcher to observe the study phenomena by engaging in direct contact with the study participants was chosen (Creswell, 2013).

Following the constructivist worldview philosophy, this study included a qualitative research design. This approach has three critical research design criteria to consider according to Creswell (2013): (a) the research problem, (b) personal experiences, and (c) audience. Based on Creswell’s criteria, I have outlined three aspects of the research problem influential to my selection of a qualitative design:

1. **Research problem.** Providing more context to HR professionals’ perceptions of for-profit graduates is a topic of value, but one that lacks thorough research. Rich descriptions of perceptions and experiences indicate a qualitative design using in-depth interviews or case studies over a quantitative design using instruments such as an experiment or a survey.

2. **Personal experiences.** As a researcher, I prefer to participate in research directly. As discussed in the previous section, I also have more than a decade of experience in the for-profit education sector and believe this experience provides deeper context to what the participants reveal in their in-depth interviews.

3. **Audience.** Since many of the primary audiences for this study (lawmakers, prospective and current for-profit students, and HR professionals) are likely not versed in quantitative measures and statistical analysis, the key audiences may have a better understanding of a qualitative design.
Furthermore, as outlined previously in the thesis’ introduction, the theoretical framework for this study suggested a qualitative study that implicitly investigates biases. Greenwald and Banaji (1995) suggested that “investigations of implicit social cognition require indirect measures which neither inform the subject of what is being assessed nor request self-report concerning it” (p. 5). In some cases, the participant’s desire to answer in a socially acceptable way or out of fear of retribution may be influential to the results obtained using explicit reporting tools (Chao & Willaby, 2007). In fact, Greenwald and Krieger (2006) demonstrated that explicit forms of measurement yield higher rates of neutrality towards disadvantaged groups versus implicit measures that revealed higher levels of bias towards those groups. More specifically, 64% of respondents showed a bias towards a disadvantaged group of individuals when using an implicit measure, compared to 20% when an explicit one was used.

The framework of social cognition has been studied qualitatively in the field of medicine, most specifically. For example, researchers utilized theories of implicit social cognition to explain rater perception of workplace-based assessments of new physicians using verbal protocol analysis (Govaerts et al., 2013). Govaerts and his colleagues identified several implicit frameworks that raters used in evaluating the physicians subjectively (outside of the technical rubrics provided). Researchers have also qualitatively derived bias by reviewing treatment recommendations, richness of communications, and other subjective outcomes for discrete sets of patients who are identical in every other way but for race or ethnicity (Chapman et al, 2013; Govaerts et al, 2013). When distinct differences in treatment recommendations can be found by race or ethnicity, the theory of implicit bias can be used to explain the results as an unconscious bias.
**Phenomenology.** Within qualitative research designs, I chose phenomenology as the research tradition. At its essence, “a phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). Moustakas (1994) named Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) as the founder of phenomenology. Moustakas credited Husserl with creating the critical concept of “epoch” that indicates a state which “requires the elimination of suppositions and the raising of knowledge above every possible doubt” (p. 26). Moustakas described phenomenology as a “… process [that] involves a blending of what is really present with what is imagined as present from the vantage point of possible meanings; thus a unity of the real and the idea” (p. 26). In its truest form, a phenomenological study should result in the interpretation of meaning in the first-person tense so that the perspective of the researcher is only an additive to the interpretation and not an influencer of it.

I chose phenomenology due to its unique features that aligned with this research study. Most specifically, phenomenology focuses on one single concept (Creswell, 2013) as was the goal of this study. Furthermore, Creswell indicated the exploration is done through in-depth interviews with a group of participants who have experienced the studied phenomena. Phenomenology also allows the researcher to bracket their own experiences with the phenomenon during data collection, but it simultaneously allows for those experiences to be considered in the description of the essence of the experience. Lastly, data analysis follows a standard procedure from micro- to macro-meaning generation (Creswell, 2013).

Specific to this study and in line with the aforementioned aspects of this research design, phenomenology was suitable to this research problem due to its capacity to clearly focus on describing the experiences of HR professionals with for-profit institutions or graduates as
possible helpful context to understanding the lower vocational outcomes for for-profit graduates—without explicitly asking about a bias. A group of HR professionals who have had the experience of choosing a nonprofit graduate versus a for-profit one assisted me in studying this phenomenon. I identified these research subjects using a sample selection exercise outlined later in this narrative.

Secondarily, because the study goal was to reveal the experiences of others, I chose this design as it typically includes open-ended questions, which encourage participants to speak freely of their experiences which the primary researcher captures to generate meaning (Creswell, 2013).

A final consideration in this section was to select the specific type of phenomenological approach. Phenomenological research has two common types: one that Clark Moustakas developed and one outlined by Max van Manen (Creswell, 2013). The focus of these methods is on describing the experiences of a group and deriving meaning from them. Moustakas’ approach to phenomenology became the choice because it involves a structured data collection methodology suitable to the personal strengths of the researcher; I outline this methodology later in this narrative.

Site and Participants

Study site. The setting for this study was flexible due to the instruments selected for sample selection exercise (online, electronic survey), as well as the availability of an online meeting tool called Go To Meeting™ that allowed the researcher to interview study participants from a broad range of states. The opportunity to be unencumbered by the limits of physical travel was appealing due to its benefit of gaining a richer understanding of the phenomenon beyond the geographical setting of the researcher residing in Indiana. As such, study participants
resided in the following states: California, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Texas. One participant currently resides in India and works for a United States-based company.

**Study participants.** Following the tradition of phenomenology, each HR professional participant in this study must have experienced the decision of selecting an employee candidate for a screening and/or hiring decision in order to help us understand the phenomenon. In this study, I did not attempt to use an experimental design and draw conclusions about causal relationships; the study was a purposeful sampling of those who had experienced the study’s phenomenon. Purposeful sampling is not only a hallmark of phenomenological research (Moustakas, 1994), but it is also a requirement, since those who have not made prospective employee choices based on the type of institution from which a person has graduated could not add value to this study (Maxwell, 2005). Therefore, each participant in the study had to be a HR professional who had potentially used the type of institution (for-profit versus nonprofit) as a screening and/or hiring determinant. In line with phenomenological philosophy, study participants who participated in the in-depth interviews were called “coresearchers” as a way of acknowledging their participation in the research (Moustakas, 1994).

Given the focus of for-profit institutions mentioned in the Literature Review section of this thesis, only HR professionals recruiting employees at healthcare- and technology-related industries were invited to participate. This decision was made, working under the assumption that HR professionals would have more likelihood of familiarity with for-profit institutions if they recruited in the industries served primarily by for-profits. This variable added richness to the in-depth interviews because a credible comparison could be drawn between a well-known for-profit and a well-known nonprofit institution. Purposeful sampling was made possible via the sample selection exercise described next.
Recruitment for this study was conducted through the following channels:

a) LinkedIn searches.

b) Previous colleagues of the researcher.

c) Referrals from friends, family, and professional colleagues.

Northeastern University’s Institutional Review Board approved an email template sent in request to participate and/or to gain referrals as well as the Participant Flier that can be reviewed in Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively. The Participant Flier outlined the “phases” of the research (Phase I or the sample selection exercise and Phase II or the phenomenological in-depth interview), the estimated time to complete each phase, and the participant’s potential compensation. Compensation for completing the sample selection exercise was a $10 Amazon gift card with an additional $100 for participation in the in-depth interviews, if the participant were selected.

Protection of human subjects. Once 20 potential sample selection exercise participants were identified, each received an overview of the study to include their potential participation in the sample selection exercise (called Phase I in their materials), and the opportunity to be selected to participate in the in-depth interview phase (labeled Phase II). Potential participants reviewed the Consent-to-Participate (Appendix C) form, which was also approved by the Institutional Review Board and which contained the major elements Creswell (2013, p.153) suggested:

1. “The right of the coresearchers to withdraw from the study at any time;

2. the central purpose of the study and the procedures to be used in the data collection;

3. the protection of the confidentiality of the respondents;

4. the known risks associated with participation in the study;
5. the expected benefits to accrue to the [coresearchers] in the study; and
6. the signature of the [coresearcher] as well as the researcher.”

Only those potential participants that signed the Consent-to-Participate form were invited to participate in the sample selection exercise.

**Sample selection.** The sample selection stage in the research involved sending a set of résumés to the potential participants and asking them to choose their preferred candidate through a brief online survey (Appendix D). This step was useful in ensuring that selected coresearchers had experienced the study phenomenon and in preparing them to answer the in-depth interview questions. It was also initially designed to indirectly demonstrate the possible effects of mere exposure or implicit bias in the selection process—to then investigate further in the in-depth interviews. This exercise involved the following steps:

1) Sample selection participants were divided into two groups.

2) Group A received a job description (Appendix E) and two résumés. The résumés were nearly identical in nature (gender, geographical location, career objective statement, work experience, and college degree attainment). Candidate 1’s résumé (Appendix F) listed Kaplan College (a for-profit college) and Candidate 2’s résumé (Appendix G) listed Southern New Hampshire University (a nonprofit).

3) Group B received the same job description and the same résumés, but the type of institution was reversed so that Candidate 1’s résumé (Appendix H) listed Southern New Hampshire University and Candidate 2’s résumé (Appendix I) listed Kaplan College.
Sample selection exercise participants. Eighteen of the potential 20 participants in the sample selection exercise completed the survey. Demographic information on the sample selection exercise participants follows:

- 17 of the participants were women, nearly in-line with the HR profession’s typical demographic structure/make-up as mentioned in the Literature Review section of this thesis. Specifically, that 74.4% of all HR managers are women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014).
- 13 of the participants worked in a technology-related industry, while the five remaining participants worked in a healthcare-related company.
- 11 participants chose the résumés that listed nonprofit institutions, while the remaining seven chose the for-profit one.

Initially, it was determined that a participant would need to choose the nonprofit candidate résumé in order to proceed into the full research stage (in-depth interview) since they had experienced the phenomenon of choosing a nonprofit candidate over a for-profit one, possibly under the influence of mere exposure or implicit bias. However, during the third in-depth interview with a coresearcher that met this criteria (she chose the candidate with the nonprofit institution listed on the résumé), she changed her mind and selected the for-profit candidate instead. Even so, later in her interview she indicated she had some preferences around Education Type (for-profit versus nonprofit) that would be germane to the study. Due to this surprise finding, a decision was made to interview all sample selection exercise participants, regardless of their choice of candidate résumés. The following table depicts key demographics of the participants in the sample selection exercise.
Table 2

*Participants with an asterisk next to their participant code did not participate in the in-depth interviews.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>State of Residence</th>
<th>Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COS005</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAL006</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>TX</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIA001</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>OH</td>
<td>Technology/Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAR004</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JON016</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEP009</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MI</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LUN013</td>
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<td>MCQ008</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVJ011</td>
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<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Healthcare</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>IL</td>
<td>Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REV012*</td>
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<td>IN</td>
<td>Technology/Healthcare</td>
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<td>TX</td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In-depth interview participants.** Sample selection participants that participated in the in-depth interviews were called “coresearchers,” as performing the research without their participation would be impossible (Moustakas, 1994). Coresearchers came from organizations varying in size and from various states, though they all focused on recruiting in healthcare and/or technology-related disciplines—programs commonly offered by for-profit institutions. The final sample size after the sample selection exercise was 16 coresearcher volunteers. Table 2 from above outlines specific demographic data of the in-depth interview coresearchers (those with
asterisks next to their names chose not to participate in this phase of the research). Summary demographic information on the coresearchers selected for in-depth interview follows:

- 15 of the participants were women.
- 12 of the participants worked in a technology-related industry, while the four remaining participants worked in a healthcare-related company.

**Data Collection**

Moustakas (1994) suggested in his model of phenomenological research a set of sequential steps involved in data collection and analysis. Once the sample selection had been finalized based on the previous section, the in-depth interview phase commenced. Within the in-depth interviews, coresearchers shared their experience with regard to the sample selection exercise and the situations or externalities influential to their selections. Interviews were conducted in the months of September, October, and November of 2015.

The interviews were semi-unstructured and largely open-ended, with a primary focus on the following question: “Please describe with as much detail as possible the process you went through in each [résumé] section that contributed to your selection”. The interview guide (Appendix J) was intentionally brief, but detailed enough so that I could objectively evaluate the experience and not reveal the aim of the study and thereby influence the coresearcher responses. Moreover, the interview guide was useful because it reminded me of central questions helpful to the coresearchers in fully describing their experiences, which is the central goal of phenomenological research interviewing (Moustakas, 1994).

The theoretical framework for this study is implicit social cognition, specifically, the theories of mere exposure and implicit bias covered earlier in this thesis’ introduction. As highlighted previously, explicit measures of the effects of these theories are not as effective as
implicit ones. To address this issue, the in-depth interviews in this study covered the entire résumé of the candidate that each coresearcher chose in the sample selection exercise. Embedding the questions about education type (for-profit versus nonprofit) within the discussion of the other aspects of the résumé was a decision made to gather data about education type without directly focusing on it. Interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. All interviews took place via Go To Meeting™, an online meeting tool that allowed for a large geographic spread of coresearchers, screen sharing of the résumés and a clear recording of the conversations. Afterwards, I had all recordings transcribed by a third party transcription service; the transcriptions were the ultimate source of deriving the essence of this phenomenon. Resolution to misconceptions or confusion were typically resolved during the interview, which was useful to validate the results, but also via a confirmation between each coresearcher and myself as to the accuracy of the transcript. Each coresearcher was involved in a second interview and/or email exchange where they were asked to review their transcript for accuracy, and to provide any further thoughts that might have occurred to them since the first in-depth interview had taken place. Every coresearcher confirmed the accuracy of their transcript (contained in Appendix K; comments regarding education type are highlighted in yellow).

**Data Analysis**

Following data collection and transcription was the data analysis, according to Moustakas’ modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analyzing phenomenological data (1994):

1. I documented and set aside my personal experience with the phenomenon.

2. Data analysis from the coresearchers followed a process of identifying “significant statements,” otherwise known as “horizontalization.” These significant statements were then combined into “clusters of meaning” (p.193).
3. I then wrote textural and structural descriptions of these statements to include my personal experience.

4. I then wrote a composite description that showed the essence of the coresearchers’ experiences.

Figure 1 shows a typical template for analysis and coding of a phenomenological study.

Figure 1. Coding a phenomenological study. Adapted from Creswell (2013).

The following narrative shows each step in detail.

As a first step to documenting the bracketing of my experience, I described my personal experience with the study phenomenon and physically/emotionally set it aside. In line with what Moustakas (1994) informs us, this was an iterative process whereby I needed to enumerate my biases several times before I could rid myself of them to look at the data with a fresh perspective. I had been working in this sector for over a decade, and I did not take this stage of the methodological process lightly; only once I was thoroughly convinced I had set aside my personal experiences did I proceed to the next step.

After I had thoroughly bracketed my experience, I read all of the coresearcher transcripts thoroughly in one sitting. At this stage in the research, intentionality was critical. Intentionality “refers to consciousness, to the internal experience of being conscious of something” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 28). While reading the interview guides, I marked in the margins the notes, themes, and key ideas for later organization and understanding. Upon completing the initial
review, I wrote a general account of the issues described in the interviews. Again, just allowing
the information to come into consciousness was essential. In this stage, every statement was
important and could be a favorable contribution to the overall meaning derived from the research
(Moustakas, 1994).

Next, I analyzed the interview guides, transcriptions, and my notations for key themes,
which was the first phase of coding, otherwise known as significant statements or
horizontalization in phenomenology research (Creswell, 2013). I then clustered significant
statements into broader units known as “clusters of meaning” (Creswell, 2013). During
horizontalization, I discarded statements that were irrelevant or duplicative. I cycled through this
stage of coding several times to be sure that I had thoroughly categorized the significant
statements into clusters of meanings that represented the interviews and that were free of my
personal bias. I then categorized these statements into major meaning units.

After the initial meaning units were recorded, I reread all the transcripts several more
times in the context of these meaning units to ensure they were representative of all the data, as
well as within the context of the study research questions.

Just prior to the finalization of these meaning units, raw transcript data was reviewed by
an independent party (see Appendix L for curriculum vitae). After her initial review of the data,
we had a phone conversation to discuss her observations and to brainstorm on the final set of
meaning units. At the end of the conversation, we agreed on the final meaning units immediately
following this passage.

The next steps in data analysis (the findings) are fully detailed in the next section of this
thesis, but they are described here as a description of how those findings were developed and
documented. Once the clusters of meaning were finalized, I summarized the meaning units to
capture two critical elements: (a) what the coresearchers experienced—or noema and (b) how the coresearchers underwent the experience—or noesis (Moustakas, 1994). The “what” section of this summary refers to the textural description, which Moustakas (1994) described as the transcendental-phenomenological reduction stage. Moustakas (1994) pointed out that during this stage the phenomenon shows “the constituents that comprise the experience in consciousness, from the vantage point of an open self” (p. 34). In this stage, verbatim examples were useful to capture the phenomenon.

The “how” section shows the structural description and the stage that Moustakas (1994) referred to as imaginative variation. Moustakas stated that “from this process a structural description of the essences of the experience is derived, presenting a picture of the conditions that precipitate an experience and connect with it” (p. 35). In this stage, I reflected on the specific settings and contexts in which the phenomenon existed, a way of bringing meaning to the phenomenon. This stage shows the data from many angles and perspectives to derive meaning (Moustakas, 1994). At the end of this stage, my personal experiences with the for-profit sector were added within the context of the other structural descriptions obtained through coresearchers. As mentioned earlier, practicing “bracketing” was essential to deriving meaning distinct from the researcher’s personal bias.

Lastly and most importantly, I captured the essence of and assigned meaning to the phenomenon through a descriptive passage detailing the “what” and “how” the coresearchers experienced choosing prospective employees, with the type of college or university they attended in consideration. Moustakas (1994) summarized the process:

[I]n the phenomenological model that I employ, the structural essences of the Imaginative Variation are then integrated with the textural essences of the Transcendental-
Phenomenological Reduction in order to arrive at a textural-structural synthesis of meanings and essences of the phenomenon or experience being investigated.

This final stage of phenomenological study results in a narrative that shows meaning suitable to the study problem (p. 36).

Validity and Credibility

Those who choose to read the results and open a dialog concerning lower wage earnings of for-profit graduates will ultimately verify the trustworthiness of this research study. Beyond this practical approach to trustworthiness, I included five other methods, which are useful in adding further credibility to the results of the study:

**Third party verification.** As mentioned previously, I worked with a third-party qualitative researcher who independently coded the interview data. She and I compared coding and brainstormed on the final meaning units to arrive at an impartial set of units that accurately describe the experiences of the coresearchers in this study.

**Researcher bias.** An embedded aspect of phenomenology is the bracketing of the researcher’s inherent bias as a former for-profit education executive. This bias included a full documentation on the positionality statement of the narrative, which is the first part of data analysis.

**In-depth interview corrections.** As referred to earlier in this narrative, the confusing and misleading statements made during a coresearcher interview were discussed “real-time” and after transcriptions were completed (less than two weeks from each interview). In this way, each coresearcher had the opportunity to clarify while the information was fresh.

**Phenomenological validation protocol.** Following a model by Polkinghorne described in Creswell (2013), a set of questions were asked at the end of data analysis to validate the
results. Appendix M outlines the questions, and the parties that reviewed each question and confirmed the answers positively.

**Member checking.** The last piece of validation used in this study was that of member checking. In member checking, the findings and the essence of the phenomenon were verified with the original study coresearchers (Creswell, 2013) to address all of the abovementioned trustworthiness questions. Each member had the opportunity to judge “the accuracy and credibility of the account” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Members also had the opportunity to provide primary feedback on the description of the essence the researcher drafted to ensure it reflected their aggregate experiences.

**Data management.** The storage of files for each coresearcher, labeled by their coresearcher number, is stored on a resident computer with a backup to a cloud server. These files include all interview guides and recorded interviews. All transcript files are stored in the same folders by a confidential coresearcher number. Every month, a third backup to an external hard drive is part of the data management procedure. Because the identity of the coresearchers is not relevant to the analysis, the master key of coresearcher numbers was kept only until after their transcripts were all confirmed for accuracy; at that time the key was deleted to further protect the anonymity of the coresearchers in the study. All emails to coresearchers with attached files were also permanently deleted.

**Conclusion**

This phenomenological study sought to describe the perceptions of HR professionals regarding the quality of candidates from for-profit versus nonprofit educational institutions. Furthermore, utilizing the frameworks of implicit social cognition’s theories of mere exposure and implicit bias, I sought to make sense of what HR professionals *may say* about how they
make candidate selections based on education type versus the behaviors an HR professional *may exhibit* in making a decision between candidates from different types of institutions.

Participants for this study were selected based on their occupation as a HR professional (former and current recruiters and/or managers of recruiters) working in a healthcare- or technology-related industry. A final selection of coresearchers participated in the sample selection exercise where they chose a prospective employee candidate for a theoretical open position provided to them along with the candidate résumés. In-depth interviews investigated this choice and asked probing questions about the situations, and about externalities and experiences that lead them to those decisions, with particular attention paid to the Education section of the résumé.

The researcher ensured the trustworthiness and quality of the data through careful and secure management of the data, as well as by using several structured validation techniques. These methods comprised a system of cross-checking data and analysis by the researcher, by an independent third party, by the dissertation committee, and by the coresearchers themselves.

This study contributes to the scholarly literature on for-profit institutions and the wage earnings of their graduates in several ways. Firstly, this study adds texture to the research on for-profit graduate wage earnings seen through the lens of HR professionals who are making screening and hiring decisions. This perspective may be helpful in explaining the data that revealed that for-profit graduates earn less than more traditionally educated peers. The results of this study also add a scholarly contribution and benefit to three other important audiences: (a) for-profit institutions, themselves, (b) lawmakers writing legislation based on wage earnings data; and (c) prospective and current students considering or pursuing a for-profit education. Students interested in attending a for-profit institution should be fully informed consumers as
they weigh their educational opportunities, including their employability and potential wage earnings, upon completing their program.

Secondly, this study makes a significant contribution to the body of literature regarding theories of implicit social cognition applied to the area of human resources. More specifically, the results of this study add to the potential existence and importance of unconscious motivators in employment decisions. Moreover, this study did reasonably reveal that this set of HR professionals were making decisions about employee candidates utilizing theories of implicit social cognition (mere exposure and implicit bias) and that they were thereby perhaps making choices that could needlessly limit their applicant pool.
Chapter Four: Research Findings

The purpose of this study is to describe the perceptions of HR professionals regarding for-profit education at a selection of 16 healthcare and technology-related companies in the United States. While the results of this study do not indicate causation, describing the phenomenon provides a hypothesis to explain why employment outcomes are lower for graduates of for-profit schools when compared to employment outcomes for graduates of nonprofit schools.

The theoretical framework for this study was implicit social cognition, specifically the theories of mere exposure and implicit bias covered earlier in this thesis. The words of the coresearchers are significant to the key audiences of this research because they represent a group of experienced HR professionals (recruiters and those in charge of recruitment at their companies). They make screening decisions from a subset of diverse companies, geographically spread throughout the United States representing healthcare and information technology. Their experiences and insights inform our understanding of whether education type has an impact on screening decisions. In the astute words of one of the coresearchers in the study, “recruiting is not a science” and this narrative reinforces this supposition.

Overall, if one defines a well-known university, or one that a company has a relationship with, as an education type, an overarching theme emerged in the data indicating that education type does indeed matter, but the reasons the coresearchers cited varied greatly. The following represents the final, major meaning units derived from the in-depth interviews within the context of education type:

1. Education did not matter.
2. Education type may matter.
3. Education type usually does not matter to me, but…
   a. it matters for higher level positions.
   b. it matters to others.

4. Education type matters less than existing preference for an institution.

The following table represents the meaning units with a count of coresearchers who made statements consistent with that meaning unit. Coresearchers often made statements that represented several meaning units so that the counts will not equal the sample size of this study accordingly.

Table 3

*Meaning Units, Coresearcher Count*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning Units</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education type did not matter.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education type may matter.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education type usually does not matter to me, but…</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it matters for higher level positions.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it matters to others.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education type matters less than an existing preference for an institution.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a foundation, it bears noting every coresearcher indicated that for this job, the possession of the educational credential listed in the job description or posting was a critical choice factor. In fact, it was probably the first thing used to qualify or exclude a candidate since the qualification was most objectively stated in the job description. According to coresearcher statements, candidates without the listed educational credential would have been excluded during
screening; although, two coresearchers did mention that in the current labor market shortage they are starting to challenge the notion whether an education credential is the ultimate qualifier for a position at this level in an organization (e.g., a customer service representative). A coresearcher quotation succinctly sums up this viewpoint:

If you hire for fit and you can develop a great culture with great leadership and all that, where someone got their education from, is a whole lot less important for the majority of the positions that we recruit for (HAR004).

As mentioned, to merely embed questions about education type within the context of the entire résumé was critical; so coresearchers were initially asked to describe the entire experience of how they made their choice in the sample selection exercise. Consistent with the problem of study, several probing questions were asked about education type once the Education section came up in conversation, or it would be brought up explicitly as needed. An example of this probing question is, “So, in looking at both of these candidates, it seems they both possess the required credential with the only difference being that Southern New Hampshire University is a nonprofit university whereas Kaplan College is a for-profit institution, did this impact your decision?” The extent of this chapter is dedicated to deriving meaning from the answers to this probing question and within the possible constructs of the theories of implicit social cognition, mere exposure, and implicit bias.

**Meaning Unit: Education Type Did Not Matter**

The three coresearchers who indicated that the type of education did not weigh in their decision were quite definitive in their statements and gave insignificant context to the answer even when asked for clarifying information. One of the coresearchers said, “You know…it doesn't matter to me where these folks are going to school (GIA001)” and another said, “I didn't
feel like one was better than the other and honestly, I didn't know Kaplan was for-profit. It
wouldn't have swayed me either way (OVI011).” A third statement in this meaning unit should
be mentioned as well, “…I recognized Kaplan, but at this point I think a lot of even the for-profit
universities are…do[ing] a good job, and I don’t want to discredit an applicant for making that
attempt to get a degree (ROS003).” While this statement was made by someone who selected the
for-profit candidate in the sample selection exercise, it should also be noted that this particular
coresearcher specifically mentioned that she strongly prefers a one-page résumé and in her
sample selection group, the candidate from the nonprofit institution had a résumé that spanned
two pages, whereas the for-profit candidate’s résumé fit to one page. Possibly, her strong
feelings (about a one-page résumé) may have superseded her feelings towards for-profit
institutions which seem to have a sense of bias in the words she chose (even the for-profit
universities). This meaning unit suggested that education type did not matter in the selection
process; though these three coresearchers represent a minority compared to the 13 coresearchers
that made statements that indicated education type does indeed matter.

**Meaning Unit: Education Type May Matter**

From the 13 coresearchers that made statements that suggested education type may
matter, four coresearchers indicated that the type of education (for-profit) did matter to them and
it weighed into their decision. The remaining nine would then temper their response to the
probing question with other statements that indicated education type may matter under certain
circumstances.

**Education type as for-profit did matter.** Of the four coresearchers who indicated a for-
profit institution weighed on their decision, three of them responded that it negatively weighed
on their decision and one responded that it had a positive weight on her decision. Of the three
that said it would negatively affect their decision, one was particularly vocal about her feelings regarding for-profit institutions. She initially mentioned she was unfamiliar with the institutions listed on the résumés, so she was provided context within her community to which she then responded, “Then I would have been—I would have personally leaned towards Southern New Hampshire.” She clarified her point with, “You know, I am not a big fan of the for-profit schools (LUN013).” She went on to say, “…to be perfectly honest [sic], there’s just no need to go to a for-profit school”. Further into her interview she described her feelings about teacher quality, work-based learning as well as the quality and focus of the student body—all indicating a higher quality at the nonprofit school as compared to the for-profit one in her community. This coresearcher has had several, direct interactions with the for-profit and nonprofit institutions in her community and was able to describe her feelings as a result of her experiences and not value judgments. The second coresearcher openly admitted the she is, in her words, “an education snob (COS005)” and that perhaps Corinthian Colleges, being in the news in her community, contributed to her selection of the nonprofit candidate during the sample selection exercise. The third coresearcher’s comments in this area overlap with a meaning unit covered in more detail later in this narrative, but said, “…if you did your MBA at [sic] for-profit school online, we don’t count it as an MBA (WOO018).” The comments of these coresearchers seem to have suggested the possibility of negative implicit bias developed as a result of direct experience with for-profit (and contrasting nonprofit experience) and being exposed to negative news stories about for-profits.

The coresearcher who indicated a favorable position on for-profits had a recent experience working at this type of institution and said, “…I recently worked for a for-profit education institute…I think I may have placed more value on it [sic] than I used to (JON016).”
Following the framework of mere exposure, her affinity towards for-profits is possibly associated with her recent work experience at this type of institution.

**Meaning Unit: Education Type Usually Did Not Matter to Me, But…**

The remaining nine coresearchers initially mentioned that education type did not weigh in their decision, but then provided context to their answer that suggested that perhaps it became a considerable factor. Their comments fell into one or both of the following meaning subunits: (a) education type does matter for higher level positions, and (b) education type matters to others. Additionally, some comments fell into the final meaning unit, that education type matters less than an existing preference for an institution.

**Education type matters for higher level positions.** This meaning subunit represented comments used to temper an immediate response indicating that education type did not matter, but that perhaps it would matter if the position used in the sample selection exercise was at a higher level in the organization. Three coresearchers would have more interest in where someone went to college if they were recruiting for management and executive levels, where a bachelor’s degree and above is required. As with the coresearcher who was unfamiliar with the institutions provided on the résumé, examples of Purdue University (nonprofit) and the University of Phoenix (for-profit) were often supplied, to which one coresearcher responded:

…I probably am more biased about—to me, I looked at associates…I didn’t even look at where they went to University. To me, it’s sort of less predictive. Or I should say, which college they have gone to. I think it’s also for the job, so it’s almost like where they went to college or where they went to university, 80% of the time is not a factor. It’s sort of the extremes that become a factor…I feel like I shouldn’t have that bias, so I would say it’s—so you got your law degree from online, maybe Phoenix or something, I don’t know
if I want you running my corporate legal department. So maybe that’s—it’s sort of down the extreme sides that I would think of this. For this role, neither one of those stood out to me at all (LEP009).

Another coresearcher commented, “I would definitely want to look into…what kind of…I was thinking of university or college they’re coming out if it is a management position… (PAR010).”

Another coresearcher succinctly represented this meaning subunit by saying, “For lower to midlevel positions, we tend not to look at education at all. What school somebody came from means absolutely nothing (WOO018).” In a similar way, another coresearcher commented in response to me asking if the type of institution weighed in her decision, “No, not really. Especially for this type of role, I don’t think that that’s as important. I think…depending on the role…for some hiring managers, that might make a difference (ROC007).” This meaning subunit seems to have suggested that education type is not important at entry-level positions within an organization, but that education type would be reviewed more closely when recruiting at higher level positions with more responsibility in the organization. Moreover, because these tempered statements were in direct reaction to being asking about whether for-profit versus nonprofit mattered to them, it may have suggested an implicit bias against for-profit institutions, but only for recruiting higher level positions in a company.

**Education type matters to others.** This meaning subunit represented statements that were made that were tempered by statements that indicated education type is not as important to them personally, but they know of others to whom it is. These six coresearchers would clearly state that the type of institution a candidate had graduated from did not matter to them, but they knew of others, or had experiences where it did matter to others. Examples used took several forms:
1. companies worked at,
2. companies they knew,
3. hiring managers they had worked with, and
4. colleagues they knew.

A sampling of statements that represented this subunit follows. In direct response to a coresearcher being asked if she had experiences where the institution being a for-profit mattered she indicated,

I think it’s across the spectrum, because I was going to comment that from a nursing perspective, coming out of more recently [working in] nursing education…where I got my first insight…in terms of quickly having a hiring manager say, “Oh, no way. We’re not going to hire from these schools (PEN008).”

Often specific context needed to be provided such as, “Have you had experience with folks that said…‘If University of Phoenix is on their résumé, I just put them to the side’? Have you seen that sort of for-profit, nonprofit issue?” To which one coresearcher responded,

Yes, yes, absolutely. I think that from a hiring manager perspective, with someone that’s not in HR, I hate to say it, but (they) [hiring managers] are huge discriminators against individuals that have been to like Phoenix and those types of institutions (WILL014).

Another coresearcher commented in a similar way saying, “my husband worked at [large, Fortune 500 company] for like 14 years, and they would not recognize degrees from the University of Phoenix… they would say they didn't meet the educational requirements (DAL006).” She went on to comment that she had seen other companies get “very hung up on the ‘pedigree’ of [the] degree”. And yet another coresearcher commented about the company he had worked at previously in response to a question concerning whether the perception of for-
profit education might have something to do with it being “nontraditional” such as competency-based education like Western Governor’s University has implemented, “I worked at [large Fortune 500 company that has been in existence for more than 100 years] previously and [this company] is going to be slow to change to that type of philosophy [embracing new models of higher education] (HAR004)“. One of the coresearchers who is a contract recruiter for several different types of companies commented about some of her clients and/or hiring managers in this way, “…they’ll definitely have preferences…certain degrees out of certain colleges that are very specific to that role (ROC007)”. In a similar way, another coresearcher commented, “I’m probably less of a university snob than what I’ve heard from other people (LEP009)”.

This subunit seems to have suggested that while they do not practice this type of selective screening, they know of others who do. Coresearchers seemed to affirm that this type of biased selection process does occur. Though, as people working in human resources, they try to advocate for applicants as a whole by educating hiring managers on the benefits of an applicant from all angles, rather than just focusing on whether they went to a nonprofit college or not. They acknowledged the poor practice, but that it does happen; they cited the responsibility in working with hiring managers to be more objective. This subunit also seemed to suggest that while this pool of coresearchers is not wholly making decisions under the influence of implicit bias, it is happening in other areas of companies outside of human resources.

**Meaning Unit: Education Type (For-Profit Versus Nonprofit) is Less Important Than a Preference for a High Prestige or Well-Known Institution**

This meaning unit represented statements indicating that the education type was perhaps of less importance than was the preference of the recruiter, hiring manager, or company. These statements encompassed commentary around the prestige and reputation of an institution, or if the company had an existing or unspoken relationship with the institution. These eight
coresearchers responded that education type did not matter, but that someone graduating from a college or university they had worked with or one that was a well-known brand (e.g., Harvard, Purdue, etc.) would be more favored than someone going to the state university in that community or to a for-profit. Initially this meaning unit was separated into two subunits to differentiate between well-known institutions and ones that a company had an existing relationship with; however, after further analysis it seemed these institutions were often the same set of institutions and more suitably categorized as an “existing preference.” Moreover, a well-known institution in their community was more often than not an institution they had an existing relationship with as well. The following are statements represented in this meaning unit.

- “I don’t typically pay attention to the institution from which a candidate lists their education unless, for whatever reason, you know, we have a specific relationship with a college. So, for instance, at one of my previous positions, we were an engineering consulting firm and we had, you know, specific relationships with a couple of different local colleges; nothing, you know, in writing that said, ‘Hey, we’re going to hire your graduates,’ but we did take a look at them first because they may have gone through a special program that one of our senior leaders assisted with, or something like that (MCQ008).”

- “Some organizations or hiring managers…have preferences if you will. Usually it’s not necessarily across the board, certainly some sectors recruit from top 4 tiers [of colleges]. In general, it’s… ‘I prefer not to have individuals from X, Y, or Z institution.’ Because usually it’s that they don’t feel as though their programming is adequate (PEN008).”
• “You know what, for me personally, it doesn’t weigh in the decision whatsoever. Now if it would have been a prestigious university, if it’d have been Harvard or Yale or University of Michigan or Stanford or something like that, that would have stuck out to me (WILL014).”

• “[Global 500 company] wanted people from Harvard and from Yale and from all these Ivy League schools, and they literally would not—the hiring managers, not necessarily HR, because we don’t want to get into discrimination—but the hiring managers literally would not look at individuals if they were not from a well-branded, Ivy League type institution (WILL014).”

There was much overlap between the meaning subunit around higher level positions and this meaning unit around preference, evidenced by this statement: “If a university is ranking good in commerce, now I can expect great people with a commerce background to come from there. I can’t expect to hire some science people from there for a manager career at least… (PAR010).” Stated more aggressively, this coresearcher said the following in response to the clarifying question of, “I guess what you’re saying is, once it’s in the more leadership-oriented roles or more executive roles, you tend to see people looking more at reputation, is that what you said? I just want to make sure.” The coresearcher responded,

Yeah, well, reputation and as you call it, profit versus nonprofit, particularly in the MBA area. Did you buy your MBA or did you earn your MBA…I know, that sounds really bad, but if you did your MBA at blah-blah-blah, you know, for-profit school online, we don’t count it as an MBA. Isn’t that horrible? But it’s true (WO0018).

At times clarifying questions were asked about the personal experiences that either the recruiter or hiring managers had with these institutions—it seemed to matter in the selection
process even if they did not have direct experience with the institution. For example, one coresearcher indicated, “You know, the name, the reputation certainly adds to one’s…decision making at times, even if you have really no experience with [the institution] (WILL014).”

This meaning unit may have represented the intersection of mere exposure and implicit bias where well-known institutions in the recruiter’s community would be preferred, even if they had no direct exposure to them. Furthermore, long-term exposure to, or experience with, particular institutions may, over time, develop into an implicit bias—positive towards the well-known or institutions they have a relationship with and possibly a negative bias against “other” institutions, such as for-profit institutions.

Observations on the Confusion Between “Online” and “For-Profit”

A pattern in the data emerged whereby six of the 16 coresearchers seemed to use the words “online” and “for-profit” synonymously and interchangeably in the interviews. It is mentioned in this narrative as merely an observation, not to derive meaning from it necessarily. Interestingly, coresearchers would use the word “online” to answer a question specifically referencing “for-profit”:

You know, anymore it doesn't matter to me where these folks are going to school. I know there for a while it was sort of a stigma, that online learning when it was very, very new and it was sort of seen not on the same playing field as onsite, on the ground learning, but I think we're sort of past that now (GIA001).

Others seemed to use the terms additively:

I recognized Kaplan, but at this point I think a lot of even the for-profit universities are—and online universities do a good job, and I don’t want to discredit an applicant for
making that attempt to get a degree. As long as I’ve heard of the college and know that it’s a reputable one, even if it’s a for-profit as you said…(ROS003).

And,

If I'm going to look at a traditional brick-and-mortar college setting versus a for-profit entity that might be an online driven thing… I do have some biases against the online institutions, but I feel ashamed saying that… It’s just—it is a bias out there (HAR004).

This observation will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis as a possible future study to derive meaning on why HR professionals would use these words interchangeably and what that might mean to applicants who attend a for-profit institution.

**Observations About the Sample Selection Exercise**

In addition to the statements in the in-depth interview, other data in this study bears discussion. As outlined in the Methods section of this thesis, the sample selection exercise was initially designed to indirectly uncover implicit bias through the selections made of similar candidate résumés, with a nonprofit and for-profit education. This step was useful in ensuring that coresearchers had experienced the study phenomenon and in preparing them to answer the in-depth interview questions. The exercise involved the following steps:

4) Coresearchers were divided into two groups.

5) Group A received a job description (Appendix E) and two résumés. The résumés were nearly identical in terms of gender, geographical location, career objective statement, work experience, and college degree attainment. Candidate 1’s résumé (Appendix F) listed Kaplan College (a for-profit college) and Candidate 2’s résumé (Appendix G) listed Southern New Hampshire University (a nonprofit).
6) Group B received the same job description and the same résumés, but the type of institution was reversed so that Candidate 1’s résumé (Appendix H) listed Southern New Hampshire University and Candidate 2’s résumé (Appendix I) listed Kaplan College.

Coresearchers were then asked to respond to a brief electronic survey as to their preferred candidate and their reason for selecting that candidate. Both groups had nine participants (there was attrition of two participants from the sample selection exercise going into the in-depth interview phase). The same résumé was selected six times (67% of the time) with a nonprofit institution listed in Group A, but only four times (44% of the time) when a for-profit institution was listed for the same candidate in Group B; no other variables were changed. Similarly, the same résumé was selected five times (56% of the time) with a nonprofit institution listed in Group A, but only three times (33% of the time) when a for-profit institution was listed for that candidate in Group B; no other variables were changed. So, across both groups, the same résumé was selected more often when a nonprofit was listed. The change in the rate of selection—for the same résumé—suggested the possibility that mere exposure or implicit bias was influencing screening decisions. However, the sample selection exercise was not designed as a true experiment, where other possible explanation for this result were controlled for (e.g., demographics of the participants in each group), so empirical conclusions cannot be drawn.

Conclusion

All the data in this study seemed to suggest that education type does indeed matter; though the reasons for this took many forms. Upon completing data coding and then allowing my personal experiences to be added to this commentary, it seems to suggest that graduating from a for-profit institution may present a possible barrier to employment, and that having a
more well-known institution on a résumé would increase selection. This phenomenon is consistent with my experience as a former for-profit college administrator. As mentioned in my positionality statement in the Methods section of this thesis, I have heard employers say they would rather hire students from more “trusted universities” (whereby they would list nonprofits in their community as examples), even though they were unable to give me objective reasons.

Sadly, these biases may have been earned. I am aware of unethical practices in this sector of higher education that contribute to the stigma openly discussed during my interviews with coresearchers. I originally joined this sector of education excited over the innovative nature of the model; treating education as a business appealed to my “private sector mind.” Slowly, however, I realized that purely treating education similar to a business, where the interest of the stockholders is held in higher order to the ultimate success of a student, is a breach of the original intention behind a college education. For, “it is in the implementation process that for-profit education’s flaws become immediately discernible as problematic” (Natale, Libertella & Doran, 2015, p. 416).

In the final chapter of this thesis I discuss the implications of the meaning units discovered in this study:

1. Education type does not matter.
2. Education type does matter.
3. Education type usually does not matter to me, but…
   a. it matters for higher level positions.
   b. but it matters to others.
4. Education type matters less than existing preference for an institution.
I also discuss the implications of the results of the sample selection exercise and future opportunities for research. The implications of these findings will appeal to the four key audiences of this research: (a) for-profit institutions and their governing agencies, (b) lawmakers, (c) current and prospective students of for-profit institutions, and (d) HR professionals interested in understanding how theories of implicit social cognition can unconsciously influence screening decisions.
Chapter Five: Discussion of Research Findings

The purpose of this study was to describe the perceptions of HR professionals regarding for-profit education at a selection of 16 healthcare and technology-related companies in the United States. The researcher set out to address the following question and sub-questions to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon around employee candidate selection as it relates to the type of institution the candidate graduated from (for-profit versus nonprofit):

1. In the screening and hiring process, how do HR professionals make sense of how they place value on the type of institution a prospective employee?
   a. What value is placed upon the type of institution the candidate graduated from (i.e., nonprofit versus for-profit educational institutions)?
   b. What experiences and information do HR professionals use to form their opinions on the relative quality of education for candidates from nonprofit versus for-profit educational institutions?

The researcher set out not to indicate causation, but to describe the phenomenon in order to provide a hypothesis to explain why employment outcomes are lower for graduates of for-profit schools when compared to employment outcomes for graduates of nonprofit schools.

Overall, if one defines a well-known university, or one that a company has a relationship with, as an education type, an overarching theme emerged in the data indicating that education type does indeed matter, but the reasons the coresearchers cited varied greatly. The following represents the final, major meaning units derived from the in-depth interviews within the context of education type:

1. Education did not matter.
2. Education type may matter.
3. Education type usually does not matter to me, but...
   c. it matters for higher level positions.
   d. it matters to others.

4. Education type matters less than existing preference for an institution.

   In asking coresearchers to make sense of their candidate selection process, the first meaning unit represented a minority of coresearchers (three out of 16), so the overarching theme suggested that high value is placed upon the type of institution a prospective employee graduated from; even more specifically when the position is at a higher level in the company. Furthermore, the research revealed that the HR professionals in this study placed high value on type of education as it pertained to colleges and universities with broadly understood reputations and brand-name appeal. The research also revealed that for this group of coresearchers that even though education type does not always matter to them, they believe it matters to others (e.g., hiring managers).

   The following section discusses the significance of this research and aligns the research findings to the theoretical framework and literature review of this thesis. This chapter also includes a discussion on limitations of the study, implications for practice, opportunities for future research, and recommendations for key stakeholders,

**Significance**

   This study continues to open a dialog about the role a potential employer’s perception of for-profit institutions has on employee selection. The data in this study suggested that education type does indeed matter, though the reasons for this take many forms. The study showed that there are still stigmas associated with the for-profit sector and that this stigma may be continuing to impact the rate at which HR professionals are seriously considering prospective employees
with a for-profit institution on their résumé for selection for employment interviews. The personal experiences of the researcher as a former for-profit college administrator coincide with these findings. It is thus highly reasonable to hypothesize that graduating from a for-profit institution presents a partial barrier to employment. The meaning unit in this study, “education type matters less than existing preference for an institution”, encompassed comments that suggested that graduating from a prestigious university would weigh heavily in a résumés election (e.g., Harvard, Purdue, etc.), suggesting that prospective employees would benefit from having a more well-known institution on a résumé to increase their likelihood of selection.

Moreover this study highlights that the stigma around for-profit education may be adversely impacting for-profit graduates from obtaining quality employment. Additionally, with for-profit institutions tending to educate more “at risk” students (e.g., minorities), this phenomenon of preference towards nonprofit institutions may contribute to the employment deficit burden of an already economically marginalized group of American citizens. The findings of this study and the recommendations for key stakeholders could serve as a platform in correcting this injustice.

Discussion of Findings

Alignment of the findings to the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework for this study was that of implicit social cognition, specifically the theories of mere exposure and implicit bias covered earlier in this thesis (Bargh, 1994; Bendick & Nunes, 2012; Bornstein, Leone, & Galley, 1987; Chao & Willaby, 2007; Gawronski & Payne, 2010; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; Haines & Sumner, 2012; Jacoby, Kelley, Brown, & Jasechko, 1989; Kang et al., 2012; Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980; Seamon, Marsh, & Brody, 1984; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977; Nosek & Bar-Anan, 2009; Reber, 1967; Zajonc, 1968). In using
this framework the researcher was able to make sense of the reasons differences arise between what is explicitly stated and how one behaves that is contrary.

As discussed in the previous chapter, only three coresearchers definitively indicated that “education type did not matter” to them. The remaining 13 coresearchers made statements that indicated “education type may matter.” From the 13 coresearchers that made statements that suggested “education type may matter”, four coresearchers indicated that the type of education (for-profit) did matter to them and it weighed into their decision. The remaining nine would then temper their response to the probing question with other statements that indicated education type may matter under certain circumstances.

The statements of the four coresearchers that indicated that education type as a for-profit mattered in their decision seemed to imply active cognition about the type of education on a résumé. These statements were related to previous experiences (both positive and negative) and/or hearing of for-profit “disgraces” at for-profit institutions, which are discussed in detail in the Literature Review section of this thesis that showed a Google™ search for the words “for-profit college scandals” yielded nearly 43 million results as of February 2016.

The remaining findings suggest more unconscious or implicit cognition where HR professionals in this study were possibly not as aware of their attitudes, feelings and beliefs while they were making decisions in favor of nonprofits. Theories of implicit social cognition, and specifically those of mere exposure and implicit bias among coresearchers, may in part explain these findings. For example, suggesting that it doesn’t matter that a candidate graduated from a for-profit for an entry-level position, but suggesting that it may make a difference at higher levels, may represent an implicit bias against for-profit education for levels of employment with more decision-making authority in a company. In addition, the change in the rate of selection
during the sample selection exercise—for the same résumé but with the education type modified—suggests the possibility that mere exposure or implicit bias may be influencing screening decisions, though we cannot empirically prove this observation due to the limitations of the simple survey designed for this phase of the research.

Additionally, HR professionals in this study who seemed to place more value upon an institution they had previous experience with could be explained by the mere exposure effect, whereby preference is given to people, places, or things with which we have more experience. It could also suggest an implicit bias created by unconscious learning of for-profit “disgraces”. Either way, a preference towards more traditional colleges did emerge in the research. Related to this finding, all of the examples of preferred institutions provided in the interviews also represented prestigious and/or Ivy League schools as well, even if coresearchers had not actually worked with them. This also suggests the prevalence of the phenomenon of mere exposure is strong, which is consistent with the “sleeper effect” in mere exposure where people have been shown to assign affinity to a name even if they have just merely heard of or seen that name once (Jacoby, Kelley, Brown, & Jasechko, 1989).

The theoretical framework for this study provides an explanation for most of the phenomena observed in this study (outside of explicit statements observed); however, a surprise finding fell slightly outside of that framework. Many coresearchers mentioned that a for-profit education did not matter to them, though they indicated that it mattered to other people or companies. While empirical certainty cannot be claimed, this finding may suggest that the coresearchers that made these statements actually do have a bias against for-profit institutions; they may fear retribution or have other reasons for not admitting this openly, opting to express it as a function of “someone else does” instead. This type of behavior might be explained by
another set of theories around defense mechanisms and their social impact, an additional body of literature this study did not explore.

Alignment of the findings to the literature on for-profit institutions. This study adds to the literature on the for-profit sector in the following areas, (a) student demographics; (b) outcomes related to retention and graduation; (c) cost; and (d) wage earnings.

For-profit institutions educate a disproportionate amount of students that are characterized as “at-risk” (Beaver, 2009, Chung, 2012; de Alva, 2010; Sipley, 2011). In addition, for-profit institutions seem to be better at retaining and graduating students at the two-year level than their nonprofit peers, though they seem to struggle to maintain the same performance for four-year degree programs (Imagine America Foundation, 2013; Millora, 2010). So, for-profit institutions are retaining and graduating more “at-risk” students as compared to their nonprofit peers. This study adds to this body of literature by calling into question whether the positive outcomes in these areas (retention and graduation) outweigh the challenges these graduates face as they enter the job market with a for-profit institution listed on their résumé.

As it relates to cost, gainful employment legislation specifies that for-profit colleges and universities must be able to demonstrate that graduates can make enough average wage earnings to pay back the educational debt incurred while pursuing their degree (de Alva, 2011; Miller, 2010). To complicate this matter, a for-profit, associate degree-granting institution may charge up to two times as much as a community college does for the same program (NCES, 2012b). Academic programs that cannot demonstrate enough “payback” to students upon graduation could be subject to the loss of financial aid eligibility. Gainful employment regulations have attracted much attention and negative commentary about fairness (de Alva, 2011; Miller, 2010). Based on early calculations, Miller estimated that nearly 5% of programs offered at for-profit
institutions would become ineligible immediately if legislation in its present form were passed; another 8% would be placed on restrictions; and 48% of programs would require notification to a prospective student that their debt may exceed their earnings. This would leave only 39% of programs eligible for aid in their current status. Furthermore, starting salaries for students who graduated from a for-profit institution are significantly less than or just at par with community college peers (Cellini & Chaudhary, 2014; Deming et al., 2012; Lang & Weinstein, 2012; Liu & Belfield, 2014). This study augments the research on the cost to attend a for-profit institution and lower wage earnings. The variable of the perceptions of HR professionals in the for-profit sector, whether consciously or unconsciously understood, may help explain lower employment outcomes for for-profit graduates and further exacerbate the disproportionate level of tuition asked of students attending a for-profit institution.

Alignment of the findings to the literature on public disgraces at for-profits. The findings revealed in this study add to this body of literature by illuminating what could be defined as the long-term effects of the public scandals that this sector has, and continues, to experience (Auster, 2011; Bloomberg News, n.d.; Cooley & Cooley, 2009; Federal Trade Commission, 2016; Perez-Pena, 2014; United States Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2015; United States Department of Justice, 2009; Weise, 2014). Though this thesis treated the next thread in the literature as a separate “dialog” (the growing body of research into employer preference for nonprofits over for-profits) it could be collapsed into this thread, to which this study adds texture, adding to the growing list of indignities faced by a sector plagued with a consistent stigma.
Alignment of the findings to the literature on employers’ preference towards nonprofit institutions. Overwhelmingly, the findings of this study align with the growing body of knowledge focused on specifically studying employer’s preference for non-profit institutions (Darolia et al., 2014; Hagelskamp et al., 2014; Kinneer, 2014). Previous studies in this area focused strictly on identifying a preference, but did not offer explanations as to possible reasons. This research extends this dialog through the lens of implicit social cognition and how unconscious decisions based on implicit bias about for-profit institutions or mere exposure to nonprofit institutions could be viewed as a contributing factor in these demonstrated preferences. It also further highlighted how decisions made utilizing the frameworks of implicit social cognition can be viewed as discriminatory in nature. As mentioned in the Literature Review section of this thesis, most laws created to reduce discrimination in the human resource profession assume that discriminatory behavior is explicitly demonstrated or can be proven (Chao & Willaby, 2007; Kang et al., 2012). This raises the question of the degree to which implicit decisions could be even more troublesome and hurtful since there are no consequences clearly associated with them. Greenwald and Krieger (2006) stated that “evidence that implicit attitudes produce discriminatory behavior is already substantial and will continue to accumulate…implicit attitudinal biases are especially important in influencing non-deliberate or spontaneous discriminatory behaviors” (p. 961). Kang and a team of co-author judges and lawyers supported this concept by asserting that “researchers have provided convincing evidence that implicit biases exist, are pervasive, are large in magnitude, and have real-world effects” (p. 1126).
Limitation of Findings

The limitations to this study are of generalizability. Inherent in phenomenological research is the aspect that the essence of the studied experiences are unique to the coresearchers and their specific settings and are, therefore, not easily extrapolated to fit generalized cases with variations in the participant profile and the context of a particular study. The findings of this study describe a phenomenon specific to the 16 coresearchers and their geographic setting, age, gender, industry sector, and previous experiences. Indeed, according to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology “derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection” (p. 47). Moustakas also noted that a core aspect of phenomenology is its ability to generate further conversations and inquiry. This type of inquiry also cannot prove the phenomenon or explain a cause and effect relationship. The goal of this study was to start a broader conversation regarding the persistent trend of for-profit graduates earning less than their nonprofit peers; no intention was described to provide conclusive proof of why this trend exists.

Furthermore, because of the specificity of the study’s research design, the construction of a theoretical model to provide a comprehensive basis for policymaking is not attainable. This research, however, can serve as a framework to inform discussions and decisions. The concern behind this study is the prevailing, yet unconscious decisions made regarding for-profit graduates; this study is useful because it provides a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and opens a dialog to identify some of its parameters.

Implications for Practice

The findings collected from this study and specifically, that of the other studies in the area identified as “employer preference for nonprofit institutions” in the Literature Review section of this thesis (Darolia et al, 2014; Hagelskamp et al, 2014; Kinneer, 2014) suggest ways
in which the following different groups of actors might address a negative perceived employer bias of quality regarding for-profit institutions: (a) for-profit administrators, (b) lawmakers, (c) current and prospective students of for-profit institutions, and (d) HR professionals.

**For-profit administrators.** For-profit administrators need to consider the growing body of research around lower wage earnings for for-profit students and employer preference for nonprofit institutions within the context of being good stewards of their students’ trust and financial aid dollars. Simply providing what a for-profit institution may regard as a quality education does not seem to be enough to truly change the lives of their students if they have trouble obtaining gainful employment upon graduation because of negative perceptions of the quality of that education. While for-profit institutions can applaud themselves for having higher retention rates and graduation rates at the Associate’s degree levels than nonprofit institutions, as outlined in earlier in this thesis, this seems for naught if the students cannot then obtain gainful employment and pay educational debt they may have incurred. It bears noting that *gainful employment* legislation is targeted at highlighting the very issue of whether or not students can obtain employment at the rate that allows them to pay back their student loan burden.

Data on gainful employment legislation also suggests that, even when corrections are made in response to research indicating that starting salaries for students who graduated from a for-profit institution are significantly less than or just at par with community college peers, the for-profit sector finds itself in a position to seriously reevaluate the relative financial cost-benefit to the students they serve. Deeper reflection by for-profit institutions is needed on the broad, societal impact of the reality that their tuition charges are double that of nonprofit peer institutions and that they are providing just on-par or significantly lower wage earning outcomes for their students.
Lawmakers. The findings of this study may also prove useful to lawmakers involved in legislation targeted at the regulation of for-profit institutions by contributing to discussions about the body of research defining lower wage earnings for for-profit graduates. Previous studies indicated that for-profit graduates earn the same or less than nonprofit peers, yet they pay more tuition. This study found that the variable of the perceptions of HR professionals in the for-profit sector, whether consciously or unconsciously understood, may help explain lower employer outcomes for for-profit graduates. Simply creating gainful employment legislation to regulate the issue only addresses the monitoring of the problem and not the source. Lawmakers might further consider the sources for the outcome they are interested in controlling (lower employment outcomes) to proactively and collaboratively explore (with for-profit institutions) mechanisms that could lead to more long-term solutions. These solutions could focus on continuing to serve a critical student demographic while improving outcomes, rather than on punitive action after the outcome is reported and thousands of for-profit graduates are left with jobs upon graduation that pay salaries that are proportionally deficient. Offering the opportunity of higher education to “at risk” students, a demographic that for-profit institutions are serving in disproportionate rates, is a valuable social goal. If it is one lawmakers aim to address, engaging in more proactive and less punitive solutions to lower wage earnings than potentially closing the doors of for-profit colleges and universities may prove highly beneficial.

Prospective and current students of for-profit institutions. Prospective and current students of for-profit institutions should be privy to research regarding wage earnings of for-profit graduates to evaluate their chances of obtaining quality employment upon graduation. As a former for-profit administrator, I can speak to the earnest intentions of students enrolling at for-profit institutions. The majority of the students I have had experience with at for-profit colleges
and universities are there to change their lives: they aim to support their families better, to leave
an abusive relationship, or to leave a dead-end, low-paying job, among other reasons. While for-
profit institutions are required to report their job placement statistics in their catalogs, this
information is not necessarily made easily accessible to prospective and current students who
may not directly ask enrollment representatives to provide such data. It is also questionable if
the information reported is accurate. For example, in late 2015, the United States Department of
Education (DOE) fined Corinthian Colleges $30 million dollars for misrepresentation in the case
of the operation of Heald College. Specifically the DOE “… determined that Heald College's
inaccurate or incomplete disclosures were misleading to students; that they overstated the
employment prospects of graduates of Heald's programs; and that current and prospective
students of Heald could have relied upon that information as they were choosing whether to
attend the school” (United States Department of Education, 2014, lines 7-10).

**HR professionals.** This research study can serve as a platform for HR professionals to
investigate their candidate selection methodology for objectivity so they do not needlessly
exclude viable candidates for open positions. Through self-reflection and the awareness of the
potential for implicit social cognition to influence their decisions, HR professionals can ensure
that résumés are reviewed based solely on their merit. At least two of the coresearchers in this
study referred to a labor market shortage. Indeed, the National Association of Business
Economics found that 35% of their surveyed firms reported labor market shortages through July
of 2015 (2015). Outside of reducing the possibility for unconscious discrimination and within
the context of a labor market shortage, it would seem prudent for HR professionals to ensure
they are including as many viable candidates in the selection process as possible, to more
effectively fill open positions.
**Recommendations for Further Research**

The research around wage earnings of for-profit graduates is in its infancy, with the first study published in 2012. In response, research into employers’ preference for nonprofit institutions over for-profit ones was first published in 2014. Previous studies on employer preference for nonprofits mainly focused on identifying the preference, rather than illuminating possible reasons for this affinity. This study sought to contribute to bridging that gap; it remains a beginning inquiry into this complex phenomenon.

Specific to this study, three of the 16 coresearchers in this study indicated that having a for-profit credential for the entry-level position used in this study’s sample selection was not an issue, but that it might be for more senior-level positions. A future study could replicate this one to further probe these statements, inquiring about a higher-level position such as a senior manager or a C-title executive appointment. A follow-up study could also be performed with the coresearchers who indicated “education type usually does not matter to me, but matters to others” to investigate if this was limited to their belief systems (utilizing a defense mechanism to avoid retribution) or was more deeply inscribed in qualification requirements explicitly expressed by others or included in company-specific HR training. Another follow-up study could also be conducted to further investigate the interchangeable use of the terms “for-profit” and “online” and what this might mean to applicants who attend a for-profit institution.

Furthermore, a larger study could be performed using the instruments from the sample selection exercise in this study to derive more explanatory power around resume selection. This investigation could also include analysis of the other sections of a resume to weigh how other sections impacted the decisions made in favor of education from a nonprofit institution, as observed in this study.
Outside of the implications for future research derived from this particular study, it bears mentioning that research into economic changes and the impact on the vocational outcomes of for-profit graduates should also be performed. As mentioned in the Literature Review section of this thesis, in their study of wage outcomes for for-profits graduates, Lang and Weinstein (2012) pointed out that their dataset represented the time period occurring during an economic recession; they stated that they could not rule out the possibility that another variable driving results was that students at for-profits experienced more negative effects of a recession in general than nonprofit peers. While this was not clarified in their study, it is reasonable to take into account that a recession would likely more negatively affect the populations generally served at for-profits (minority, low-income, and female). Studies support this possibility with respect to ethnicity, where the wealth gap widened for African American and Hispanic households at greater rates than for Caucasian-headed ones, during the most recent recession (Lowrey, 2013).

**Recommendations for Key Stakeholders**

**For-profit administrators.** For-profit administrators might take into account this growing body of research to define ways to increase positive exposure in their employer communities. The for-profit sector has an active industry association, the Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities (APSCU), which has been actively involved in lobbying and advocacy efforts with policymakers who are fighting gainful employment legislation. A change in focus by this sector from policy to advocacy with major employers on behalf of students might prove beneficial. This shift in focus could create goodwill amongst key stakeholders of the for-profit sector as well (prospective and current students, lawmakers, etc.). This type of effort could yield improved media coverage of student success that might counterbalance negative press reports on the effects of implicit bias generated by news coverage of what was referred to
in the Literature Review as for-profit “disgraces.” Increasing exposure with major employers would also positively utilize the effects of what is known as the mere exposure effect in the case of for-profit institutions.

Individual for-profit colleges and universities could focus energies on increasing awareness with major employers outside of the efforts of the APSCU. On a grassroots level, for-profit institutions could reallocate some marketing dollars to this effort, focusing advertisements beyond student enrollment to include the significant contributions made by for-profit institutions. These contributions are important to the population they serve, as mentioned in the Literature Review section of this thesis; they include “small classes, self-directed and active learning, practical application of knowledge…” (Kinser, 2006a).

In addition, for-profit institutions could hire third-party placement verification companies to confirm their job placements; they could also dedicate resources to collecting reliable and accurate salary information for transparent use with prospective students not only in the catalog, but also in conversations with enrollment candidates and in other marketing/advertising materials. If an institution finds that its graduates’ salary data is lower than median salaries in the geographic area, it could consider the following strategies to improve outcomes:

- Reduce tuition.

- Integrate salary negotiation training into career development courses so that students are equipped with strategies to secure equitable salaries.

- Continue the dialog with employers to include expectations of fair salaries.

Whether it is the APSCU or individual for-profit institutions increasing positive awareness about for-profit institutions, these measures may also indirectly impact traditional academe by contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the need for the for-profit sector of
higher education. Indeed, for-profit institutions educate a disproportionate amount of “at-risk” students, serving a real but often underemphasized gap in the higher education market. Students at for-profit institutions typically fall into the following categories: (a) older, non-traditional, or “adult” students; (b) students from disadvantaged backgrounds; (c) minorities; and (d) women (Beaver, 2009; Chung, 2012; de Alva, 2010). It could be argued that these student populations deserve a chance at higher education as well—a notion that would be difficult to deny.

**Lawmakers.** Lawmakers seeking to implement legislation to monitor wage earnings at for-profit institutions should consider that full accountability for employment does not fall exclusively within the for-profit institution itself. Whether earned or not, the possible negative perceptions by HR professionals about the for-profit sector is part of the explanation of lower wage earnings. As such, it seems prudent for lawmakers to obtain a more direct and nuanced understanding of the service these institutions provide in their communities and to include this type of data in their decision-making. In this way, lawmakers could also collaborate with the APSCU or with individual for-profit institutions to more widely publicize positive outcomes and to thereby create more opportunity for positive impressions among employers.

**Current and prospective students of for-profit institutions.** Current and prospective students of for-profit institutions could consider the data on the wage earnings of their peers in the context of the growing body of research demonstrating a preference to nonprofit institutions when making their educational choices. Students should consider themselves informed consumers and thoroughly research their educational choices to better understand the quality of the education they will receive and their probability of obtaining sufficient vocational prospects upon graduation.
**HR professionals.** Lastly, an examination of the screening methodologies of HR professionals is warranted. Implicit social cognition theorists suggest that the best way to combat automaticity in decision making is to cultivate active awareness (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Haines & Sumner, 2012). HR departments and degree programs would benefit from training based on learning theory, within which implicit social cognition and its possibility to promote unconscious discrimination is evaluated. Such training could be added to the curriculum for the Certified Human Resource Professional (CRHP) as well. Continuing education units covering topics of discrimination might include discussion around unconscious discrimination in addition to the more explicit versions presently incorporated. This should extend to the praxis of HR professionals, with their superiors encouraging them to clearly identify and reflect on biases in order to objectively and comprehensively review each résumé on its comprehensive merit.

**Conclusion**

The intention of this study was to learn more about the perceptions of HR professionals in relation to the quality of education and training at for-profit institutions of higher education. The study showed that there are still stigmas associated with this sector and that this stigma may be continuing to impact the rate at which HR professionals are seriously considering prospective employees with a for-profit institution on their résumé for selection for employment interviews. This study aligns with the assertion that “…there remains a strong backlash regarding the profit model” in the human resource profession (Natale, Libertella, & Doran, 2015, p. 417).

This study also found that colleges and universities with broadly understood reputations and brand-name appeal were favored over lesser-known competing institutions by this particular selection of coresearchers. Overall, this study confirms previous research reviewed that job seekers with a for-profit college on their résumé are at a disadvantage compared to nonprofit
peers. The data suggests that job seekers would benefit more from having a college degree from a well-known nonprofit college or university on their résumé than from a for-profit institution stigmatized by “disgrace.” With for-profit institutions tending to educate more “at risk” students (e.g., minorities), this phenomenon of preference towards nonprofit institutions may contribute to the burden of an already economically marginalized group of American citizens. Higher education was historically intended to be an equalizer in United States society, regardless of the source of that college degree. That it may actually disadvantage some from achieving that important part of the American dream is troubling. As such, this study can serve as the beginning of the dialog into what is causing lower wage earnings of for-profit graduates and serve as a catalyst for change amongst these key stakeholders, (a) for-profit administrators, (b) lawmakers proposing legislation to more closely regulate the for-profit sector, and (c) HR professionals. Moreover this study can serve as a platform for current and prospective students to make informed decisions about their college choice.
References:


Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Materials

Email template to gain referrals to study participants:

Dear XX,

As someone with a large network, I am hopeful you can help refer me to research candidates for my doctoral research in fulfillment of my Doctor of Education program at Northeastern University. I am studying the screening and hiring process that human resource professionals use to select prospective employees. I am wondering if you could refer me to at least three of your contacts that might fit the following candidate profile:

1. A human resource professional;
2. Working at a technology or healthcare-related company; and
3. Willing to devote three hours of their time over a 60-day period to this study should they be selected.

Here is an email that you could forward to your contacts on my behalf with a carbon copy to me so that I can follow-up after they have reviewed it. It gives you more detail on my study as well.

Thanks in advance,
Bettyjo Bouchey

Email template for those referring study participants:

Dear XX,

A colleague of mine, Bettyjo Bouchey, is completing her doctoral dissertation at Northeastern University. Specifically, she is studying the screening process that human resource professionals use for finding new employees. Bettyjo is looking for study participants and I thought you might be interested.

Her research is divided into two stages, 1) a Sample Selection Exercise and 2) a series of in-depth interviews. If you participated in both stages, it would be around 3 hours of your time and you could be compensated $110.

Here are the details you will be interested in:

During the Sample Selection Exercise you would receive a job description and two résumés; you would then fill out an online survey as to your selection and why you chose one candidate over the other. This part of the research would take you around 30 minutes and you would receive a $10 Amazon gift card for your time.

Once complete, she will be choosing 15 participants to progress to the second stage of her research that will consist of three meetings (either in-person or via Skype/phone):
1. an in-depth interview where she will ask you to take her through the choice you made in the Sample Selection Exercise (up to 60 minutes),
2. a meeting to confirm the accuracy of the data she collected from the in-depth interview (up to 30 minutes),
3. an opportunity for you to read through her findings, as a whole, to see if you agree with the collective description of the process of screening employees (up to 30 minutes), and
4. an optional debriefing phone call at the end of her research to discuss her recommendations based on the study findings (up to 30 minutes).

For your time in the second stage of the study you would be compensated $100 after you participate in the third interview listed above.

I’m cc’ing Bettyjo in this email so that the two of you might have time to discuss this opportunity. I hope you will consider it.

Sincerely,

XX
RESEARCH STUDY
FALL-2015

Are you a Human Resource Professional interested in contributing to the scholarly literature on how screening decisions are made? As a doctoral researcher at Northeastern University, I’m conducting a two-staged research study to look at this phenomenon.

Here is a brief description of the study:

Phase I – review a job description and two resumes. Fill out a brief, online survey as to your preferred selections and why. Up to 30 minutes of your time and you will receive a $10 Amazon Gift Card.

Phase II – based on responses in Phase I, 15 respondents will be selected to move onto Phase II. Participate in at least 3 interviews. The first interview will last 60 minutes; the subsequent interviews will be approximately 30 minutes each. There is also an optional 4th meeting where you can be the first to hear of the study results. For your time in this study, you will be compensated $200.

Please contact me today if you are interested in learning more and/or to show your interest in participating!
Appendix C

Signed Informed Consent Document

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies
Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Ronald Brown (Principal Investigator), Bettyjo Bouchey (student)
Title of Project: Describing the Candidate Selection Process by Human Resource Professionals

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
You have been asked to participate because as a human resource professional, you have made candidate selection decisions in the past—and you will do so during the first stage of this research as well.

Why is this research study being done?
This research is being done to provide more context into employee-candidate selection processes. Specifically this study seeks to understand the processes, past experiences, and thoughts that weigh into your decision to choose a candidate for a position (or to interview for a position). There are no right or wrong answers to this research, just detailing the experience of selection and uncovering the process you go through in doing it.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to do the following:

1) Participate in a Sample Selection Exercise. In this exercise you will be asked to review a job description and make a selection between two candidate résumés—you will answer a brief online survey about your preferred candidate.
2) Once the survey answers are reviewed, you may be selected to participate in an in-depth interview regarding your Sample Selection Exercise, as well as any previous experience you have had making candidate selections. My questions will be open-ended because I am interested in you telling me your experiences in your own words. I may prompt you a few times, but mainly it will be just you describing your experiences. Please note that not everyone who takes the survey will be selected for an interview.
3) Review your interview transcript for accuracy during a second interview.
4) Review the final, aggregate summary of the interviews for comments.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?
The Sample Selection Exercise will be administered to you via email and will take you 30 minutes. You will submit a simple online survey as to your choices. The in-depth interview will take 60 minutes and depending on your location, it may be in-person or via Skype. Reviewing your transcript should take 30 minutes and, finally, reviewing the aggregate summary should take up to 30 minutes.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
Our interview will be an open and transparent conversation about how you make your candidate selections. I will ask that you make every effort to be as honest as possible, even if you are worried about what you might say. Your interview is completely confidential. Each co-researcher will have complete confidentiality in the collection, coding and reporting of the results. I will be the only person who knows your identity.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

There are no benefits to you, directly. Though, as human resource practitioners, it is critical to collect and evaluate current methodology, share best-practice and continuously improve what you do so that the entire profession improves over time. This is an opportunity for you to participate in adding to the body of knowledge in the human resource professional field as it pertains to the applicant screening process.

**Who will see the information about me?**

During the Sample Selection Exercise your identity will be confidential and known only by me. This data will be used in the aggregate form in reports and publications and won't be used to draw any conclusions or used individually. This data is only used to purposefully select in-depth interview candidates.

Your part in the in-depth interview phase of the study will be strictly confidential. Only the researcher on this study (me) will see this information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being part of this project. Your identity will be protected via a randomly assigned code. This code will be used to describe you and any data collected from your participation. Interview notes and corresponding audio files will be provided to a 3rd party transcription service, identifiable only by your assigned code. Your name will never appear or be mentioned in them.

Once data analysis is complete, your code will be discarded—providing further confidentiality to you.

Documents and files will be stored via your assigned code on my home computer and backed-up to a password-protected cloud drive (your code will be discarded as described above). These files will be stored for a period of one year after this thesis is successfully defended.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

No harm is anticipated from your participating in this research study.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me, Bettyjo Bouche at (317) 800-8687 or bouchey.b@husky.neu.edu, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Ron Brown, the Principal Investigator (research advisor) at (617) 435-8166 or ron.brown1@neu.edu

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.
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<th><strong>Will I be paid for my participation?</strong></th>
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<td>You will receive a $10 email Amazon Gift Card for your participation in the Sample Selection Exercise and another $100 should you be chosen to participate in the in-depth interviews (payable after the 3rd interview).</td>
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<td>Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent</td>
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Appendix D

Sample Selection Exercise
Online Survey Questions

a) How likely is it that you would invite Mr. Smith for an interview?

Very Likely
Likely
Somewhat Likely
Somewhat Unlikely
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

b) Please explain the reason for your decision. (Open-ended response)

c) How likely is it that you would invite Mr. Singer for an interview?

Very Likely
Likely
Somewhat Likely
Somewhat Unlikely
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

d) Please explain the reason for your decision. (Open-ended response)

e) On the basis of the two résumés, which man would you be more likely to hire for the position?
Appendix E

Customer Service Representative

JOB DESCRIPTION

Summary/Objective

The customer service representative is responsible for providing effective customer service for all internal and external customers by conveying excellent, in-depth knowledge of company products and programs as well as communicating effectively with team members within the customer service department.

Essential Functions

The essential functions of the job are as follows. The successful candidate will be expected to:

1. Provide timely and accurate information in response to incoming customer order status and product knowledge requests.
2. Process customer orders/changes/returns according to established department policies and procedures.
3. Work closely with the credit department to resolve disputed credit items.
4. Provide timely feedback to the company regarding service failures or customer concerns.
5. Partner with the sales team to meet and exceed customer’s service expectations.

Reasonable accommodations may be made to enable individuals with disabilities to perform the essential functions.

Competencies

1. Customer/Client Focus.
2. Problem Solving/Analysis.
3. Time Management.
5. Teamwork Orientation.

Supervisory Responsibility

This position has no supervisory responsibilities. This position reports directly to the Customer Service Manager.

Work Environment

This job operates in a professional office environment. This role routinely uses standard office equipment such as computers, phones, photocopiers, filing cabinets and fax machines.
Physical Demands

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job.

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to talk or hear. The employee is frequently required to sit, stand, walk, use hands to finger, handle or feel, and reach with hands and arms.

Position Type and Expected Hours of Work

This is a full-time position. Days and hours of work are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. This is an exempt position.

Travel

No travel is expected for this position.

Required Education and Experience

1. Customer service experience.
2. Computer experience.

Preferred Education and Experience

1. Minimum of an Associate’s Degree.

Other Duties

Please note this job description is not designed to cover or contain a comprehensive listing of activities, duties or responsibilities that are required of the employee for this job. Duties, responsibilities and activities may change at any time with or without notice.

Appendix F

Jerry Smith
18 Mills Way, Fairfield, NJ 53215
Phone: (555) 555-5555 | ps@jsmith.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP / 5 YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN CALL CENTER SETTINGS

Polished, professional customer service rep offering:

- 5 years of experience providing customer support in busy call center environments for public utility and insurance industry employers.
- An unwavering commitment to customer service, with the ability to build productive relationships, resolve complex issues and win customer loyalty.
- Strategic-relationship/partnership-building skills -- listen attentively, solve problems creatively, and use tact and diplomacy to find common ground and achieve win-win outcomes.

Experience

Inspirion Co., Flemington, NJ, Customer Service Representative, 9/2011 to Present

- Efficiently handle incoming customer order inquiries.
- Recommend solutions to customer complaints in order to expedite resolution.
- Ensure the highest customer satisfaction through utilization of proven customer service skills and experience.
- Consistently recognized for call handling.
- Enter data for all orders quickly and accurately to ensure timely delivery of products and services to customers.


- Handled all product-specific questions for new customer; followed through to ensure they were satisfied and able to use the product effectively.
- Worked with the sales team to assist in cross-selling opportunities to pleased customers.
- Chosen to participate in training opportunities for company advancement.

Education


Training
- Customer service excellence
- Dealing with difficult clients
- Handling multiple priorities
Appendix G

John Singer
18 Mills Way, Greenwich, CT 53215
Phone: (555) 555-5555 | ps@jsinger.com

Customer Service Representative
Providing Exceptional Service ... Building Loyal Relationships ... Solving Problems ... Increasing Sales

- Dynamic customer service professional experienced in both call-center and retail store settings.
- Excel in listening to customer needs, articulating product benefits and creating solutions that provide value to the customer.
- Build and maintain enduring customer relationships to boost sales and generate repeat business.

Experience

Abacos Inc., Three Rivers, OH (National retail brand with a fast-growing catalog operation)
Customer Service Representative, 9/2011 to Present

- Respond to telephone inquiries, providing quality service to customers and associates inquiring about the availability of products or status of orders.
- Listen attentively to caller needs to ensure a positive customer experience.
- Access electronic and paper cataloging systems to look up product information and availability.
- Strive for quick complaint resolution; commended by supervisor for the ability to resolve problems on the first call and avoid escalation of issues.
- Excel within a service-oriented company, demonstrating a talent for communicating effectively with customers from diverse backgrounds.

Delano, Inc., Cornwall, NY (Cornwall’s largest showroom for residential and commercial flooring)

- Ensured customers were satisfied with every part of the flooring experience, from initial greeting through order completion.
- Memorized the company’s product offerings; contributed to a 12% sales increase for the quarter by communicating product benefits and providing excellent service.
• Recommended solutions within customer budgets and proactively followed up with all leads.

Education

Southern New Hampshire University
Associates, 5/2011

Seminars completed:
The Customer Focus | Creating Win/Win Relationships | The Customer Is Always Right

Available for evening and weekend shifts
Appendix H

Jerry Smith
18 Mills Way, Fairfield, NJ 53215
Phone: (555) 555-5555 | ps@jsmith.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP / 5 YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN CALL CENTER SETTINGS

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- 5 years of experience providing customer support in busy call center environments for public utility and insurance industry employers.
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Experience

Inspirion Co., Flemington, NJ, Customer Service Representative, 9/2011 to Present

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- Chosen to participate in training opportunities for company advancement.

Education


Training
- Customer service excellence
- Dealing with difficult clients
- Handling multiple priorities
Appendix I

John Singer
18 Mills Way, Greenwich, CT 53215
Phone: (555) 555-5555 | ps@jsinger.com

Customer Service Representative
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- Memorized the company’s product offerings; contributed to a 12% sales increase for the quarter by communicating product benefits and providing excellent service.
• Recommended solutions within customer budgets and proactively followed up with all leads.

Education

Kaplan College, Greenwich, CT
Associates, 5/2011

Seminars completed:
The Customer Focus | Creating Win/Win Relationships | The Customer Is Always Right

Available for evening and weekend shifts
Appendix J

Pre-interview steps:
1) Remind coresearcher of salient points from the signed Consent Form,
2) Confirm that you will be recording the interview,
3) Remind them of how much time the interview will take, and
4) Remind them they will be asked for their confirmation of the information at a later date.
5) Pay attention to body language as questions are asked.

Ice breaker:
Thank you so much for your time today! I thought it would be helpful for us to introduce ourselves. Can you give me a bit of your background and I can do the same?
Ok, let’s start the interview; my questions will be open-ended in nature. I’m not here to prompt your answers, just document your experiences. At any time if I am unsure of what you mean, I may ask you a clarifying question and this is only meant to avoid any misunderstandings during data analysis.

Interview focus:

Thank you for participating in the Sample Selection Exercise. This interview is intended for me to document why you made the choices you did. Let’s go through the résumé you chose, section-by-section. We can go in the order that the résumé appears in, just make sure you tell me what section you are discussing prior to your comments. Please describe with as much detail as possible the process you went through in each section that contributed to your selection.

Example prompts to ensure the experience is accurately and thoroughly addressed, without leading the coresearcher responses:

- What was the most critical characteristic in this section that aided in your selection?
- What were you thinking at this point?
• What experience(s) were you using to assist you in making the decision?

• After discussing your experience in the selection, how do you feel about the choice?

• Is there anything else you would want me to know about why you made the selection you did?

End of interview

1) Thank them for their time, and
2) Give them the approximate date for the second interview.

Second Interview Date:

• Clarifications of statements from the first interview will be noted in red text in the above notes.

List any new information here from the second interview:

End of interview

1) Thank them for their time, and
2) Give them the approximate date for the transcript review.
COS005 Interview Transcript

Female Speaker: I’m here, okay and then let me share my screen. I don’t know. Are you in front of a computer COS005?

COS005: I am

Female Speaker: Okay good. So I don’t know if you’re able to see my screen.

COS005: I can

Female Speaker: Excellent wow. I’ve got all the like technology gods in my favor tonight, I think.

COS005: You did great.

Female Speaker: [Laughter] Not only can you hear me but you can see my screen. I feel like I’d better stay in for the night.

So when you went through the original process at the end of the survey I kind of forced each of you to say, okay, if I had to make a choice, it would be this person. You chose the résumé on the left, which is John Singer. So I’m wondering if you could just kind of walk me through the process that you go through or that you went through with this exercise in terms of how you screen for you know candidates and why you chose John Singer specifically for the position that I sent you.

COS005: Sure. I liked the overall [background pinging noise] [inaudible] [01:19] when I first it, although I will say that that’s not always something that I can take into consideration because at least in my world sometimes the formatting gets extremely garbled, and I don’t necessarily think that that’s always the candidate, that I sometimes think is our system. However, having said that I do think I really liked the way his format was, and overall though what I liked was that he specifically indicated that he had both call center and non-call center experience. That was very clear to me from the very beginning that his experience appears to be more varied then what Jerry had and that I liked that he had the product piece of it. That seemed to be stronger than what Jerry indicated that he had, and that seemed from the position description from what I can recall looking at the position description that those two things would be really important in this specific role. That as I recall was one of the primary things I really liked better about John’s résumé.
Female Speaker: Um hum.

COS005: Some…

Female Speaker: Right go ahead.

COS005: No go ahead.

Female Speaker: I was just going to ask you to sort of you know when you look at them in totality they have similar numbers of years of experience. You know they kind of have the same level of their education attainment and things like that.

COS005: Um hum.

Female Speaker: What I heard you say was that in this case formatting did become a little bit you know part of your decision and then having sort of more diverse skill set, I guess, is the best way to describe the second aspect, is that right.

COS005: Yeah definitely. I think that’s a great way to describe it. I’m trying to remember exactly how the résumé phrased it. I remember one of the things on the résumé, and I can’t get back to it.

Female Speaker: If you want I can scroll down here on the screen for you.

COS005: That would be great.

Female Speaker: So on John’s résumé what are you specifically looking for?

COS005: Oh no. I’m sorry, on the job description.

Female Speaker: Oh John… Yeah, I’ve got that here.

COS005: It’s on one of the things the job description said. Here we go. So in the job description product knowledge was one of the things that I keyed into that was important for the role, and then partnering with the sales team. Those were two of the things that I thought were going to be key things for this specific role and important aspects.

Female Speaker: Um hum.

COS005: What I liked on John’s résumé specifically was that he has the varied experience between the call center and retail. So his experience seems greater and if you can click back over onto John…

Female Speaker: Yup.
COS005: I guess should have printed these out so I would have them right in front of me but I didn’t.

Female Speaker: Oh no worries. This is him here on the left.

COS005: Wow so if you can go down just a bit he specifically mentioned that he had product benefit experience and that he followed up with leads which I thought was important when you’re working with a sales team. Then obviously I’d want to check on it to make sure it really happened, but his commendation from his supervisor for problem solving and on the first call. Those were some of the things that I thought were really positive that were part of what influenced me.

Female Speaker: Right excellent. Okay. As I look at these guys you know sort of if I take you through sort of an exercise here where they’re side by side and you kind of so look at you know I guess what we would normally kind of call the career objective space, if you will you know. Which one sort of stood out to you as better or worse and why?

COS005: So I think in John’s and right underneath his role as customer service representative just from the words that he used are words that I would typically use in my environment. So the idea is exceptional versus polished or building relationships is really important to us, problem solving. Those were the words that I think I would check out in the very beginning.

Female Speaker: Um hum. Did you think it helped Jerry to sort of really highlight that five years’ experience up here or did you just kind of glaze over that because you were…

COS005: it really didn’t for me. I really looked more at the time in the position…

Female Speaker: Um hum.

COS005: …and because what I would look for is not just how many years of experience but are you in one place because jumpers really irritate me.

Female Speaker: [Laughter]

COS005: So five years’ experience could have been in five different companies.

Female Speaker: Good.

COS005: Though I wouldn’t necessarily look at that. I would go down to where have they been and how long have they been there.
Female Speaker: Right.

COS005: …which was the same for both of them.

Female Speaker: Gotcha, yeah exactly. The experience levels are relatively consistent though there are a couple of differences between how they have characterized their experience as well, right.

COS005: Um hum. Yes.

Female Speaker: So Mr. Singer here kind of gives you a brief overview of what the company was. Did that help you in terms of kind of getting more flavor for him or did it matter.

COS005: That really didn’t matter to me. If I had really wanted to key into that I would have just looked up what the company did. I wasn’t familiar with it.

Female Speaker: Um hum.

COS005: So that really wasn’t a big factor for me.

Female Speaker: Okay. I think as I look at them side by side too, it kind of seems to me that Mr. Singer is just a little more maybe [background barking dog noise] [inaudible] [07:43] of dogs. Hey shush. Stop that. [Laughter] They came in from outside like something was chasing them.

COS005: Mine [inaudible] [07:52]

Female Speaker: I’m tell you, and Mr. Singer, I guess the way I would describe it, he’s a little more verbose, I guess with how he’s describing his experience. Whereas Jerry is sort of you know a little more succinct. You know how did you feel about that?

COS005: So I definitely responded more positively to how John’s was, and I definitely was keying in on the language because those are the types of words that my environment uses. So those words would pop out at me more quickly.

Female Speaker: Um hum. So I’ve actually heard you say you know your environment a couple of times. I know enough about you to be dangerous, but can you give me a quick overview of those experiences that you’re kind of using to help you make this decision.

COS005: Sure. So I’m responsible for a local member services with that kind of community so definitely the member experience, the customer service
experience is a big part of what we look for, and we’re working very hard to make sure that we do things like complaint resolution and avoiding escalation. We don’t want members to escalate because that ends up in complaints and grievances.

Female Speaker: Um hum.

COS005: So probably those are just words that I look for, and that’s why I noticed them.

Female Speaker: Um hum. Yeah and I think it’s all part of the process, right. Part of what I want to understand is how did you look at these guys sort of at face value, but then also what are the externalities that you use in the screening process, right. So…

COS005: Right.

Female Speaker: …if I had to describe it as like you know what is the secret sauce you know that you use…

COS005: Um hum.

Female Speaker: …versus maybe what someone else would use, and I’m really interested in that. What makes the screening process…

COS005: Right.

Female Speaker: …so unique right, from person to person.

COS005: I think when I [inaudible] [09:54] to my cultural perspective, I would look at the culture at what I thought this person is good within our culture, and those words would be things that I think would aid them in success in kind of assimilation.

Female Speaker: Interesting. So can you give me an example of a couple of the words that, and I know you said problem solving was sort of one of the phrases. What are some of the other examples that you thought, yeah, this person kind of speaks our language.

COS005: So he mentioned specifically listening attentively.

Female Speaker: Um hum.

COS005: I liked that he had experience in the electronic lookup for product information.
Female Speaker: Um hum.

COS005: That he specified that complaint resolution and escalation and there was another one, but I remember when I did it I was kind of highlighting them.

Female Speaker: Um hum.

COS005: The product benefit knowledge was one thing. Those were the things that were key to me.

Female Speaker: Yeah makes sense. I think especially probably just even seeing avoid escalation in here was probably real [laughter] interesting to you, right.

COS005: Um hum. Yes.

Female Speaker: Excellent okay. Then in their second experience is similar I think although I see you know John started to mention some achievements versus job duties. How important is it for you to see achievements in résumés sort of beyond describing job duties.

COS005: So I like it because it does tend to emphasize that they have at least some type of results orientation which is important to me. I t think the other thing that he shared in that piece that was really important to me was the idea of recommending solutions that were focused and tailored for the customers and versus just handling questions from the customer. Evidently he’s thinking about it and thinking about the customer as a total person versus pleasing the customer. Pleasing the customer doesn’t necessarily for me mean that you’re meeting their long term needs. You might be meeting their needs to get them off the phone, but it seemed to be that John had more of a tendency towards really working at long term peace versus a just a very short term pleased with.

Female Speaker: Interesting okay. Then as you transitioned into education, you know, tell me what you were thinking in this section. I mean obviously they’re relatively similar in that their associate degrees were achieved in the same month and year. I think the only difference here is that Southern New Hampshire is a state school whereas Kaplan is a for-profit. So how did that education piece play into your decision?

COS005: So I will say that I actually had a long conversation with my fiancé about that because I told him I thought that I was finding myself to be proven an education snob.

Female Speaker: [Laughter]
We’ve had a lot of press out here lately about some for-profit colleges that have been closing and there’s been a lot of problems with them…

Yeah.

...and I will say I noticed that. I’m not sure how much that influenced me, but I definitely noticed it.

Right and had that been something that was on your mind before the news came up or was it just because it sort of a hot topic these days.

I think because it’s a hot topic.

Yeah. What did you fiancée have to say about it.

Oh he just told me I was an education snob.

[Laughter] [Crosstalk]

Well I don’t think that of you

Again part of that’s culture, I mean, I work for a medical group where education is obviously clearly important...

Um hum.

...and it’s the first time I’d ever worked someplace where literally people with an associate’s degree would probably hang their diploma on their walls.

Right.

I’ve never done that but I understand why people do it. It is something that I probably noticed more in this job than I have in any other.

Right yeah. I can relate to that. I’ve had some experiences, some even recently where you know same thing. Some folks that just come from a whole different you know sort of lifestyle if you will or just upbringing is so different. What kind of college did you go to?

I went to the University of San Francisco, a private college.

Gotcha okay. So that makes sense. So Southern New Hampshire is a little different than where you went, but definitely sort of along those lines, I would say, although they’re nearly purely online these days, which is interesting.
COS005: Yeah, it is interesting, and I might not have noticed it so much if it hadn’t been so much of a hot topic.

Female Speaker: Right and I’m trying to think who’s been in the news the most in California. Is it Corinthian? Is that the hot topic…? [Crosstalk]

COS005: Corinthian definitely.

Female Speaker: Yeah.

COS005: Yeah.

Female Speaker: Yeah. So they closed them all together, is that right?

COS005: Yes.

Female Speaker: Yeah interesting. I haven’t had any experience with Corinthian, but I guess I’m glad I didn’t [laughter] in hindsight. So that’s helpful on the education side, and then as we switch down to sort of trainings versus seminars, you know, did having any sort of post-secondary or I guess even post-post-secondary training weigh in your decision or did you discard this section or did it weigh in?

COS005: It didn’t weigh in because chances are whatever I wanted them to have, I would have them take in my organization. I mean it’s nice to know that they took other things, but everything we do is very specialized. So even if they had taken the same course before we would probably have them take it with us again. So that wasn’t a big deal to me.

Female Speaker: Right okay. Well you’re very efficient COS005. So let me sort of take you back and kind of look at it, you know, in totality. So as we kind of walked through each candidate and looked at them side by side and you had an opportunity to articulate it out loud, you know, have any of your feelings changed about either candidate?

COS005: Not really, no.

[Laughter]

COS005: The reality is I’d probably talk to both of them…

Female Speaker: Um hum.
COS005: …and I wouldn’t automatically exclude either one of them, but if I was forced to make a choice just based on what I have in front of me, I would have chosen John.

Female Speaker: Right.

COS005: In the real world I would have wanted to talk to both of them. I’d want to see how they handle themselves. I’d want to see you know how they did with questions from us. So probably I would have talked to them.

Female Speaker: You’re not the first person to say that. So you know I think that’s relatively consistent, and of course it’s an artificial setting when I make you choose just one candidate, right. [Laughter]

COS005: Sure.

Female Speaker: Which in reality you would never just choose one candidate in a screening process, right. That would be pretty unusual.

COS005: Yes.

Female Speaker: So…

COS005: Because I’ve made mistakes.

Female Speaker: Well right and I think you know part of it is it really is just a document, right. You know people can write kind of what they want.

COS005: Yes.

Female Speaker: So what I hear and what I think I’ve experienced over the years too is the résumé is the ticket for the interview. The rest is you know how they behave in those interviews. Is that accurate?

COS005: Yes.

Female Speaker: Yeah. So is there anything else about your decision making that you think is important for me to know or that sort of occurred to you as we’re walking through? Were there any other things that you know played into your decision as you went about this process?

COS005: I don’t think so.

So excellent, COS005. This was like the fastest interview that I’ve had which is a good thing. I think…
COS005: I going to say, is that bad?

Female Speaker: No. You know I think part of what is actually really helpful from a research perspective is that you’re very clear in your conviction, right. Like there’s not a lot of gray area in that decision, and so that’s actually even more helpful for me to kind of put that into context. So here’s what happens next just to kind of give you the next couple of steps which is not a heck of a lot of work on your end which I’m sure you’re happy about. So what I do now is I send this out for transcription, and just prior to doing that I stripped your name off of it. So then you are just a number to the transcription service. Then I will send that back to you so that you can just take a quick look at the transcription and make sure that, 1: you’re accurately represented in there which you should be, but 2: sometimes when you look at the transcript you think to yourself, you know, maybe I did want to say more about this or maybe after this meeting as you’re driving home you think, you know, there was probably something else I would have told her. So that gives you an opportunity to kind of just post-mortem on that. So you can add anything to that transcript at that time, and then I take all the transcripts for my interviews of which I’ll do right around 15. I try to come up with a common set of experiences. So basically what my research is doing is describing the screening process with the 15 people that are in my study. So kind of coming up with a phenomenon if you will; hopefully there are some consistencies which I suspect there will be. Then at the very end of that process I insert my experiences into that as well, and that becomes the narrative that I will send out to each of you for your feedback into that narrative. The very last phase is I take the narrative and I situate into the current body of research so that it has meaning based on what’s already out there. That’s the time where we will debrief about the research in general.

So a couple of things in that, one is the only person that knows who you are is me, and so that’s why I stripped your name off before it’s sent out to transcription. Of course when all of this gets situated in the research you names and companies and all of that are associated with that, but certainly you can tell people you participated if you decide. So that’s entirely up to you. So that’s kind of the next few steps so I’m hoping to have your transcription back. The transcription service says within seven days. So hopefully in a week I’ll send that back out to you and you can kind of take as much time as you need. While I say as much time as you need but probably a good maybe week, week and a half if you need that to let me know if there’s anything else you want to add to that, but I’ll follow up with you if I don’t hear as well. How’s that sound?

COS005: Great. [Inaudible] [23:28] again.
Female Speaker: Excellent. Well thank you again, COS005. I really appreciate your time. I appreciate you jumping through these first two steps with me, and I’ll look forward to the next steps with you at well.

COS005: Okay thank you.

Female Speaker: Have a good night.

COS005: You too.

Female Speaker: All right, bye COS005.

COS005: Bye.
DAL006 Interview Transcript

Bouchey: Let me get that out of the way. What I am looking at is the screening process that HR professionals use to evaluate résumés. In that first phase, I gave you two similar résumés with a job description. I tried to keep them entry-level, so that there weren't a ton of nuances between both résumés that might sway you artificially.

The purpose of this interview is to have you walk me through that decision-making process. What are the things that you take into account when you're starting a screening process? What were the things about John Singer, which is the résumé you chose, versus Jerry Smith that you thought were important in your decision-making?

The first part of our conversation is really you leading me through that process. Then I'll probably have some more probing questions, looking at the résumés side-by-side as well to say, "Was this part important? What were you thinking here?" That kind of stuff. It's intended to capture you experience rather than be a Q&A kind of process. Does that make sense?

DAL006: Totally.

Bouchey: Okay. As referred to in that original consent process, what we'll do from here is, I'll record this interview, and I'll be sending that out to a third party transcription service. At the time that I send it to them, I remove your name and assign you a participant code, so that the only person who knows who you are is me. Then they send me back a transcription nearly word-for-word.

What I'll do, I will not edit that. I'll send it directly back to you and say, "Hey DAL006, is this an accurate representation of what we discussed?" What I'll also ask is, what I find is sometimes after an interview and after you've seen the transcription, there maybe a couple of things that you want to add or clarify based on seeing that in print. I'll just ask that you supply it at that time.

Then I'll take all of the interviews, look at them in totality, look for the commonalities of experiences, and try and to come up with a collective phenomena, if you will, across the 15 people that I'll interview to say, "Here's what they go through. Here are the things they consider en masse in this group in terms of how they screen résumés." I'll add my experience to the very end of that process. Then I'll ship that narrative out to you so you can take a look and provide some feedback into that.

The very end of the process is that debriefing stage, where I then take this narrative, this capturing of your experiences, and I situate it in the research. I'll show how I'll be adding to the conversation that's already in play, and walk
you through how it adds to that body of understanding. Does that all make sense?

DAL006: Yes.

Bouchey: Any questions about that the rest of that process or anything about participating in the study before we go ahead and jump in?

DAL006: No, I understand.

Bouchey: Perfect. Let me share my screen in just in case you need it. It just gives me a way of keeping myself on track as well. What I've got here on this screen, I just have the résumés side-by-side. The one here on the left, John Singer, is the one you chose in that first exercise. Maybe just start me off how you approached the screening process and what led you to choosing... of course, I forced you to choose between the two. Let me know what went into that decision.

DAL006: Everything I know about résumés I've learned from my friend Dirk Spencer. He's just published a book called Résumé Psychology.

Bouchey: Oh, interesting.

DAL006: I wanted to make sure that you're aware of that. I heard him speak here in Dallas probably almost 10 years ago. He's really tested not just what goes through an ATS well, but how us, as humans, actually take the data in. You might want to look at that and even see if he wants to participate in your study. He's a recruiter, actually.

Bouchey: Cool.

DAL006: If you want an email introduction or something, just let me know.

Bouchey: I would love that, DAL006. That's excellent.

DAL006: That's the first thing that I wanted to get off my chest. Every time I look at the résumés, I'm always thinking to myself, "I'm at the point now where ostensibly they've made it through the ATS." There's some stuff on John's résumé that Dirk would say, "Take out." I'm going to walk you through what I found, and a lot of it goes back to Dirk's Résumé Psychology in terms of what's easier to read.

Bouchey: Got you. Okay, great.
When I look at John's, Dirk would say, "Take those lines out. They don't go through ATS as well. Watch what you use italics for" and things like that. I like that he's got some keywords up top. It's very easy to read the customer service rep. I like that he's talking about service, relationships, solving problems and increase in sales.

Jerry didn't have that on his right off the bat. Part of my decision-making was because they're so similar really in technical skills. Who's presenting himself better? That's really what my conversation with you is about. Does that make sense?

Bouchey: It absolutely does, yes.

John's résumé was easier to read because his bullets were only two lines each and even more concise. I'm looking at dynamic customer service professional, and Jerry's went into three. That whole piece, I'm an attorney, so I'm a reader, a veracious reader, but most Americans don't take the time to read this. I think you've got what? 10 seconds with the recruiter's eyes to really screen a résumé. I liked it, because it was easier on the eyes.

The other thing I liked about John's résumé is... I'm moving down into the experience now. I liked the way that he discussed what type of company it was, a national retail brand with a fast-growing catalog operation. That gave me insight into the type of experience he has with... I'm always looking for, is it a fit for industry?

Then for some jobs, is it a fit for this previous experience with size and scope of an operation? It's one thing to be a customer service rep for a mom and pop, and it's another one to be one GM Financial, right?

Bouchey: Yes, absolutely.

I liked that he did that. I thought that was good. Other than that, I liked also the way that he... I'm trying to remember their names now [laughter].

Bouchey: Yeah, they're right through the top two.

They're right on top, yeah, thanks. I need to look at them.

Bouchey: I can do it, too [laughter].

Cool. Jerry told me more of what his tasks were. Also, he didn't use as much action-oriented verbs. I liked that John also listened attentively. I thought that was good, because that's a big part of a customer service person. I liked how he strived for quick complaint resolution.
Really, again, you guys, I assume it's you, did a masterful job at really putting the same technical skills together, the same... I went back and said, "All right, who's got more experience?" It's exactly the same time. Then it came down to, how did they position themselves? I just felt that John did a more masterful job of using those action words, and the format of the résumé was what tipped me over.

**Bouchey:** Okay.

**DAL006:** Even, I think coming down to... I liked that way that... Jerry's, I think it's almost a little bit easier to read just because you've got clearly and then excellent. I have to think a little bit more about, I would reformat John's a little bit with that section rate that you were discussing over with Delanor. Delanor, sorry, I forgot we're talking about FDR here.

I still like the way that he's talking about, "We're exploring." I'm like, "Okay, at least he's giving me a little bit more about what type of product it is," because I'm not sure what I'm hiring for, but he gives me more insight. I just felt like he did a better job, but I like the way that Jerry's is formatted.

Dirk would say, "Try to..." He wouldn't like these italics and stuff. I would format it differently, but it's okay for our purposes [inaudible][09:51]. I really want to introduce you to Dirk. He's a great guy.

**Bouchey:** It sounds really interesting what he's looking at. It sounds like we're looking at similar things in terms of, on paper, how do we consistently evaluate? Is it a very individual experience? I would ask you, too, outside of being bought into how Dirk approaches résumés as well, are there other externalities that you consider or previous experiences that helped guide you through this process?

**DAL006:** Not really, because what he says really just made so much sense. When I really thought about how we process information as humans, for me it just made sense. Like, "Make it easy on their eyes." When I'm talking to job seekers I always tell them, "You need to imagine the laziest recruiter you can even ever conceive, multiply that by 100, and that's what your résumé needs to be ready for."

**Bouchey:** [Laughs]. Yes, and you're right. If you're only going to get 10 percent or 10 seconds of their time as well, you want to make sure that you're concise and impactful with your words.

**DAL006:** Especially for an entry-level job like this. Obviously, if I'm recruiting an executive, I'm going to expect a wordier résumé. If we go down, I think, to education, yeah, they had exactly the same education. I was like, "They both have associate's degrees, so that's a complete match." I thought that John did a better job of telling us what exact seminars he's completed.
It's just the way that it was presented was a little more professional than just saying... I don't know with Jerry's education, this customer service excellence, is that, "I did an hour on this"? The way that John positioned it, it looked more like truly more like a seminar and workshop. Jerry's was a little more vague, I think, because he didn't capitalize these. I didn't know what these really were.

Bouchey: That makes...

DAL006: They weren't titled as nicely.

Bouchey: A little sort of... Let me go back. Let's go back up to the top. Let me ask a couple of clarifying questions. I hear what you say about ATSes, and I think you're absolutely right. In a world of technology, we're relying on ATSes to do a lot of the front end work.

These lines and a couple of these formatting changes may throw things off. Generally speaking, how important is the - we have all kinds of names for this - but the objective statements up here? How important are these sections in résumés that you're looking at?

DAL006: The first top third of your résumé is the most valuable real estate on the document. That's where you're going to capture someone's information and imagination. That's why it needs to be keyword-rich and engaging.

Bouchey: I'm just trying to replay this back to you, you thought that Jerry was perhaps was a little too verbose here as opposed to John getting a little more succinct. Is that right?

DAL006: Yeah, I thought he was more succinct. I liked the way that Jerry had the five years up there. It didn't make me to have to work for it. I'm the kind of person, too... you asked me to compare each. I really went through each, I've had to do the math myself for John. That's the only negative one there.

Bouchey: Having that very concrete summary of years of experience is important.

DAL006: Yeah, but also the way John had up here, "Providing exceptional service, loyal relationships, solving problems, increase in sales." That drew me in more than just "Polished customer service rep offering."

Bouchey: It's like a tagline versus the substance.

DAL006: Yeah, correct.

Bouchey: That makes sense. When we, then, go down to experience, it's almost like we switch gears, so that Jerry gets really succinct and John gets a little more
verbose. It's a mixture of job duties versus accomplishments. Can you give me a little more flavor about that in terms of job duties versus achievements, one, but then the difference in how they have characterized it in terms of actual words that they use?

**DAL006:** With most entry-level résumés you don't see any metrics, and that's what the big miss is on both of these résumés. It doesn't give me any insight on either one for the amount of volume they're handling or anything like that. There isn't a dollar saved, there's nothing here.

With lack of that, I didn't really see on - let me see - Jerry's [laughs]... Jerry is entering data, but John punched it up a little bit where he's talking about access to electronic paper cataloging systems to look up... It just sounded a little more sophisticated the way that he presented it.

**Bouchey:** It seems like maybe Jerry got perhaps too succinct in the way that he was characterizing his...

**DAL006:** Yeah, he's listing out his tasks and blah, blah. It wasn't punched up. He didn't use those same action words. He wasn't as descriptive.

**Bouchey:** Certainly, that action-oriented language, I think, is critical on a résumé altogether. Would you agree?

**DAL006:** Yes. I actually give job seekers a list of 200 words that describe what people do.

**Bouchey:** Excellent. I suspected it doesn't look exactly like Jerry's [laughs].

**DAL006:** I'm not going to say all my people ever use it, either. When I'm doing our placement training, I'm like, "You want some secret sauce? Here you go."

**Bouchey:** What I heard you also say is that it was also helpful to have a brief overview of what these companies are to give you a little more context, a little more...

**DAL006:** Absolutely, absolutely.

**Bouchey:** Especially these aren't companies that everyone knows.

**DAL006:** I have no idea, you don't know... With Jerry's, you've got no idea what the industry is.

**Bouchey:** Let's scroll down, let's look at education. Education, you're right, associate's is consistent. I think the only difference we see here is that Southern New Hampshire is a state school versus Kaplan that's a for-profit. Did that make...
any difference to you at all?

**DAL006:** I didn't know that... I didn't really think... I thought you made up Kaplan. I shouldn't say that because I have a friend, she's one of their directors. She's been in charge, now that I think about it. I know that she's VP of HR. Oops, my bad.

You know what? Here's why I didn't really care, because I went to a college called Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, and a lot of people think that I went to New Hampshire College.

**Bouchey:** Oh, interesting.

**DAL006:** I thought Southern New Hampshire University, I thought that that was an online school.

**Bouchey:** They do have a significant online division

**DAL006:** I thought that John probably got an online degree or something. Then Jerry, I was like, "Oh, Kaplan College? I'm from New Jersey, I know where Fairfield is. Maybe it's a little community college there, I don't know [laughs].

**Bouchey:** Interesting.

**DAL006:** No, it didn't matter to me where it came from, because honestly, it's an associate's degree. We're not talking... I'm glad to see that they went and had some college, but still, an associate's degree is a great start, but is not like a bachelor's or beyond.

**Bouchey:** It's not as defining, a top position, by any means. If they were, though, would that play into it? If Jerry and John were applying for mid-level management and a bachelor's or a master's were required, how would that weigh in?

**DAL006:** Obviously, then we're going to look at... every company is very different as to how stringent they are on the educational requirement. Some companies, of course, will let you put a mix education and experience in lieu of a degree, but obviously some positions require a degree, like me being a lawyer.

You have to have a JD and your license blah, blah. I'm a huge fan, I'm just going to say, for however is transcribing this [laughs]: I'm huge fan to the community college system. I also don't think that the college is for everyone. I think that there's a discipline, though, that comes with actually attaining your four-year degree that you won't otherwise have.

**Bouchey:** I'm sorry, did you say you were or were not a fan of community colleges?
DAL006: Huge fan. I am a huge fan of them.

Bouchey: Tell me more of that. I'm interested in what you mean.

DAL006: I think that community colleges are a very affordable way to get half of your bachelor's degree done, for one thing. I think also that they also help people avoid going into crazy amounts of debt getting a bachelor's degree, where maybe it turns out that maybe college isn't right for them.

So they can test the waters and get their prerequisites done through the community college system, and then decide whether or not they really want to go on and transfer their credits. I just think they're great. I think they've also stepped in to fill a huge void that we have with vocational and technical schools going the by the wayside.

Bouchey: Yeah, you're absolutely right. I think it's a really a good point, especially when the most community colleges do have that direct articulation into their state university system, or that two years goes directly towards their bachelor's. I think you're right.

It's that or something that I did [laughs] back in the day. I'm a big fan of that as well. The converse of that is, and the Kaplan College I think is probably a really good example from the for-profit aspect - credits may or may not transfer. Would you look at that differently?

DAL006: I wouldn't because it's not a bachelor's degree still. I'm still stuck on, "Hey, good for you. You got your associate's through Kaplan." It's up to him whether or not he wants to go on and get a four-year degree. "Hey, so sorry that you went to a for-profit school, and those credits didn't transfer."

I'm not as hung up on the for-profit and nonprofit. To me, it sounds like the same kind of discussion we had in HR 10 years ago when the online schools were coming out. Back then, I don't know if you're aware of this and even to this day, there's still some organizations that will not recognize degrees from online colleges.

Bouchey: You're kidding me.

DAL006: I'm not kidding you.

Bouchey: I guess I didn't realize that, though. They way you're saying it, I suppose that means it probably does still exist, right?

DAL006: Yeah, I'll give you an example, my husband worked at [LARGE COSMETIC COMPANY] for like 14 years, and they would not recognize degrees from the
Bouchey: Wow, even though they were in Phoenix [laughs], they would be sifted out?

DAL006: Yeah, they would say they didn't meet the educational requirements. Now, things have changed and maybe they do now. When the online stuff started coming out, a lot of us, and I'm probably quite a bit older than you, a lot of us were like, "How do they even know you're really doing the coursework? It's not the same as really going to school," but times have changed. I think this conversation we're having about for-profit and nonprofit reminds me of those conversations.

Bouchey: I think probably some of it was rooted in for-profit even back then, because University of Phoenix is the largest for-profit institution we have in the US. You're right, I think originally it was this newfound thing called online education thing, right?

DAL006: Yeah.

Bouchey: In reality, though, it is, is for-profit education looked at the same quality level as a community college, for example? I think that I don't know. It sounds like that may still be a question?

DAL006: I've seen companies get very hung up on the "pedigree," and I'm using air quotes here - your "pedigree" of your degree. I'm going to tell you, you probably don't know about my college. At Hampshire College, there were no credits, no grades, and very few minimal requirements. It was completely self-paced, and I wrote papers all through and finished college in three years.

Bouchey: How interesting. I'm going to look up Hampshire. This is really interesting.

DAL006: Now, I have a different view of this pedigree than a lot of other people, because I think my education was harder to obtain, because I had to be completely self-directed to complete it. It wasn't like I took a class, I regurgitated data, and I took an exam, and I filled in the bubbles. It didn't work like that. You had to demonstrate and apply the knowledge that you learned. I basically wrote a master's thesis in my third year of college.

Bouchey: Wow [laughs]. That must be difficult when you're at that age even, too. The synthesization of big concepts and trying to put that into context at that age is probably really difficult, you're right.

DAL006: They made you take an interdisciplinary approach to everything that you did. That's why I was like, "That was me." My sister, on the other hand, has an undergraduate degree from Wharton School of Business. She has the pedigree, but we bring different skills and strengths to everything that we do,
That's why I don't put a lot of stock into pedigree, because when I hear people say that, it's usually white males who are trying to say things like, "I only like to hire people who have played competitive sports in college." That actually means, "I like to hire other white males" [laughs].

Bouchey: [Laughter]. Yes, these things are definitely related, aren’t they [laughs]? I think, too, maybe the reverse of that is, "We prefer to hire from institutions that we have a relationship with." That's a way to articulate that that might be more palatable sometimes?

DAL006: It's a lot less discrimination, wrought with discrimination [laughs].

Bouchey: [Laughter]. But in reality it's almost like reverse discrimination, right?

DAL006: Exactly, yes. I didn’t get hung up on his whole education. If we were talking about a bachelor’s degree and we knew, for example, that... let’s say that we were talking a supply chain person. I know the top 10 supply chain schools in the country.

I would be a little more impressed if someone had a degree, say, from the University of Michigan or something, but we're not talking that right now. We're talking about a customer service rep where I suspect that a high school diploma is all that's required anyway.

Bouchey: That's a very good point. In that credential society, we just keep increasing the barriers to entry into some of these positions. I like what you say about... I guess that's getting into rankings a little bit in terms that the discipline at the school is known for. I gave this example in another interview is, I went to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. I don't know if you're familiar with RPI.

DAL006: I sure am, great school.

Bouchey: Fantastic school. Periodically, when I'm interviewing, I'll get the random engineer [laughs] that's like, "Oh wow, you went to RPI." I know very specifically I have been called for interviews only because I have RPI on my résumé. I actually did my MBA there rather my engineering degree, but in some way these things don't really matter. I guess they're just looking at the reputation. Yeah, those kinds of things pull through.

I wasn't even thinking about it. It just happened to be that RPI was in the same town that I lived in. It wasn't really a purposeful master plan [laughs]. It just happened that way. It has been something that has... as I chose my doctoral program I was a little more... I could have certainly gone to Walden or University of Phoenix to get my doctorate. It might actually have been a little
easier just in terms of purely online, but I chose Northeastern because in many ways it's associated with Harvard, like the stepsister of Harvard.

**DAL006:** Yeah.

**Bouchey:** I'm thinking to myself, just looking at that lens, is it better to have University of Phoenix or Northeastern University?

**DAL006:** Northeastern for a doctorate, no doubt.

**Bouchey:** Exactly, interesting conversation. Thank you. I got off on a tangent there. It's interesting.

**DAL006:** That's okay.

**Bouchey:** Then the last thing was training versus seminars in terms of how they've articulated it. I think I've heard you say that Jerry looked a little less impressive making that John's. It may just be, I don't know, because John used that actual title maybe of the training versus the substance. Do you think that that had an impact?

**DAL006:** That had an impact. He also used the word "seminar" and not just "training."

**Bouchey:** Tell me about that.

**DAL006:** A seminar indicates to me that this is a formal class of some kind. Training is simply just, "I did an online training class on customer service excellence."

**Bouchey:** Yes, good point. I haven't used the word "seminar" in very often in my life, but you're right, the definition is different, right?

**DAL006:** Yes.

**Bouchey:** Good. As we’ve gone through that exercise, DAL006, and you picked through your selection a little bit, or picked at your selection a little bit, is there anything else that comes to mind? Anything else you would want me to know about the selection that you ultimately made? Anything else come to mind?

**DAL006:** Not really.

**Bouchey:** No? Good. One of the thing that's been really fun about these interviews is that everyone is extremely resolute in their decision [laughs]. I haven't got one that changed their mind.
DAL006: I took a lot of time, actually, comparing the two. It's like playing that game of, can you find 10 things different between this picture and that picture [laughs]?

Bouchey: Right, but everything is not like the other.

DAL006: They both live on the same street, but that really about it [laughs].

Bouchey: [Laughs] They're probably are brothers that are not. Excellent. Well, this is good. This has been really very helpful. Like I said, what I'll do from here is send this out to transcription and then have you take a quick look at that and let me know. Certainly, if anything else comes to mind, too, that's...

DAL006: I just saw one other thing. You can scroll on John's just for one minute.

Bouchey: Excellent.

DAL006: Go down a little bit, I saw a number 12 percent somewhere.

Bouchey: Yeah, right here.

DAL006: That's what made the difference for me, too.

Bouchey: Oh, interesting. Having that...

DAL006: There is at least one metric on that résumé.

Bouchey: Yeah, there was only one, and that did make a difference?

DAL006: Totally, yeah. Look at the level of sophistication, "Memorize the company's product offering contribute to a 12 percent sales increase for the quarter by communicating product benefits and providing excellent service." That's a lot different than, "Worked with the sales team to assist in cross-selling opportunities to increase customers."

Bouchey: Yeah, I see exactly what you're getting at there. Often we talk to our clients about having a very clear narrative on the job duties but then just doing bullets for their accomplishments to really draw attention.

DAL006: Right, at least there's is one metric on here. That tipped it over to me, too.

Bouchey: There's got to be something in each of these jobs [laughs] that you've done that I'm sure Jerry did hopefully.

DAL006: He could have got rid of "memorize," that part. I just cared about "12 percent sales increase." That tells me that he understood the fundamental meaningful
metrics for that company.

**Bouchey:** Excellent, great.

**DAL006:** That's all I had. I'm going to let you finish up, and I think we can call it a day.

**Bouchey:** Yeah, perfect. Actually, these ended up going a lot faster than I had originally intended, which is fantastic for everyone. I'll send this out to transcription, I should have it back within seven days. Then I'll just email that to you and let you absorb that, and let me know if you have any changes or new thoughts. I should have all of my interviews done by November, 8th. That's the goal and plan to do all of the coding right before Thanksgiving.

I suspect I'll be sending out the large narrative while I have a little more time on my hands during Thanksgiving break and try to bring it to fruition over those next couple of weeks after that. That's the general time line. I'll keep in touch about timelines as well just to give you guys a heads up, especially as we head into the holidays. I know everyone's time gets a little more crunched than usual. Any other questions or comments about this or anything else on this project list?

**DAL006:** No, just stay on me with the deadlines please, because I'm super-busy with the startup.

**Bouchey:** I will.

**DAL006:** Then, would like an email introduction to Dirk also?

**Bouchey:** I would. I'm actually going to get on Amazon here and see if I can get a Kindle copy of it and take a look at it this weekend as well. I appreciate that.

**DAL006:** I can send you the link to it. I've got that, because I put it on LinkedIn for him.

**Bouchey:** Oh, fantastic, excellent. I love that. I love that you're giving me the introduction, that's fantastic. DAL006, thank you very much for you time and your efforts. I really appreciate it.

**DAL006:** Oh, you're welcome. I'm always happy to help a student, my friend [laughs].

**Bouchey:** Enjoy the rest of you Saturday. I appreciate your time this morning.

**DAL006:** Bye.

**Bouchey:** Take care.
DAL006: Bye-bye.

Bouchey: Bye DAL006.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]
Q: So we are (inaudible) now. All right. All right. Okay, so our friend, Mr. Singer here. So (inaudible) we're just going to kind of go through each section in the résumé and you'll kind of let me know, again, just free flow what you were thinking, what were the items that stuck out, good and bad. I'd like to kind of hear both sides of why you were to choose him over Mr. Smith. Make sense?

A: Mhm. Okay.

Q: All right, so let's start with the top - you know, I don't know if the address had anything to do with it but I'll just leave that out there as something - just let's start at the top.

A: I mean, not in this particular role, it didn't have any effect in my decision, only because I don't know where the CSR position is located. In a normal scenario though that does play into a decision. But it didn't have any weight in this particular decision.

Q: Okay. And you can just kind of take me through - you can start here with the targeted statement he has at the top of his résumé.

A: Okay, so I'm just going to work my way down. I'm not necessarily the biggest fan of a tagline. I find that a lot of times a job seeker will use these targeted taglines as résumé filler because so many companies now use résumé scanning software. So I myself am not a big fan of the targeted statements and only because as well, you know, your résumé is going to change depending on what you're applying to. So for me, the CSR tagline really had no weight in my decision. What I do like though is dropping down to the next line, those targeted, very specific to customer service taglines and the language that was utilized, words like exceptional, building, increasing sales of course. In any CSR opportunity, that's what you want your CSRs doing. So I found that to be something that wasn't as readily throughout the other candidate. I also am a big fan of the bullet points that he utilizes right under that; very clear cut, lets me know how he is a good fit for the job description. Not only that, but he calls out some reoccurring themes throughout the job description; building enduring customer relationships, boosting sales, repeat business. Again, as a hiring manager looking for a CSR, those are all very targeted keywords that I'm looking for that also show that he's been successful in the world of a Customer Service Representative/Sales. He also hits on things like listening, just the simple use of the word 'articulating' product benefit information, creating solutions. So to me it shows experience and longevity within the industry. Moving down to experience, the way he has his employment listed is very easy to read. I do like that he's got a small, little summary there of who the company is and what they do. I could really take it or leave it, it probably just depends on how a candidate words it, but he did it very, very concise, which I think was nice at least for me, but let me know how long he’s been there, lets me know where the position is located, along with his job title. Going into the job duties, I think it is a nice combination of precise job duties that are tailored to what he does on a daily basis. He doesn't get too wordy, very action-oriented and it is, again, very tailored to the job description; striving for quick complaint resolution, positive customer service, understanding and knowing the availability of products, providing that quality service - very, very tailored to the job description which I like when I'm looking through
résumés. And as sort of simple as it is too, it's all done in the correct tense. He is working there. And then really the same goes for his next opportunity. He lists the role that he had in Cornwall, New York, again, action, language, (inaudible) memorized the company's product offerings. I mean as someone who's hiring a CSR, who wouldn't just be, you know, mesmerized by that. Again, proper tense. He's now started to incorporate metrics, talking about the 12% sales increase. So for me, those are always very key things that I look for and I pay specific attention to. They are also things that I have found that hurt folks once we get into an interview scenario because they may just throw in numbers for the sake of a résumé but they may not be very true. And you can typically vet those out in the interview scenario. But no, I mean, just very, very similar format to his present role and tailored, again, toward the job description. Rolling into the education, he does hit on having the Associate Degree. What I don't particularly like about the education section is I don't know if he graduated or what the degree is in.

Q: Okay. How important are those aspects?

A: I think it depends. You know, in this particular scenario I believe the Associate Degree was a requirement - oh no, it was a preferred piece. But what I feel when I'm looking at résumés is - I mean, I don't have a hard statistic but I would say a good 50% of folks that I talk to that have something very similar to this on their résumé don't actually have the degree.

Q: Oh gosh. Okay.

A: Yeah. They'll come back and they'll say, "Oh, well I took classes my Associate or took classes toward my Bachelor Degree." And it's something, too, that I, as a career services professional, have also coached people in doing. Especially in IT, which is what I specialize in now, you can't trade 20 years of avocation development for a piece of paper in terms of a degree. And a lot of people will be ruled out because they don't have the Bachelor of Science but they may have taken, you know, 10 classes. So while I do preach that, I'm also not a big fan of seeing it on a résumé. But more than anything, I have no idea what the degree is in.

Q: Yeah, okay.

A: And then I do like the seminars completed. Because of the focus of the seminars, I probably would have actually put them much higher up in the résumé because I think they tie very well to this particular job and I think they hold a lot of weight for this candidate.

Q: Yeah, I agree. I think they're certainly related a little more heavily than potentially an Associate's with no concentration or what have you. Okay. One of the things I thought I would also do is pull up Mr. Smith's résumé and kind of talk about maybe why he wasn't a preferred candidate. But before I do that, was there anything else about John Singer as a whole that stood out to you as, "This is my preferred candidate." Is there anything else that sort of came to mind?

A: I don't think so. I think more than anything, the big highlights with this particular candidate is that the résumé was easy to read, one. For me, punctuation and tenses in résumés, using the correct vernacular, staying away from the I's, the my's, the me's, the we's, the they's is very important. It was just very action-driven and it was very tailored to the job description. But
the language was also more mature in Mr. Singer's résumé versus the other one, which demonstrates, at least in my mind, taking the ability to critical think to the next level.

Q: Right. Right. Okay. So let me pull up Mr. Smith's résumé that you didn't prefer over Mr. Singer. And so maybe we don't have to go line by line on him but I'm interested in the basic, I guess, big categories in a résumé - if there were contrasting themes there that stood out to you.

A: His résumé popped up and I also remember I also preferred Mr. Singer over Mr. Smith because of the fact that John Singer indicates that he has CSR experience in both a call center and a retail store, kind of that face-to-face setting.

Q: Ah okay.

A: Whereas it looks like with Mr. Smith, all of his experience is call center based.

Q: Right. I guess I didn't pick that up as clearly I think as you did. Okay. And so you've got kind of your favorite tagline here at the top. We'll take that off as our list of the things that we coach people on.

A: Not a big fan.

Q: Not a fan. But was there sort of a contrasting perspective on how he articulated his focus of his résumé in terms of these three bullet points versus what Mr. Singer has put on his résumé?

A: I really think that Mr. Singer's was just more graceful, better articulated. This has all of the same information for the most part; talking about winning customer loyalty, strategic relationship partnership building skills, listening attentively, but it wasn't done as action-oriented as Mr. Singer's. One thing that I do like about Mr. Smith's bullet points is that he actually uses the numeric number to how many years he actually has providing customer support. You know, I, as a hiring manager, then don't need to go digging through the résumé. It's, boom, right up there. The other thing that I do like in Mr. Smith's that I would've liked to see in Mr. Singer's is he also talks about his industry verticals, that he's worked within the public utility and insurance industries which, I suppose too, depending on what industry the job I'm hiring for could be a hindrance/

Q: Or it could help, right?

A: Yeah. I mean, if this is for healthcare, I really could probably care less if it's utility or insurance that's your background.

Q: Right. I'm taking some notes here even though I'll get the detailed notes back here. So what about his experience? I think they have about the similar number of years of experience, but were there things here that contrasted against Mr. Singer for you?

A: Again, I think it just came down to pure language and to how things were worded. You know, for me, "Effectively handle incoming customer order inquiries" versus, "Listening
attentively to caller needs to ensure a positive customer experience" - they're saying the same thing but in two dramatically different ways.

Q: Right. Anything else about that experience section that jumps out at you? And I see where you're going with the semantics for sure.

A: Yeah, no, I mean, again, you know, grammar was pretty well on point, right tenses, no I's, me's, my's anything like that. So overall they were pretty similar, it just came down to how they were worded.

Q: Okay. And then when we switch down to education they both have an Associate's, although I notice too here that Mr. Smith didn't present what kind of program that he was in, although hopefully they both graduated, although it looks like they're different types of colleges. We've got the Kaplan and I think Southern New Hampshire University I think was Mr. Singer's. So talk to me about education.

A: Same thing there. You know, anymore it doesn't matter to me where these folks are going to school. I know there for a while it was sort of a stigma, that online learning when it was very, very new and it was sort of seen not on the same playing field as onsite, on the ground learning, but I think we're sort of past that now. So where these folks go to school doesn't matter to me. But, again, it doesn't tell me a whole lot. I don't know what your degree is in, I don't know how well you did, I don't know what your GPA looks like, anything like that.

Q: So you think that stigma has sort of passed though, right? So Kaplan versus whatever is a non-issue at least in terms of where you recruit. Is that what you're saying?

A: Yeah.

Q: And then in training, of course he bundled education and training here at the bottom similar as to Mr. Singer, so how does that sit with you?

A: They're very generic. I thought that Mr. Singer's were -- I guess more than anything, Mr. Smith's training section, it looks like it could potentially be just bullet points that he threw in there, you know, "Handling multiple priorities." Whereas when I look at Mr. Singer's résumé, he's got something called, "Creating win-win relationships" or "The customer is always right." Those seem very formalized to me whereas these don't. I could take those or leave those. I don't necessarily have a whole lot of confidence that he really even went through those sort of things.

Q: Right. Well, and there aren't dates here, although there weren't dates on Mr. Singer's either so it is kind of hard to tell whether they were sort of workshops or just another reiteration of skillsets, right?

A: Right.

Q: Yeah. Okay. Well the good news is they're both short résumés so we got through walking through the experiences pretty quickly, a lot more quickly than I thought we would. So
after going through the exercise of talking through those résumés with me, are you still happy with your choice? I think the answer is yes, but I want to sort of give you an opportunity to sit with that. And now that you've talked through both, do you still feel like Mr. Singer would be a preferred candidate?

A: I do. Now, I would most certainly interview both of them, but if I could only bring one in, it would be Mr. Singer.

Q: And what I have down for you, the big things were that his résumé was essentially more eloquent. It was easier to read, the punctuation was clear, the tense was appropriate, and I think probably the most important part of it was sort of an action-drive or action-oriented language, right, (inaudible) does that sound right?

A: Yeah, and just kind of working help desk positions, now I see what works in a résumé, you know, which is essentially a CSR résumé just dealing with technologies. And when folks talk about the metrics that they're held to and how they meet those metrics in their résumés is very resonating to me. I think it's very appealing. Mr. Singer talked about striving for quick complaint resolution and ensuring that he's able to do those things the first time around, which is a huge metrics in the CSR world so I like that that was brought up as well.

Q: Mhm. Okay. I'm just looking at my list of questions to make sure that I got through each. I think we did. I think we got through that really quickly, which I would've expected nothing less. You're so efficient and clear in your convictions, which is really, really cool from a research perspective. And so just to recap what we're doing in this (inaudible) and what might come up after this, I'm taking a selected group of folks from the survey - and thank you for doing that so quickly as well, it was so nice - and then really just again, just like I did with you, is take me through your decision, was there anything particularly interesting about this section, you know that kind of thing and most importantly, making sure that I don't drive the conversation as much as I just sort of take the information in. There is a point in the research - this is called phenomenological research where I'm really studying a phenomenon - but part of that is my bias has to be set aside at this point in the research, but at one point I'm airing (?) my perspective - I sort of throw it in the bunch, if you will, after I've looked at all of the data from what I call coresearchers because I can't really do the research without you. So I sort of code all of that and then I kind of add my perspective to the overall narrative. And so what will happen from here is I'm going to send out these recordings to a transcription service here in Indy and she'll give me back a text-based document. I'm going to send that to you. It's actually a pretty formal, researcher accuracy checking - it's called member checking - and so I'll send that back to you just to make sure that we've accurately captured what you've said to the best of your ability. I know that you're not taking copious notes in this conversation either. So once you say, "Hey, yeah, this looks like what we talked about" and I finish all of the other interviews, I’ll print that. I'll be coding all of that data to look for general themes across the coresearchers and write that into a narrative that should describe the collective phenomenon across just the people that I’ve worked with. So it may not be that this is the phenomenon for everyone who has ever screened a résumé, but it will be representative of the roughly 10 folks that I take through the in-depth interview process. And then I'll ship that back out to you guys for you to say, "Yeah, this makes sense to me, that is the phenomenon.” And then I'll add my perspective to that. And then at the
very end I will send you the final version of essentially the data results. And so (inaudible) the brief at that point so that you kind of understand what the dissertation looks like as a whole. You probably won't want to read the whole thing, but I'll give you, at the very least, the data analysis part of the dissertation for you to review and post comments on if you decide to do that. So that's kind of what the process looks like. I do want to reiterate that from the point after the survey is completely confidential - it's confidential across the board, but at this point, once I get the transcription back I'm actually going to discard your name altogether. You are 001, that's your participant number. So from here on out you will be 001 to everyone but me - I will know who you are - but I will actually discard the key at one point as well, likely as soon as I put that summary narrative together so that I can't even really trace back conversations to any one individual person either. And not that you've said anything here that would ever discredit you - in fact quite the opposite - but just as a way to make sure that everyone knows that these are conversations that just have to do with research and not for any other purpose.

A: Okay. No, that's perfect.

Q: Make sense?

A: Yeah.

Q: Anything else you would want me to know about the selection process before we come to the end of our recording here?

A: I do. I will tell you that - and of course I couldn't make this determination based off of the résumés and just the job description - but the location of the job would play very heavily into my decision.

Q: Okay. And why is that?

A: Well, if the position was in New Jersey and it was 10 minutes from where Mr. Smith lives, that is going to really play up to me much more than if it's going to take John Singer 45 minutes to an hour to get there or if he has to relocate.

Q: That makes sense.

A: Especially because this is not a super high profile role. It's not like I'm going to pay for Mr. Singer to relocate, anything like that. And I have found that when people job search, it tends to be very emotional. So with that, when people talk about relocating, they're typically saying they'll relocate because they're very emotional and it very, very, very rarely comes to fruition.

Q: Interesting. I don't think I've gotten that kind of feedback before. Of course I'm not recruiting people every day. Interesting. So do you have people back out of that process?

A: Oh yeah. For as long as I have done this, for as long as I have worked in career development, I have never seen someone through the full lifecycle of the relocation.

Q: You're kidding me.
A: No. It's a very slow process so I play with them. And I say play because it really has to be played like a game of chess because it is a very emotional decision. And it can range from, gosh, I just had a really crappy day at work, I hate it here in Columbus, Ohio because it's raining today and I'm moving to Arizona because I have a third cousin out there who will let me sleep on the couch.

Q: Right.

A: You know, you let them vent it out, you play the game, you contact them every day, you talk about the scenario, and by day three or four life here in Columbus, Ohio ain't so bad. They're in a secure job, they're paid well and all goes back to normal. So it happens very, very frequently and it's typically always based off of emotion even though the person doesn't realize it at the time.

Q: Well, job searching when you're in a position of weakness is really - probably job searching in general is a stressful process, but especially if you don't have a job or you absolutely need another one, I can see where impulsivity might be higher during that initial phase and then once reality sets in it's sort of a different story.

A: The safest people to work with in recruiting are people that are passive because they're typically not working off of any type of emotion; it's something that's well thought out, they incorporate their decision makers within the family and they make a well-informed decision.

Q: Interesting.

A: People that are being laid off or have been laid off and are without work are scary.

Q: Well, I mean, that makes sense because that's that position of weakness again, right? We're seeing on our project at WorkOne here in Indy where we work with the long-term unemployed and if I had a nickel for every time I said, "Okay, I hear that you have a job offer (inaudible) and then super excited too. Let's just take a step back and really evaluate if this is the right opportunity. I understand you have to pay your bills but just getting a job on your résumé to have a job on your résumé may or may not be the perfect solution.” But then I also understand that desperation. It's a real thing not to have a job and not to be able to pay your bills.

A: Oh yeah, I mean especially if there's a family to support.

Q: Yeah, talk about an emotional process. So now are you primarily recruiting in Columbus these days or do you have sort of national stuff that you look at as well?

A: The majority of it is based here in Columbus. We do have some clients that will do some national things. They typically are insurance clients and healthcare, but most of it's based here in Columbus.
Q:  Gotcha. And is that sometimes a challenge in terms of re-lo or is that something that - do you primarily recruit local candidates?

A:  Well, we strive for local candidates, but sometimes we'll have just a very niche skillset, that these people aren’t just running around the streets of Columbus so we kind of have to broaden our strict radius. And that's when you really increase the risk because, sure, you can Skype with these people or you can FaceTime or whatever it is you want to do, but you never really get to have that true kind of face to face where you really can look them in the eye and get a good sense of where they stand.

Q:  Who they really are, right?

A:  Yeah. So those positions are hard.

Q:  Yeah, I don't envy you. And one of my very best friends is in charge of talent acquisition and management at GM up in Detroit and, boy, you have no idea how hard it is to get people to move to Detroit. You know, Detroit alone and then (inaudible) industry to make matters worse. He's like, "This is the hardest job I have ever had."

A:  Yeah, I wouldn't touch that with a ten-foot pole.

Q:  Yeah, and he's loving it. So I think that's the great news, that he came from Google and Microsoft where it was like just picking the cherries off the trees, you know, to get people to come. So this is a whole new, interesting challenge for him. Well, awesome, I am going to stop the recording.

(END RECORDING)
HAR004 Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Let me say, thank you once again. I absolutely appreciate your time. Did you have any questions about the study, about consent or anything before we get started?

Executive: No, I don't. Thanks for asking though.

Interviewer: Alright. Awesome. Let me ask you this, do you have those résumés in front of you or do you want to view my screen? What's easiest for you?

Executive: I got them in front of me now.

Interviewer: OK. Cool.

What I'm doing in these interviews is having you guys walk me through selection that you made in that first phase. When I forced you to choose, you chose Jerry Smith.

Executive: Uh huh.

Interviewer: A good way to start might be for you to just take me through your process of selection and why Jerry ended up being the preferred candidate when you were asked to choose. That doesn't usually take a ton of time. I find that you guys are extremely resolute people, right? So I may then go back and look at the résumés side by side and ask you some clarifying questions to see if I can jog any other memories or things that you were thinking about during that selection process.

Executive: Right, OK.

Interviewer: Sound good?

Executive: Yep.

With Jerry, I think the thing that I used to compare and contrast compared to John Singer was -- Jerry to me seemed to show a little bit more overall business acumen in the way that he chose to show himself on paper.

As an example, when I look at -- talking about the specific bullet points -- unwavering commitment to customer service, ability to build productive relationships, resolve complex issues and win customer loyalty. Just something as simple as that shows me that Jerry's a little bit more engaged to understanding the bigger picture of things.
Then when I actually go into the actual experience... Just a second here, I'm trying to make sure that I'm looking at the right résumé here.

**Interviewer:** Yes, you were definitely talking about Jerry's just then.

**Executive:** Yes. Jerry was the guy that I said I would choose. Correct?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. When I forced you to choose, I think you showed some affinity towards both. Then the last question pushed you to just choosing one candidate out of the two and you preferred Jerry.

**Executive:** Yeah.

"Solving problems by recommending solutions, expediting resolution" -- I think that's a key thing. A lot of times with customer service, efficiency and process is just as critical as providing somebody a good customer service experience.

The key thing being, if you're inefficient in providing great customer service, you're likely disappointing other customers, and whatnot. I think follow through also came up on things that were referenced in there. "Consistently recognized for call handling" -- I think again that shows somebody that is solid in what they do in all that.

The core thing that sold me was really looking at the key difference in the very top of the résumé, compared to both.

Again, they're both very similar, but something about Jerry just stood out to me that I thought showed a little bit more relevancy to thinking bigger picture -- and broader -- and understanding business overall compared to the other individual.

**Interviewer:** Right, OK.

So what I'm hearing you say is -- some people call it career objectives, or career summary or whatever those terms are that we use for that top of the résumé -- That seemed to be a really critical area of the résumé for you.

**Executive:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Is that consistent with your experiences screening candidates overall? Is that an area you spend a lot of time looking at?

**Executive:** Yeah, for me it is, Betty Jo, because the talent and mindset that I have is, I understand jobs and environments and all that. What I want to see is how does
somebody represent themselves first and foremost, before they represent the roles in the positions that they do.

I may be a little bit of a weird bird, but I grew up in different environments, where talent is talent. If you've got a great ability to train and engage people to an organizational role or a function, that's what matters more than just simply the experience of what they've done. Again, that's a general statement. Obviously talent isn't talent if you're talking about positions you need to have specialized training in.

But, for me, I really look at someone and their ability to sell themselves and represent themselves well.

Choosing the customer service piece I think was just a really nice touch to the project here, because the mindset from customer service is also critical on how well does somebody represent themselves.

Interviewer: Right, OK.

Executive: That's the mindset that I took and I typically do take when I am reviewing résumés: What is this person telling me about themselves and not necessarily their experience? Because most positions, most people -- They're going to apply for positions that are relevant to their experience.

Interviewer: Right.

Executive: So I focus more on: What are they telling me about them?

Interviewer: Right. Who are they? Right. Versus...

Executive: Because those types of things are going to relate the whole hire for fit philosophy.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Executive: If I see somebody that does a better job -- again, based off of my opinions -- viewing themselves as something a little bit more than a customer service rep, but somebody that sees themselves as also somebody that can drive sales or enhance product offering or whatever, I'm gonna choose that person over the person that just says, "Hey I'm a good customer service rep."

Interviewer: Right. OK. That makes sense. Perfect.

So let me ask you some sort of brass tack questions if you will about some of the other areas on the résumé if that's OK.
Executive: Uh huh.

Interviewer: I think you're right: Their summaries do have some differences in terms of how they've characterized themselves. I think you've covered that really well. When I look at their experiences, their "experience sets" if you will, are the same. They have the same number of years of experience, similar roles. Jerry is probably a little more succinct in his word selection than John. John seems to have a little more -- to use your term -- "verbose-ness" around him --

Executive: Right.

Interviewer: -- a little more wordy if you will. And I also noticed that John gave some context around the companies that he worked for. Can you look at the experience section and let me know if there was anything that jumped out at you on either résumé?

Executive: Yeah, I actually think that the experience section for John Singer was stronger, clearly, than the experience section for Jerry Smith.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Executive: The positions and the jobs are similar in nature so I'm going to look more focused on the actual experience. Is knowing that it's a national retail brand with a fast growing catalog operation -- It's nice to know, but what I want to know is: What did you do with the role and the function? The other key thing is -- and you kinda referenced it -- Jerry was pretty succinct in telling me this is what I've done, this is what I do. John is a little bit more broader. I'm making the assumption -- and this is a dangerous assumption but -- I put on my customer service head and I want the person that's gonna convey their message as quickly and efficiently as possible, and get on to the next customer.

Interviewer: Ah, interesting. OK.

Executive: With John, he's a little bit more detailed. Right? Depending on the organization, the business that you're in, that detail is sometimes needed or not needed. I'm just making the assumption that I like Jerry better because Jerry's quicker, more efficient, and told me the exact same thing that John did except it took less time for me to understand it

Interviewer: Right. Yeah. Interesting. I hadn't even thought about that from the perspective of performance over the phone, but good point. That hadn't occurred to me at all.

The other thing with John versus Jerry, too, is John started to get a little more clear about accomplishments in his Delano experience versus just job duties.
How important is that to you -- job duties versus accomplishments -- when people are characterizing their experiences?

**Executive:** It depends on the position, Betty Jo. For a customer service representative it's probably not going to be, to me, as critical. I look back to the experience I had when I was at [REDACTED – LARGE FORTUNE 500] as an example. It was all about: Are they efficient in their metrics and those types of things.

What John's saying is: "Certain customers were satisfied with every part of the phoning experience, from initial greeting to order completion." OK. Isn’t that what you're supposed to do? I don't know if that's really a bullet point that you need to include in the résumé. "Memorize the company's product offerings." OK. Well, I'm gonna make the assumption that you don't have to memorize the product offerings. We're in a pretty technologically driven world these days. Do I want somebody that's gonna memorize the product offerings, or just know how to get to the information they need quickly?

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Executive:** You bring up that point, that was one thing I remembered. Why do you have to go memorize all the company's product offerings?

**Interviewer:** [laughs]

**Executive:** Now, "Contributed to a 12% sales increase for the quarter by communicating product benefits and providing excellent service." OK. Any time anybody says those types of things -- I have to take it at face value.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

**Executive:** What are the odds that I am actually going to call a reference, and say, "Hey can you verify that this individual contributed to a 12% increase in sales? Did he memorize your product offerings?" For me, I just didn't think that those things were nearly as relevant as what Jerry put on there.

**Interviewer:** Gotcha. OK.

Was it about this role, particularly? When you look for higher level positions, do you dig a little bit more into their accomplishments? Or are you, "This is unverified information, too much, lets move on." What are your feelings there?

**Executive:** Let's say that as an example this was a sales position. I would dig in, definitely, on much more accomplishments and commendations and all those types of things, because that's the sales culture and that's how a lot of organizations run their sales organization.
Executive: But for customer service, what I want to see is major customer loyalty and efficiency.

Interviewer: Right.

Executive: That's really it.

Interviewer: OK. I'm just going to make a quick note on that. I like what you just said. OK. So, anything else about the experience section that jumped out at you?

Executive: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: OK.

Executive: When I scroll down to education, they both have their Associates at the same month and year to be exact. Jerry went to Kaplan and John went to Southern New Hampshire University. One's a for-profit and one's a non-profit. Did any of that weigh into your decision?

Executive: No. Absolutely not.

Interviewer: That ever been anything that weighed into your choices in selections?

Executive: You know, it's supposed to.

Together: [laughter]

Executive: My days at Target taught me that talent is talent. You can't judge somebody's skills, experience, and fit for a position simply based off of that diploma.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Executive: It's a data point. For me, if I have somebody that provides a better overall fit and maybe even better capability, probability for potential and all those types of things, the education is an important element but it's not critical in my viewpoint.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Executive: Therefore, I'll look at: What does the person do; what do they bring to the table. If the position requires a certain level of education, do they have that?
If I'm going to look at a traditional brick-and-mortar college setting versus a for-profit entity that might be an online driven thing, it's really not as critical in my opinion as it used to be, especially with the so-called war for talent and different industries are so highly competitive. I'm of the strong opinion that the more open minded you are with where you're attracting and engaging talent to, the better off you're going to be in the long run. Because you're not shutting off a potential talent piece. Times are changing. People don't have the same opportunities as others to go to a brick-and-mortar huge university with a division one football team, versus somebody that is happy that they put in the new vending machine.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Executive: So for me that's a huge thing. I continue to try to challenge our organization and any organization I've been in. If you hire for fit and you can develop a great culture with great leadership and all that, where someone got their education from is a whole lot less important for the majority of the positions that we recruit for.

Interviewer: I think your philosophy is outstanding.

Executive: [17:16] Outstanding!

Interviewer: Outstanding. I think that war for talent is a critical piece to that. Have those been conversations that you've had to have in the past? You said, "...as much as it used to be." So did it used to be an issue and now people are, "Hey, we just need talent." Is that how things have progressed do you think?

Executive: Yes. So as an example, I've been in my current role for a year and a half, new to the company and new to healthcare. One of the first things that I was told when I got here and when I was interviewing people to be recruiters on my team, was, "Oh, we saw that you're interviewing this person." Or, "Hey, we interviewed this person. Were you aware that they didn't have a bachelor's degree?" Yeah, I was aware that they didn't have a bachelor's degree. "Well, you can't hire them."

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Executive: Why is that? "Well, job description says they have to have a bachelor's degree." Oh, OK. Well, I'll change the job description then, and guess what, that's my candidate that I'm going to hire.

Interviewer: Right.

Executive: A year and a half later it's my number one recruiter.
Interviewer: Gotcha.

Executive: This is somebody that didn't even go to college. I've got people on my team that went to Notre Dame, St. Mary's, IU and Purdue.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Executive: Well, the number one recruiter is somebody who went to the school of hard knocks, you know? I hate to say it, but they understand and they know recruiting. In their previous positions elsewhere they worked with phenomenal people in phenomenal cultures that provided them the opportunity to grow and develop into a better recruiter than somebody that studied human resources at Purdue.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. [18:56][clicking noise] Definitely like you have a high reputation university team there, so I wonder if there’s ever some intimidation factor there? [laughs]

Executive: No, not really. That's the other reason why I chose that person. Because she was extremely comfortable: Hey, I didn't have those opportunities; I grew up in a household with a single mom; I had two older siblings; they got to go to college; by the time that it was my turn we were in debt; I couldn't afford it --

Interviewer: Right.

Executive: So I just said, "You know what, I'm gonna work."

Interviewer: Right.

Executive: "I'll work my butt off."

I think that's just as much credence...

That person actually has better business acumen than the individual that studied management at Purdue. Because that person was running a Burger King when they were twenty years old. They know what a "P and L" means, and labor costs and food costs and all those different types of things. OK, great, you studied HR in a book at Purdue for four years, or wherever.

I've always been very open to that. I wasn't initially in my career but when I got to Target they just blew me out of the water with how open minded they were with folks.

Interviewer: That's interesting that you changed your position over time on that. It's all in the area of growth for us, right? [laughs]
Executive: Absolutely, yeah.

Interviewer: One of the cool things about this type of research that's called phenomenology is that the coresearcher which is you, guides the conversation and my job is to follow it where it goes. This is an interesting segue into this education space in terms of how that plays into modern day recruiting.

Let me ask you just one more question, because I’m interested in this as well. Have you seen some challenges in the past in that traditional versus new-fandangled type of higher ed?

Maybe a modern example, too, is WGU with a competency-based education versus like a Purdue, and the for-profits versus the non-profits. Have you seen that change over time as well?

Executive: I think it's beginning to change slightly. I think it depends on who you deal with and all that type of stuff. I worked at [REDACTED – LARGE FORTUNE 500] previously and [REDACTED – LARGE FORTUNE 500] is going to be slow to change to that type of philosophy. They're going to want people from the Michigan States, the Notre Dames, the Cornells, the [21:50][phonetic: rose home] and all that type of stuff.

But I think that what I have seen is that organizations are at least having the conversation and needing to come to the point where they're making those types of decisions to say, "What's really the most important to us?" Filling these open positions and having a pipeline of talent available, or adhering to the days of, "Oh we really like that pedigreed individual."

A lot of it is cultural- and leadership-driven. What I see within healthcare is we are beginning to be more and more flexible on the positions that there is a gap in available talent.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm.

Executive: As an example, I still have some nursing leadership that do not want their nurses going and getting nurse practitioner degrees from online programs. I can adhere and agree to that in some regards, because a traditional nurse practitioner program that actually has a clinical component we've seen statistically the people that come out of those programs are better prepared to be a nurse practitioner than somebody that holistically went through the online program.

Interviewer: Right.

Executive: Part of that being, Betty Jo, is because when they're in their clinical rotations as part of the traditional programs they're being put in tough situations as a nurse
practitioner to make diagnoses and communicate effectively with the physician. So that what we're seeing is people that don't come from the traditional programs add about a six to nine month learning curve that the other individuals that went through a traditional clinical program already have.

**Interviewer:** Interesting. OK.

**Executive:** Healthcare may be the anomaly on that. I don't want to sound like I'm talking out of both sides of my mouth, but when it comes to patient care and quality outcomes, I'm not as pushy to our leadership as long as they can show me the data that says, here's 12 people that went through the traditional program; here's 12 people that went through a non-traditional program. 12 out of the 12 in the traditional program are already doing reimbursed-based diagnoses and support. I've got only five out of the 12 -- and these are actually real numbers -- that have passed the board examinations to start doing diagnoses-based analysis.

I see those types of things and think, OK the data clearly shows --

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Executive:** -- that those students aren't that. And so as an example, I've encouraged our nursing education team: You should probably reach out to these programs and let them know, "We know you're an online program, but can we partner with you to provide a clinical rotation because your students are a lot of our associates and employees." They're coming out of those programs spending a lot of money and they're not ready.

**Interviewer:** Right.

**Executive:** All they've done is passed assessments on line. So we are seeing a little bit of phenomenon there. But for a lot of other positions though, Betty Jo, we've actually... I've been proud of the organization's willingness to be a little bit more flexible and less old fashioned.

**Interviewer:** I think that's excellent to hear and I think it's admirable that you would put yourself out there, too, to help improve those programs that you've seen some challenges with their graduates from too. I think that's fantastic.

Good. So we probably we beat that dog to death. [laughs]

So let me move down to training which is the last pieces of each résumé. We've got Jerry who's got three trainings, and we've got John who's got three trainings that he called seminars. Did that weigh into your decision making at all do you think?
Executive: No. They really don't.

Interviewer: Is that in general? Do trainings not resonate with you? Or is it for this particular position you didn't think that those [computer dings] were terribly important?

Executive: Trainings that will resonate with me are the ones that -- and this may be personal preference -- the programs that I think are well known and well branded and also well delivered. So your Covey-type things and all that.

If I'm seeing just a title of a training and I don't know where it's from, well -- heck, what if it's the worst delivered customer service service training in the history of man?

Interviewer: [laughs]

Executive: I better not utilize that as my assessment piece and say, Oh this person went to this training. To me it really doesn't show a lot.

If I see it's for customer service manager position and I see that they've gone through Steven Covey's Four Disciplines of Execution or Great Teams, Great Leaders, I might hold a little more weight than to somebody that hasn't. It really doesn't have a huge impact on me.

Interviewer: OK. Makes sense.

As we went through that exercise and dug in a little bit was there anything else that came up for you? You thought, "You know what, I'd wanna circle back and say that something else helped make my decision." Is there anything else that you can think of as we went through that process?

Executive: Not really. Here's the thing though: Let's say the position was in a marketing position, I'd probably look at John Singer first because he did a better job format and laying out his résumé.

Interviewer: Ahh.

Executive: So even though I said Jerry was much more succinct and straight to the point and efficient in presentation -- Man, if he was a marketing guy, I'd be really disappointed in the way that his résumé presented himself.

Interviewer: Gotcha. Yeah, that makes sense.

Does formatting really weigh into your decisions generally, outside of marketing?
Executive: Yeah, I think it does. If it's formatted bad, or poorly, or difficult to read, it might have an impact on me. Depends on the position though.

Interviewer: ...and how many candidates and all that, right?

Executive: Then again, Jerry's wasn't bad, it's just short sweet and to the point, you know? I'm a customer service rep; here's what I've done; here's what I do. You know?

Interviewer: Yeah. [laughs]

Executive: The only other thing that stood out to me is that my wife grew up in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Interviewer: Oh, get outa here...

Executive: [laughs]

Interviewer: That's so random.

Executive: Yeah.

Interviewer: So those are probably not real addresses in Greenwich, just so you know. [laughs]

Executive: OK.

Interviewer: These are not real people. [laughs]

Executive: OK.

Interviewer: I designed these specifically for the research process.

The very last question I have for you is, after discussing the selections, are you still confident in your selection of Jerry over John?

Executive: If someone forced me to make a decision among the two without an interview or whatnot, yeah, I'd still stick with Jerry.

Interviewer: OK. Would you have called both of them for a screen, if I didn't make you choose?

Executive: Yes.

Interviewer: OK. That's helpful for me. That's kind of a research verification of mine to see how similar the résumés were so I appreciate your answer there.
Cool. So we got through that really quickly, so thank you.

Let me just quickly tell you about the next steps and I'll get you out of here. Again, I appreciate your time.

What I'll do from here is I'll send this out to transcription. Just prior to sending that out I'll strip your name off of it and I'll assign you a participant number. So I'm the only person who knows your identity anyway, but now that I'm sending it out to a third party, I'm just going to strip your name from that and give you a number. I'll get that transcript sent back. It's word for word. I always warn people that it is a verbatim transcript that I'll get back. I won't edit it. I'll send it back out to you, just to have you take a look over it and make sure it's an accurate representation of what you're trying to convey.

Sometimes people read it and they say, "You know what, that's not exactly what what I meant." Or, "Something else occurred to me after I read this." That would be a great time for you to add those thoughts. So that's the first step after this. That should be pretty brief.

Then what I do is I take all of the transcripts and I code them and look for commonalities in the phenomenon across the fifteen people that I'm interviewing, and try to come up with a collective experience, if you will. I'll turn that into a narrative.

At the very end of that process I'll add my experiences to it. I'll send that back out to you guys as a research check called "member checking" where I'll ask you to look through that and give me your thoughts on how that represents an overall picture of your experiences.

Executive: OK.

Interviewer: At the very end, there's a debrief point where I'll then take that narrative and I will situate it in the current research. So you'll see how the research problem gets stated.

Phenomenology is a backward design. The research I'm doing with you takes me into the actual answer to the problem, as opposed to trying to prove the problem.

Does that make sense?

Executive: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: I may find that you provided an answer, but I may also find that there is no answer. And that's just as much of an answer as nothing, right?
So that will be the debrief at the end. Just three short steps from here. My goal -- personal time aside -- is to get that all done by the end of November. So I'll keep in touch. I'll probably get your transcription back in about a week. So I'll just email that to you and ask you for your thoughts.

How does that sound?

Executive: Sounds good.

Interviewer: Awesome. Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it.

Executive: OK, sounds good. Thank you so much, take care.

Interviewer: Take care.

Executive: Alright.

Interviewer: Bye.
JON016 Interview Transcript

JON016: Okay.

Betty Jo: Let me push that – okay, so we’re being recorded. Let me start off with once again saying thank you. I truly appreciate your time, I know how busy you are. Did you have any questions about the study, about consent, or anything like that that we can get out of the way before we kind of dig in here today?

JON016: No, I’m good.

Betty Jo: Good, excellent. Okay. Here’s what we’re trying to do today JON016. What I’d like for you to do is kind of just walk me through, in your own words, why you chose Jerry over John. I know I kind of forced you to choose, so I understand it’s a slightly artificial exercise in that regard.

I’m just interested in, you know, how you go about the screening process. What are the things that you thought were important in Jerry’s résumé? Certainly feel free to give it texture in terms of using how – your previous experiences as you went about that process as well.

We’ll kind of start off with you kind of telling me what you did. Then I’ll probably pop in and just ask some clarifying questions and maybe kind of go through the résumés side by side and just kind of ask you to be more specific in certain areas of the résumé as well, if that’s okay with you.

JON016: Sure.

Betty Jo: Excellent.

JON016: Sure. The first thing that I did was review the job description so that I could understand what the job was and then the requirements of that job, even though they weren’t really listed on the job description.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: Which made it a little difficult that – I mean, just the education and experience was pretty vague, so you’re kind of working with limited requirements, which is not unusual.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: I first looked at both the résumés and I thought, well gosh, they’re both really good. They both certainly qualify.
Betty Jo:  Okay.

JON016: We would probably – my answer to the first question was would we interview both of them? The answer I put was yes, that I would definitely want to interview both of them. Then when I was forced to choose one based on the résumé only, I looked back at the job description again and said, okay there’s got to be something that could identify one as a better fit than the other.

The thing that I picked up on the résumé was – I’m sorry, in the job description, was that it was more than simply talking to customers and assuring that we’re giving good service.

Betty Jo:  Right.

JON016:  John’s résumé said – yeah, he says he – his experience, which was pretty detailed and helpful, was that he responded to telephone inquiries, providing service, inquiring about availability of products, but it never really said he entered orders.

He listened to caller needs and made sure you had a positive customer experience, you know, looked up information, checked on availability, resolved complaints, and did all that very, very well. In his job prior to that, again, he was ensuring customers were satisfied. He had to sell like, on the floor. It was more of a retail job.

Betty Jo:  Right.

JON016:  It looked like, than a customer service job. Then when I looked at Mr. Smith, again, same years of experience, same level of education, some nice little extra trainings, as Mr. Singer, but Mr. Smith actually entered orders. That was really my differentiator there, was that his experience showed that not only did he take calls and handle them, but he entered data for orders, which was important in this – in our job.

Betty Jo:  Okay.

JON016:  That was my thought process.

Betty Jo:  Okay. What I heard you say, and let me just make sure I’m sort of looking at this correctly is that John sort of hinted around as to what he did, whereas maybe Jerry just more plainly demonstrated that he had performed the minimum requirements of the job description?

JON016:  Yeah, I don’t even know if Jerry – John hinted. He just never talked about entering orders.
Betty Jo: [laughter]

JON016: He talked about essentially answering questions and being nice and giving good service and listening and you know, maybe he did, but he didn’t tell me that he did.

Betty Jo: Got you. Okay, good. Anything else about that decision sort of globally?

JON016: No, I mean, I think they were both strong, so it would be hard to pick on a résumé in this case. The only thing that bothered me about Jerry’s résumé was there’s a tiny little typo, but –

Betty Jo: Gosh, was there? Where was it?

JON016: [laughter] Sorry. In his experience, his job with Excelon, we have a comma after New Jersey and Inspirion, but not after Excelon.

Betty Jo: Oh, no!

JON016: Sorry, sorry.

Betty Jo: No, that’s – I mean, thank you. Yeah, I never – you’re the first person who picked that up.

JON016: Oh well and you know I thought, well maybe that was on purpose, so you know, that he had a little error but maybe, if it wasn’t on purpose then you know, that’s an interesting twist, isn’t it?

Betty Jo: It is.

JON016: Yeah.

Betty Jo: Yeah, that’s a –

JON016: That was – I mean, you know, I don’t look for spelling errors and I don’t – you know, punctuation errors, and I don’t hold that against people generally. If I see them, I kind of, like in this case, I circled it, just because it stood out to me.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: It’s a data point, you know. If somebody is maybe not as detailed as we’d like, but in today’s world of word processing, sometimes those don’t get caught, you know. There are interviewers that would hold that against somebody.
Betty Jo: Yeah, you’re absolutely right. Yes, gosh. Shame on me for missing that. [laughter]

JON016: No, that’s okay. [laughter] Sorry, these aren’t HR people.

Betty Jo: Yes, well but you know, I think it speaks to your attention to detail, which I – is clearly an important skill set [laughter] in someone that’s sort of looking at mass amounts of data, you know, and trying to make good decisions. You know, you kind of have to look at these with a keen eye, I guess is the best way to describe that, right?

JON016: Oh yeah, oh yeah, and candidates should as well.

Betty Jo: Oh, positively, yes. You’re right. If Jerry was a real person, shame on him, but he is not.

JON016: [laughter]

Betty Jo: [laughter]

JON016: Right.

Betty Jo: You know, so as I look at them, you’re right. They’re purposefully similar and that is a research design, you know, so that’s intentional for them to be sort of on a level playing field. Certainly there are nuances between the résumés which you know, you probably picked up on.

Let’s kind of look at – let’s start at the top and if we look at that, you know, career summary or career objective, whatever everyone’s calling it these days. Was there anything about Jerry’s that stood out positively or negatively over John’s in that top section? Talk to me a little bit about that.

JON016: Isn’t that funny? [laughter] I thought that, you know, I probably – let me just, before I say this, I probably liked the layout of John’s better, personally. He’s got some nice adjectives here, dynamic customer service professional, and he’s excelling in listening.

Those are great words. I mean, Jerry’s got a little bit of that, but it seemed a little more straightforward, a little more factual. I tend – I will tell you, as an interviewer, that’s not my first eye. My first eye is on the qualifications, period.

Betty Jo: Okay.

JON016: If I read those sentences, it’s because I’ve become interested in you somewhere else.
Betty Jo: Interesting.

JON016: If that makes sense.

Betty Jo: Yeah, it does. That top portion of the résumé is a little less important to you than their actual experience, is that what you’re saying?

JON016: Usually. Now Jerry stood out, he made it real easy for me and told me he had five years experience.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: He backs that up in his body, but I had to work a little harder to figure out John’s. Not that hard, I can add, but –

Betty Jo: [laughter]

JON016: You know, you don’t work hard when – you don’t want to work hard to figure someone out on a résumé at first glance. You want to – you really only have a few seconds to get the interviewer’s attention, so you want to make it kind of easy on them, I think, and then verify. If he had four years, I would have said, boy that was not, you know, honest.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: He helped me there a little bit. I mean, I guess I just don’t – I liked John’s layout a little better, to be honest, but I go straight for the qualifications.

Betty Jo: Okay, good. Good, that’s helpful. When we do look at that experience section, they have similar sets of experience in terms of role and tenure. Couple of differences between them, you know, so John kind of gave you a brief description of the companies that he had worked at, whereas Jerry kind of left that alone. Was that important to you at all? Is that something that you found helpful?

JON016: Yeah, I would have liked to have known what kind of company Inspirion and Excelon were, but I don’t know what kind of company I’m hiring for either.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: Did it matter in this case, if that makes sense.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: I was curious, but I didn’t have a – like in real life, I would know, right, the industry, but I didn’t know it. I had to just go with the basics.
Betty Jo: Yeah, and you’re right. Purposefully sort of left some of those details vague, but you’re right, it may not matter in this case, since you weren’t sure what the actual vertical was that you were recruiting for.

JON016: I also – oh, I’m sorry.

Betty Jo: No, go ahead.

JON016: I think because – like I don’t even know what these other two companies, but because, I forget their names now, because John told me that it was this carpet showroom or flooring showroom, that didn’t seem as valuable, those two years or whatever didn’t seem as valuable in customers service to me as the on the phone, taking orders, kind of role. It’s a different kind of customer service.

Betty Jo: You know, you’re right. It absolutely is, and you know, let’s look at that, how Jerry sort of maybe more succinctly stated his job duties, whereas John kind of provided some more descriptors, kind of – I think we’re very clear that you kind of liked Jerry’s descriptions a little bit better, but give me some more flavor around looking at their experiences side by side.

JON016: Well again, I felt like [ding] I felt like, which one, Jerry’s was just more straightforward and just told me what he did, didn’t qualify a lot of the things, you know. Looking for an example here. I mean, I guess for me the straightforwardness is easier to get to, I don’t know. It was hard.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

JON016: It was hard to differentiate.

Betty Jo: Yeah, and it sometimes – in some positions, being more succinct is a good thing. Sometimes that’s not perfect either.

JON016: Yeah, right. Right.

Betty Jo: In this case, it seems like that – the more succinct way that Jerry wrote appealed to you over how John characterized his experience. Is that correct?

JON016: Yeah, probably.

Betty Jo: Okay. How about achievements versus job duties? You know, so John has a quick mention here at the end of his experience about increasing sales by 12%. Do you like to see those kind of accomplishment statements? Do you they not matter to you? Give me some flavor around that, JON016.
JON016: Well, I think it’s a great – I think it’s good to see those things in a – on a résumé, and it certainly provides for a great follow-up question in an interview, to understand that more.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

JON016: If I was interviewing him, I would probably say, tell me more about the sales increase for the quarter, and tell me what that meant. Like 12%, does it mean anything unless you understand the revenue that is the starting and ending, you know what I mean?

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: The starting point. You know, if they did a hundred dollars last quarter, 12% doesn’t really impress me, but if you increased it – you know, it’s all relative, right?

Betty Jo: Right, and if their budget [15:11 phonetic] was 20 – [crosstalk]

JON016: It has to be –

Betty Jo: – and they only increased by 12, then that’s certainly less impressive as – [laughter] right?

JON016: Yeah. Yeah, and like only one quarter? You worked there two years, so is that just one quarter or was that – and he also says he contributed to it, so what was his part, what was his role in that increase, would be my question.

Betty Jo: It gave you a conversation starter, but didn’t necessarily – [crosstalk]

JON016: Yeah.

Betty Jo: – sway you one way or another, is that –

JON016: Yeah, because there’s no context here, so I can’t evaluate whether that’s a good thing or not a good thing, right?

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: There’s no context.

Betty Jo: Right, okay. That makes perfect sense to me. Anything else about the experience section that jumped out at you at all?

JON016: Not really.
Betty Jo: Okay, there doesn’t have to be.

JON016: Not really.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Just want to ask.

JON016: I don’t know.

Betty Jo: There’s nothing else, no other “gotchas” in there. When we look to the education section, the core differences between these two candidates, you know, they both have their associate’s degree, both graduated in the same month and year.

The only difference between them is Southern New Hampshire is more traditional non-profit institution, versus Kaplan College, which is one of the more popular for-profit institutions. Talk to me a little bit about this section, you know, would the type of institution weigh in your decision? Do you think it did? What are your thoughts there?

JON016: I mean, I kind of noticed that, but it didn’t – I’m not sure we even need – well, it does say a degree, doesn’t it?

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: Minimum of associate’s. If they were right out of school, that might have mattered, but because they had both – both had experience, it wasn’t that big a concern for me.

Betty Jo: Okay. Interesting, so you sort of qualified that, so if they were right out of college, then how would that speak to you?

JON016: Yeah, I might have looked at that and I don’t know that – I think if I would have made a decision on that without interviewing them, that would have probably been potentially biased, so that would – I don’t know that I would make a decision on that, because I don’t know that I know enough about either school to make a comment. Having worked for a – I recently worked for a for-profit education institute, then I think I may have more value than I used to. That may have been, you know, a non-issue.

Betty Jo: Yeah, so let me make sure I understand. Having worked at a for-profit institution would have made you feel more affinity towards a for-profit or the opposite? I’m just curious what you meant.

JON016: No, probably towards it. Favorable.
Betty Jo: Okay, and that’s something that changed because you worked there, do you think?

JON016: Maybe. I don’t know. Again, I didn’t put a lot of weight in it, because all I really looked for was associate’s, but I mean maybe if I hadn’t had the experience with an institution that was for-profit, I may have thought it was different. I don’t know.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

JON016: That’s a tough one. I don’t have a control group on that one.

Betty Jo: [laughter]

JON016: You know, but it didn’t bother me that it was Kaplan. Kaplan’s a pretty business oriented school, from what I – my understanding, so you know, that didn’t bother me.

Betty Jo: Okay, good, good. Then the very last section of the résumé is the training versus sort of seminars and you know, did these – did this section sort of weigh in your decision at all?

JON016: They both had some. Again, I probably, you know – I think from just a English standpoint, you know, Jerry’s – I would have liked – I liked the way that John laid it out better, with bolding it and using capitals all the way across and Jerry didn’t do that.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: I also liked that Jerry’s was on one page and John I had to turn the page over, you know. I had to get another page.

Betty Jo: Yeah, good point. Yeah, and sort of talk to me about that, you know, formatting?

JON016: Well –

Betty Jo: The appearance.

JON016: Yeah, I – like I said, I liked the format on John’s, but I think there – I’m a fan of, unless you can fill up two pages, keep it to one, or mostly fill up two pages, keep it to one. For the few lines that he had on the second page, I would have tried to find that – those lines in the spacing in the first page.

Betty Jo: It just didn’t seem worth it to you, right? [laughter]

JON016: Yeah, it’s like okay, well that’s, you know – but I will say on Jerry’s, I felt a little like anti-climactic, is that it? You know, there’s not good closure on that one.
Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: Like if I was coaching him on his résumé, I might have said, hey let’s work on this spacing a little bit, you got some room, let’s not leave them like dangling here. Maybe just put, you know, I don’t know, maybe some computer skills, or even just say “References available upon request” even though that doesn’t mean anything. It closes it.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: You know what I mean?

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: I don’t know, that may be old-fashioned, but – or, what John did, he did it visually with a line. He closed it, do you know what I mean? I think you didn’t feel as like, okay, is there anything else?

Betty Jo: Got you.

JON016: It was very clear that that was it. On Jerry’s I was looking for a little more. Is that all you got?

Betty Jo: [laughter] What else do you got for me?


Betty Jo: Yeah, well and too, you know, now that we’ve kind of gotten through each résumé, and I’ve kind of tried to dig in a little bit on your decisions, are you still confident that Jerry would be your preferred candidate if you had to choose?

JON016: Well, I’m just going back to that whole, you know, putting in orders thing, entering data for orders.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: It’s very, very different to enter data than just be nice to someone and look up data –

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: – and talk on the phone. For me, because that’s what they’d be doing in this job, that felt a little more detailed and a little more relevant to this – whatever this job is.
Betty Jo: Okay. Is there anything else about the selection process that you’d want me to know? Anything that we didn’t discuss up to this point that you think helped you make your decision?

JON016: No. Like I said, it would have been nice to know the company’s business that the job was for.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: Just – because you would know that, right?

Betty Jo: Yes. [laughter]

JON016: If it’s a carpet – if it was a carpet, you know, or flooring company, that might have been – or an e-commerce company that John worked for, that might have been important, you know?

Betty Jo: Right, right.

JON016: I don’t know that – then the flip side to that is, so if the job was an e-commerce company, then I probably would have picked John because I don’t even know what Jerry’s experience is.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: What industry it is, you know what I mean? I think it is good – I like knowing the industry that they’ve worked in. I liked that about John, but had I known what I was hiring for, I might have chose differently then.

Betty Jo: Right, yeah, even more so than if you had the context to fit it in, right.

JON016: Exactly.

Betty Jo: Okay, good, good.

JON016: Oh, and here’s another thing. Here’s another thing. When we go back to this whole entering data thing, one of the stated education and experiences on the job description was computer experience.

Betty Jo: Right.

JON016: When you enter data, that – I mean, I assumed it was a computer, and that just seemed a little more complicated than just accessing – looking stuff up.

Betty Jo: Right.
Which is what John said, so that was my – that was part of the whole order-taking, computer skills, et cetera.

Excellent, okay. Great.

It really boiled down to that. At the end of the day, that’s all it was.

Yeah, and what I like about it is it’s very objective and definitive too, right? In terms of, you know, how you made that choice. That’s really helpful for me to understand. That’s great. Okay, awesome. That’s the breadth of what I was trying to sort of accomplish today. Let me tell you about the next few steps, just so you understand where we’re going from here.

What I’ll do at the end of this is I’m going to be shipping this file out to transcription. Just prior to sending it off to them, I’ll strip your name off of it and give you your – give that name to the document that’s your participant code, so that I’m still the only person who knows your identity.

Okay.

You know, I mean who knows – people sometimes are very worried about that. I want to make sure that there isn’t any way –

Sure.

– for anyone to trace any individual comments back to an individual person. I’ll get that transcription back and I’ll ship that off to you so that you can just confirm that this is, you know, an accurate representation of what we talked about. Of course, if there’s anything else that occurred to you about your selection process, it would be great if you could send it along then as well. That would be the next step. I should have your transcription back in about seven business days, so I’ll – you’ll hear from me in about a week on that.

Okay.

Then what I do from there is I take all the interview transcriptions and I try to come up with a collective phenomena across the fifteen people that are in my study. Then I will, you know, also send that off to you to get your thoughts and just – you know, it may be that you’re just like, oh that’s kind of interesting, let’s move on, right?

There may be something in that collective experience that really sort of says to you, wow, this is – there’s an implication in our field based on these findings, right?
JON016: Yeah.

Betty Jo: I’ll just ask if you have anything to add in terms of where I might go from there. The third step in the process is for me just to situate what I’ve learned into the current body of research. I take my study and I stick it in the right place in terms of, with the other research that exists in this area. That’s called the JON016rief, and then I would send you how this study fits in with all the rest of the studies in this sort of screening process phenomena, you know, for lack of better words. It’ll be about three more touch points, you know, along the way from here. Minimal effort on your part, you know, this is probably the longest time that we’ll spend throughout the process. Yeah, you should hear from me in about a week on that next step. Then I’ll get to coding the data over Thanksgiving break after that.

JON016: Okay.

Betty Jo: Sound good?

JON016: You’re looking – yeah, that sounds great.

Betty Jo: I’m sorry, you were just getting ready to say something, JON016?

JON016: No, are you looking for essentially how interviewers process selection, is that it mainly?

Betty Jo: Essentially I’m trying to capture the screening process, right.

JON016: Yeah.

Betty Jo: What we’ve just [27:34 phonetic] walked through, is what were the things about this résumé versus this résumé that weighed in your decision.

JON016: Okay.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

JON016: Okay.

Betty Jo: Exactly what we did just there.

JON016: Yeah, so that’ll be interesting to see how others viewed it.

Betty Jo: Yeah, I can’t wait to put all the results together. You know, I’ve purposefully not gone through the transcripts after the interviews, waiting so that I have them all in
one place and can kind of spend an entire day soaking it up and spending the time
to put that all together. Yeah, it’ll be really interesting to see, you know, the
commonalities and/or the individual differences between the interviews as well.

**JON016:** Sure, sure.

**Betty Jo:** Any questions for me, JON016?

**JON016:** I don’t have any, no.

**Betty Jo:** Wonderful. Well this has been lovely, it’s great to catch up. I truly appreciate
your time. Like I said, you’ll hear from me in about a week.

**JON016:** Okay, that sounds good, Betty Jo. Thank you.

**Betty Jo:** Thank you. Enjoy the rest of your afternoon. Talk to you soon.

**JON016:** You too, bye.

**Betty Jo:** Okay, bye.
Interviewer: …While you’re getting logged in, let me also ask you this, is it OK for me to be recording this call?

Respondent: Oh, yes, you’re fine.

Interviewer: And that’s for purposes of sending it out to transcription. Did you have any questions about the research process, about the consent or anything else I can get out of the way before we kind of dig in here?

Respondent: No, I’m familiar with all the protocols.

Interviewer: I see that you’ve logged in, so I’m going to start sharing my screen here.

Respondent: Oh, perfect.

Interviewer: Let me know when you can see that.

Respondent: I can, I’m just trying to maximize it here. No. OK. I see Jerry Smith and John Singer.

Interviewer: Excellent. OK, let me get rid of this, get this guy out of the way. All right, so this – the résumé on the left of my screen, Jerry Smith, is the candidate that, when I sort of asked you, or sort of forced you to choose, this the one you chose over John Singer.

And so in this phase of the research, what I’m interested in is you just taking me through why you chose Jerry over John, so you can just give me the context of how you went about – [computer chime sound] – oops – gosh, that’s so loud. How you went about the process of selecting Jerry over John, what were you thinking about his résumé versus John’s, that kind of thing. And I may ask you some clarifying questions, but generally, I’m going to sit back and take in what you’ve had to say, and maybe dig into anything that is really interesting but otherwise, I’m going to let you talk most of the time.

Respondent: OK. The only thing I’m confused about is I’m not sure which résumé I read first, even when I did this, and I did this a few weeks ago, so my recall of this isn’t quite as fresh. I would say, when I read the job description, to me, it seems like it would be a person, and I’m going off a month-ago memory, that if he had the right personality traits, could potentially go really strong customer service orientation, if they were, intelligent enough to pick up on things fairly quickly. You could hire somebody in maybe with not as much experience, and they would, they could ramp up and be successful in this role fairly easily.
The – what I was thinking between Jerry and John, my concern was that they might be getting both getting closer to that point of being ready for a managerial position, so it looks like they both have expressed competence for this role, so that really wasn’t my concern, it was more of the point of how long are they going to be happy in this role, realistically. And I wouldn’t want to put somebody, or slot somebody in there for six months, and then they’re already applying for another job. So that’s really just the background behind how I was looking at both of their résumés, and being forced to make a decision, I thought maybe John was a little bit more advanced in that sense, of would want to be promoted sooner than later.

**Interviewer:** Interesting. OK. And so let me ask you about that. So if you, obviously, all you have is their résumé, so what was it about John’s résumé that made you think that he was maybe on a different track than Jerry?

**Respondent:** I think I’m going to have to – it doesn’t really help me seeing these on your site, I think I need to pull them up myself, because I can only really see the top part of both of them.

**Interviewer:** I can pull down, if you want, but yes, that’s probably not easy to see them holistically on the screen. Right. You can probably pull them – you can pull them right from the meeting request. I threw them in there for you as well.

**Respondent:** And then I have, I’m going to leave the meeting because I can’t do both.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** There we go. Did you ask me about John first?

**Interviewer:** Well, I mean, I guess what I was trying to is – you said that John sort of appeared to be a little more along the lines of ready for entry-level management or middle-management, whereas Jerry seemed a little more rooted in being in a customer service rep position. So I was wondering what was it about John’s résumé that made you think that he was ready to move forward as opposed to Jerry?

**Respondent:** OK, let me open up John’s. I would say it’s probably that he has five years of experience, so that stands out to me. That he’s done customer service in a few different places, too, so he’s had a little bit of diversity in that sense. I think those are the key things.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**Respondent:** Part of what I’m wrestling with is that I thought maybe even both of them were sort of on that cusp of maybe even being closer to wanting to be a
manager, so it wasn’t, for me, it wasn’t – they seemed similar and it wasn’t that I extremely thought that John was better, I’m sorry, that Jerry was better, but it seemed really close.

**Interviewer:** So let me ask you this. Regardless of job description, and so let’s say, for theoretical purposes that this was sort of a customer service supervisor or coordinator or something to that effect, and you had Jerry and John side by side. If I look at the top of the résumés, where the career objective or whatever people call these, career summaries, whatever they are these days, is there anything about Jerry’s that stood out from John’s? Or vice versa? How did you feel about those sections of their résumés? What stood out at you?

**Respondent:** [Cough] Excuse me. They’re both male. No, actually, their résumés seemed very similar to me, so – and again, I did this over a month ago, so I can’t remember what my thought process was beyond just being concerned with one being closer to maybe wanting a manager role more than the other. I’m re-looking at them now, I don’t – I don’t know. Let me see. Maybe Jerry’s is a little bit more polished. But they both, if I just look at the top, they both seem really similar to me.

**Interviewer:** Yes, and that was intentional. There are certain nuances between them, so when I look at Jerry, he led with “I’ve got five years experience,” in fact, he repeats it twice, to maybe draw your attention to that. Whereas John kind of took the approach where he sort of developed a tag line for himself, if you will, so was there anything about those sections where you thought yes, this is a better candidate versus the other, or did you look at them on a level playing field, on that particular section?

**Respondent:** I guess the five years does stand out, because I like looking at metrics. S, honestly, the – I probably should give you some background. I spent 10 years assessing and interviewing people for a living, so I’ve seen a million résumés, and at this point in my career, it just seems like fluff, in a way. So it’s like I don’t care if John puts that he’s building loyal relationships, I don’t care that Jerry thinks he’s polished. To me, it’s just as much data as possible, and I assess more during the interview. So it’s probably I’m the worst person to do this, in a way, because I just don’t put a lot of faith in résumés themselves.

**Interviewer:** I don’t think that’s inconsistent from what I’ve heard in other interviews, so I think you’re definitely in a good group, from that position. What I’m curious about, though, is certainly you’re not going to interview every résumé that comes your way, so what are the things that are signals, might be a better way to characterize it. Are there signals that you get from either one of these résumés that would put them in the A pile versus the B pile? Does that help with context?
Respondent: Yes. So I would put them both in the A pile, with a question mark how ambitious are they? And then I would have them take an assessment, and I would look at that and see if they’re high off the charts ambition scores, and that would almost downgrade them a little bit, if I only want to put them in a certain role, in this role and keep them there. That’s really how my thought process would be. To me, they would right now both go in the same pile.

Interviewer: And that is also consistent, so just to keep affirming where you’re coming from. Obviously, I artificially made you guys choose, but most people said they would bring in both people for a screen, and that was also intentional, from a research design perspective, is to reduce the differences between the résumés, to some very finite points, to kind of assess what are those signals that people look at. For example, as it was highlighted that some of the core differences between their career summaries, if I go down to experience, a couple of things there. So John, the guy that you showed a little less preference for, for this position, he gave you some context about the kinds of companies that he had worked for. Is that helpful or is that a non-issue for you?

Respondent: I remember thinking it was helpful, actually, that’s what I did, remember that, in terms of are they work – is the customer service in a call center versus is it customer service in more of a face to face situation? So I do remember thinking that, but – so I looked at that, but then I thought, well, it doesn’t really give one of them an advantage. It would maybe be a deterrent if – because my understanding, it’s the – what does the job description say?

Interviewer: It doesn’t specify industry.

Respondent: OK, does it say context? Sorry, I have the smallest laptop on earth because I travel and it’s light, but it’s like –

Interviewer: It does say call center, but it doesn’t specify the specific type of business that it’s situated in.

Respondent: I’m sorry, did you say it is call center?

Interviewer: It is, yes.

Respondent: So what would have been, what would have stood, what I looked for is just to make sure that they both had call center experience, and then, to me, it didn’t matter if one of them had additional customer service experience in a different context. It would have been more like if John only did floor room customer service, or face to face, then that would be not a concern but a question mark for me. While it’s a whole different beast when you are in a call center, so it’s very much, it’s very different, I think, with somebody face to face. And if he’s highly extroverted and if he feeds off that type of energy, then a call center
might be too limiting for him. So that would have been something that I would have been concerned about, but he does also have call center experience, so then it became a non-issue.

**Interviewer:** That’s helpful. And when you talked earlier about liking to see metrics on a résumé, can you talk to me a little bit about job duties versus accomplishments on a résumé? Do you want to see accomplishments, does it sort of not matter, because you’re really going to send them through a battery of assessments, where do you fall in that spectrum?

**Respondent:** Where I would be is if they’ve had a job title of customer service representative, I like to see what they say what the job entailed. To me, it’s probably, customer service representative, it doesn’t seem like a very diverse job. Let me say that. So if they specify exactly what their roles, tasks, or responsibilities were, that’s fine. I would take that at face value. It doesn’t tell me anything about the quality of the work that they did, though.

So again, anybody can write a laundry list of things that they worked on or projects they were involved with, or what their roles and responsibilities were. That tells me nothing about whether they were good at it or not. So at least they’re putting down the right thing here. It’s not a résumé for a customer service job and the only thing on it is that I helped out at my dad’s bank by filing folders. So it is, I’ve had customer service representative jobs. Even if it was somebody in the service industries, like a waiter or a waitress, I would say well, those are transferable too. So the same type of personality you would need to be a good server, you could translate that over to this type of role, too. So that’s all kind of big picture, what I look at.

To answer your question, the roles, tasks and responsibilities, that’s fine. To me, it’s like, OK, yes, it looks like you know what the role of a customer service rep is. What I am more interested in, and some of the metrics come in, are what did you do with that? What did you accomplish? What’s the sell, what’s the lie? Again, people can lie on their résumés, and make up anything, but to me, even having the initiative to put metrics on a résumé, to show that metrics matter, it is, that’s sort of like, a first sort of judgement piece for me.

**Interviewer:** Excellent. Good. So that makes perfect sense. And I think one of the other things that is slightly different between Jerry and John’s résumé is that Jerry was much more succinct with his wording, whereas John was sort of – maybe flowery is probably a good way to describe it. He used a lot of action verbs. So did the succinctness of Jerry’s résumé appeal to you over the verbose nature of John’s, or did you just kind of say they’re experience is what it is, and moving on?

**Respondent:** Yes, I wouldn’t – it’s almost like I gave John a point for trying, but it does seem a little overdone for a customer service representative role.
Interviewer: So then when I scroll down to education, they both meet the requirement outlined in the job description, so they have their associates, same time, same month. One went to Kaplan College, which is a for-profit, and one went to Southern New Hampshire, which is a non-profit, more traditional college. How did that weight into your decision and/or how does that weight into your decision generally? Do you take that into account?

Respondent: I’m not familiar with either of these universities.

Interviewer: OK. So Kaplan is, I think it’s the third largest for-profit college system in the United States, and so this is certainly a trade kind of focused degree. And then Southern New Hampshire is a traditional university. I guess corollary in Indiana, I can’t give you one in Michigan because it’s not as familiar, but the corollary for Southern New Hampshire in Indiana is probably IUPUI. Does that help?

Respondent: I don’t know what that is.

Interviewer: Indiana University. So we’ve got a system of Indiana Universities here, IUPUI is the one that is sort of partnered with Purdue. So Southern New Hampshire is a traditional sort of four year university. But so – traditional versus a non-traditional is probably the best way to describe them, so has that ever played into your decision? The University of Phoenix versus Purdue kind of conversations?

Respondent: It, I probably am more biased about – to me, I looked at associates, associates, I didn’t even look at where they went to University. To me, it’s sort of less predictive. Or I should say, which college they have gone to. I think it’s also for the job, so it’s almost like where they went to college or where they went to university, 80% of the time is not a factor. It’s sort of the extremes that become a factor. So if you graduated from Harvard Law School, and you’re applying for this job, I’d wonder what’s wrong with you. Or, I do have some biases against the online institutions, but I feel ashamed saying that.

I feel like I shouldn’t have that bias, so I would say it’s – so you got your law degree from online, maybe Phoenix or something, I don’t know if I want you running my corporate legal department. So maybe that’s – it’s sort of down the extreme sides that I would think of this. For this role, neither one of those stood out to me at all.

Interviewer: I hear what you’re saying. I think for entry-level versus senior management or executive management, I think sometimes pedigree, for lack of better words, kind of takes on a different import. Is that what I’m hearing you say?
Respondent: I think so. Actually, I’m probably less of a university snob than what I’ve heard from other people. Like I know there’s some consulting firms that only hire out of Harvard. I don’t look at it like that. What I err on more is do you know your stuff, can you learn on the job? Can you learn quickly on the job, can you be a team player? That type of stuff. And, is this role a good fit for you? Are you going to be happy in it? And that’s where, that was the only signal that was coming out between these two résumés, or not even between the two, but just out of both of them. How long are they going to be happy in his role, because they’re going to want to start managing other people in this role.

Interviewer: I think that makes perfect sense, and I think, again, just to affirm what you’re saying, I am consistently hearing that we’re more focused on fit and abilities, now more than ever. There’s a bit of a talent shortage depending on what industry you’re really focused on. It was interesting, I was just going to ask you a clarifying question. So I’m not sure if University of Phoenix has a law degree, but if they did, and you had to – let’s say you were hiring general counsel, which would be a huge job at [REDACTED] – LARGE FORTUN 500, obviously, but would, University of Phoenix versus Harvard Law, or even just maybe, a state-based law institution, would that online/for-profit, which is really what University of Phoenix is, would that sort of sway you negatively? Just curious. Have you had experience there that said this is not the right thing for you to do?

Respondent: So this is why I feel ashamed saying this, and I hope I’m not being insensitive to you or anybody on this project. I think it’s because I spent six and a half years working on my PhD in brick and mortar, and really, every day interacting with my professors and every day being challenged and every day having literally my life for six and a half years. So it’s, the quality and the richness, it wasn’t just what papers we read or the books, but it really was the quality of time that was spent together. And then even going out to dinner after a class, for three hours, we’re all like debating the merits of different statistical models. So I think that’s where I would say there’s such a richness that comes out of that type of experience, where, aside from the congenial type of aspect of it, but really it’s almost – the critical thinking that comes out of having those conversations, I think, is hard to mimic in a more remote program.

Interviewer: I understand, and now I understand why you said you were so familiar with the protocols. That makes perfect sense.

Respondent: Yes, I’ve done lots of research in my day.

Interviewer: And it was certainly a consideration for me as I was sort of selecting a program, too, what will look good on my résumé, and so obviously there are a lot of options. And I’ve used this example in these interviews before. I went to
RPI, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and you probably, I suspect, do you recruit in the engineering space or in a different space at GM?

**Respondent:** Oh, we absolutely have a presence in recruiting in the engineering space, it’s one of our top areas.

**Interviewer:** I didn’t know if you specifically worked in that, but so RPI is the fourth largest engineering school in the US, and the first, I think it was actually the first engineering school in the US, or maybe. Something like that. So sometimes, I’ll be applying for a job, and I’ll run into an old engineer guy that says – that will say something like “Well, if you went to RPI, you’re fine by me.” And it always surprises me, I never really expect it, especially when you’re interviewing so far away from New York, which is where RPI is, I always get startled by it. That has been sort of a phenomenon periodically, that I’ve run across, so I was just interested to hear what you had –

**Respondent:** And then on the other side of it, so I went to school, I graduated from Wayne State University in Detroit, which is a Tier 1 research school, in terms of its graduate programs, but it’s just kind of like, well, you didn’t go to U of M. But the thing is, U of M didn’t have an industrial organizational psychology program. Wayne State did, and it was one of the best programs in the nation, when I went. But when people just say “Oh, Wayne State University,” it’s like, I have that other side, where it’s like my university doesn’t necessarily stand out, but the program I was in was one of the top programs. But it’s not, people aren’t impressed that I went to Wayne State. [LAUGHTER] But I never let it hold me back, though, either. I’m just like “Whatever. It’s the smartest decision I ever made. I’ve got the best education in the world, and very few student loans to show for it.”

**Interviewer:** And moving on, right?

**Respondent:** Moving on. Yes. Right.

**Interviewer:** Excellent. The very last thing on the résumé was about training. Training versus seminars. Did the trainings weigh into your decision at all, do you think?

**Respondent:** Not really, again, like I said, I’m a brat. Just because you showed up to a training course for one day and phoned it in doesn’t necessarily mean to me that you even took anything away from it. So maybe it’s I look at this like you got one day of training and you got a certificate in it, that doesn’t, I don’t know, it doesn’t really impress me that much. It’s like, put it on the résumé, that’s good, maybe we’ll talk about it in the interview, but it doesn’t really, I take it all with a grain of salt. I sound so jaded.
Interviewer: No, I think that, again, just like you said, anyone can write anything they want in a résumé, so I think it’s fair for you to have a sort of prove it kind of lens. I think that makes perfect sense.

Respondent: Thank you.

Interviewer: Is there anything else, now that we’ve gone through those résumés and I kind of pushed you into looking at each section, was there anything else that came to you during this process that you thought, you know, there was a couple of other things that came into my decision making? Anything else come to mind, LEP009?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: And then I think the last thing I would say is, or just ask, is are you still confident in your decision that Jerry might be the better candidate for the customer service position, or have you changed your thought process there? Do you still feel good about your decision?

Respondent: I wouldn’t say I’m confident, I would say if you’re forcing me to pick somebody, he still is fine. But like I said, I would – it’s almost like flip a coin. I would bring both of them in and then probe deeper. So right now, it’s like a lack of information, really.

Interviewer: I understand, that makes sense. So then, let me just give you a couple, just a really brief overview of next steps. What I’ll do now is, as I mentioned in the consent process, I’m the only one who knows your identity, at this point. Just prior to me shipping this recording off to transcription, I’m going to remove your identity and assign you a participant code, a three digit number so they will never know who you are, either. Once I get that back, it’s a verbatim transcript, which sometimes freaks people out, so I always just want to throw it out there that all the ums and all of that kind of stuff show up in these things. I will send that back out to you, and just kind of ask you to take a look and make sure that you feel that you were characterized the way that you were intending in this call.

And sometimes people, other things occur to them, once they’ve had some time to be away from this call and get the transcription, so feel free to provide any clarification and/or any new thoughts that came to you when I send that to you. And then what I do is take all of the transcripts for the interviews, I’m going to conduct 15 of them, and code based on similarities and common themes across those interviews, to come up with a collective experience for this group of people.

Once I have that experience documented, I’ll then add my experience to it as well, and I’ll ship that out to you guys, and ask you to take a look and give me
your feedback. And then the third step is where I will situate this narrative, this collective experience into the body of research, and that will be sort of the debrief of the research problem, and what I really came up with and so then that would be just a quick conversation that we have towards the end, where you see it in context. Does that all make sense?

**Respondent:** Yes, it does.

**Interviewer:** Any questions for me right now, LEP009?

**Respondent:** No, I’m eager to see what this study is about, but I can be patient.

**Interviewer:** Me, too. I’ll look forward to getting your transcript back, I should have it in, I would say, maybe five to seven days. So just expect an email in the next week. And I really your time today, thank you so much.

**Respondent:** It is my pleasure, so I will look forward to hearing from you in the next week or so.

**Interviewer:** Sounds good, I’ll talk to you soon. Take care.

**Respondent:** All right. Take care, buddy, bye-bye.

**Interviewer:** Bye-bye.
Betty Jo: Let me press that, there we go. First thing, and I’m going to get to that, what we’re going to do today, but did you have any questions about the study or consent or anything like that, that I can kind of get out of the way at the beginning of this call?

LUN013: No, I mean I thought it was pretty straightforward. I mean, it’s going to be interesting to see what you wind up writing and conclude, but you know, the consent was very easy and so far it’s been interesting.

Betty Jo: Cool, okay. What we’re going to do today, what I’m hoping to accomplish is just kind of have you walk me through the selection that you made, and if you want, I can share my screen. I have the two résumés up here.

LUN013: Okay.

Betty Jo: A couple of things there is, what I’m finding is that when I ask people that look at résumés all day long, when I ask them to kind of tell me why they made a decision, it’s very quick, right? It’s like, boom, boom, boom, these are the three or four things that stood out about John Smith, or what have you. That sometimes goes pretty quickly, but I do want you to kind of just walk me through the process that you went through in making this selection.

Then I’m probably going to sort of circle back and ask you some clarifying questions, kind of have you compare sections between the two candidates and kind of dig in a little bit deeper on what might have made the difference in John’s résumé where maybe Jerry didn’t perform as well in that section. Does that all make sense?

LUN013: Okay, yep. That’s fine.

Betty Jo: Awesome. Why don’t we start out with that? Why don’t you kind of walk me through, LUN013, how you came – and again, I know I forced you to choose between the two –

LUN013: Right.

Betty Jo: Tell me, you know, how
LUN013:  No, I mean I thought it was pretty straightforward. I mean, it’s going to be interesting to see what you wind up writing and conclude, but you know, the consent was very easy and so far it’s been interesting.

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LUN013:  Right.

Betty Jo:  Tell me how you went about screening these résumés, and feel free to kind of give it some texture in terms of the experiences that you kind of draw upon when you approach looking at résumés to decide who to call.

LUN013:  Well what was interesting was I thought they were remarkably similar. I would say actually I had a little bit of a hard time picking one or the other, and I believe it was in a long term – actually I was going to open them on my own screen and have both of them – it was John because of, what I would say, the added val, that I felt long term he was going to be able to do a better job of, you know, business development so to speak. Had his head more up in terms of finding new business.

Betty Jo:  Okay.
LUN013: You know, that was what was the distinction for me. I went back to the job description too, to really see, okay, these are both very, very similar. What I liked is their job history on both was very good, there weren’t any really red flags. We had a couple years at each position, you know, and that’s what I was looking for. Again, you made them very similar. They both had associate’s degrees if I believe.

I see that John does – I would also say I liked the – I liked John’s presentation a little bit better than Jerry’s. The other thing that I liked about John was he had a little bit broader experience. He had done both retail and catalog, you know, hard to say. Jerry read okay, but just didn’t wow me. I would say there were no – and not necessarily that John did, but one of the things that I look for in a résumé is I look for quantifiable information.

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: You know, something that would have said to me, saved this percentage of customers who were angry and we were about to lose. You know, something that talked to me about the volume of calls that they were handling. That would have been very helpful in either case, and would have definitely influenced. I encourage people whenever they can to put in something that could be quantified.

Betty Jo: Right, right. Sort of a metric.

LUN013: We’re looking for meat. These are nice résumés, there’s no real meat in either one of these. Now, and I would say again, and how I read a résumé, as I read a résumé purely as do you match what I’m looking for? You know, I don’t necessarily care – I care about the presentation, I care about spelling and all of those things, but I don’t want the “foo-foo-ey” [04:59 phonetic] stuff.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Well and you know, let me ask a question about that then. As I look at John versus Jerry’s, John is definitely a little bit more on the verbose side in terms of using descriptors and sort of punchier language. Do you think that made a bit of a difference, even maybe sort of unconsciously, over Jerry’s? Jerry’s was just a little more to the point, right?

LUN013: His is to the point, but it’s – yes, but his is very – his is to the point, but it’s simple. Whereas, so for example, if you look at John’s. “Strived for quick complaint resolution.” That tells me he has a sense of urgency. If I’ve got an angry customer, that’s really important to me.

Betty Jo: Right, okay.

LUN013: Yes, he was – and so in his own way, that was maybe his way of you know, quantifying. Basically saying that I’m timely.
Betty Jo: Trying to provide that meat, even if maybe – [crosstalk]

LUN013: Right.

Betty Jo: – he didn’t have it. Okay. What else, top of mind, LUN013?

LUN013: What I like about, you know and again, that John did and although they both did it, his presentation with his bullets on the top – “Provided excellent customer service, bringing loyalty” He did a better job branding himself than Jerry did.

Betty Jo: Okay, yeah. I think I see where you’re going there, and so let’s talk about that top section, right? Whatever people call it these days, the objective, the core summary, [laughter] whatever it turns out to be. Looking at them side by side, what was it specifically about John’s that just made you feel like he was maybe a higher caliber candidate versus what Jerry wrote?

LUN013: Again, believe it or not, it was something as simple as taking the time to highlight it and italicize it so it was noticeable to me. That made a difference. Again, when I read a lot of résumés, I don’t have a lot of time to read résumés. What I tell everybody when you write a résumé is, help me help you.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Right.

LUN013: Don’t bury information that I want to see. This guy, right off the top, he’s just presenting those, and that’s exactly like – when I deal with programmers, I tell them put their technical skills on the top, towards the top, because if you don’t have the technical skills I’m looking for, I’m not going to pursue you.

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: John’s résumé provided – those bullets really told me exactly who he was.

Betty Jo: So that – [crosstalk]

LUN013: In –

Betty Jo: I’m sorry, go ahead.

LUN013: I didn’t have to read.

Betty Jo: Right, and I like what you’re saying. I just want to make sure I’m kind of characterizing it correctly, that the top portion of that résumé is critically important. Is that what you’re saying?

Betty Jo: From your perspective, John just did a little bit better job in that professional brand area, right?

LUN013: Absolutely, that’s exactly what I call it. I call it branding or marketing. He did a better job marketing himself than Jerry did.

Betty Jo: You know, it’s interesting, sort of this professional branding sort of concept is something that’s slightly alien to some job seekers. I’m working on a project right now with – that’s specifically targeted at long-term unemployed folks, and making them develop their brand is a very painful process for them. [laughter]

You know, it’s just very difficult for them to kind of feel like they are a product that they’re marketing. It’s sort of interesting how that, you know, maybe has – have you seen that shift over time, where that kind of – that branding, this top portion of the résumé, became more or less important?

LUN013: Absolutely. It’s been a complete shift, and I just spoke with a woman last week who, you know, twenty years PM, MBA, and was downsized from AMRI in April. She sent me this five-page résumé, and you know, I said to her – I was like – I said to her, I can’t read it. I said to her, and so what I tell – I don’t care who the person is, I say to them, what is your elevator pitch? She couldn’t tell me, Betty Jo.

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: I was like – and I mean, she did, and it was weak. She goes, I wasn’t expecting you to ask me that, and I said – and I was sort of like, shame on you because you should be able to tell me that so you could tell anybody so they know how to help you.

Betty Jo: Right. Right, and ultimately so that you attract the right kinds of positions, right? I mean –

LUN013: Absolutely, and I mean, as it turns out like you’re talking about, your chronically unemployed, she’s a little beat up. She hasn’t gotten much response, and what she said to me, she said to me quite honestly at the end of conversation, she was like, you know, I had pretty low expectations. I can’t thank you enough, you redirected me. I basically cut her down and then built her back up.

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: Now she has a résumé that is much more functional. She created nine bullets across the top that very succinctly tells someone what she brings to the table.
Betty Jo: Right. Who she is, yeah. Excellent. I think that the long-term unemployed population is, you know, they not only have some foundational issues, their résumés or like their profiles.

LUN013: Right.

Betty Jo: They also have those emotional barriers. I think it’s difficult for them to remember why they were successful in the first place, right?

LUN013: Well, and I look at for example, if you look in John’s, because I was going to do a seminar for recent college grads. Actually that’s I think how Jenny wound up getting it, and then when you reached out to her, she was like oh my god, you should talk to – I talk to recent college grads even about creating these bullets. The kids coming out of college right now, I don’t think the career services are really doing them justification on their résumés either.

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: You look at something like problem solving. That’s something that everyone can put on. Time management. You know, you’re not – if you’re looking for an entry-level or re-entry into the workforce, you know, you’re not looking for business analysis, certifications. You’re looking for the basics.

Betty Jo: Right, right.

LUN013: They don’t have to have five. Maybe they only come up with three that they can put.

Betty Jo: Right, like these guys, three – [crosstalk]

LUN013: Yes.

Betty Jo: – bullets each. Right. It’s interesting that John’s had such an impact on you, so thank you for walking me through that. I think – one of the cool things about this type of research design, it’s called phenomenology, which I had to practice like twenty-five times to be able to say without stuttering, by the way.

LUN013: [laughter]

Betty Jo: [laughter] Is the conversation – like you direct the conversation as opposed to me directing it, so it’s sort of interesting how we ebb and flow through each interview. Thank – that was a really interesting segue into sort of the trends in job-seeking and this whole top of the résumé changing over the time, so thank you. Anything else about these top sections here, LUN013, before I scoot on to experience?
LUN013: You know, again if you do want to nitpick a little bit, I like – it’s just a personal preference. I do like – I do sometimes think on the top, less is more. Again if you look at John’s presentation, it’s cleaner, it’s not so wordy.

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: You know, it’s just a little bit easier for me. The thing that I – my recommendation when I’m talking to people about their bullets, and that’s what I refer to them as. I said, you know, you need bullets. I mean John didn’t bullet them, but basically he’s “providing exceptional service, building loyalty”, those are his bullets. I tell people to read very carefully the job descriptions and to adjust your bullets so that they match up in order of the job description.

Betty Jo: Right, right. That’s not only from a recruiter perspective, but for these ATS systems too, I suspect.

LUN013: Absolutely. Well it’s basically because of the ATS systems.

Betty Jo: Yeah. Boy, is that a whole new world. [laughter]

LUN013: [laughter]

Betty Jo: At least for job seekers. I mean, I guess I’ve known what ATSs were for several years, but I think it’s sort of surprising for them to understand that an ATS is basically Google for résumés. [laughter]

LUN013: Right, right.

Betty Jo: Your job is to search engine optimize your résumé for each of your submissions essentially, right?

LUN013: Completely. I mean, it’s – there – they do a great disservice, but the bottom line is, unless you match, the number I’ve heard is unless you match, you come up in the top third.

Betty Jo: Oh, interesting.

LUN013: You will not get an interview. You will not proceed. If your résumé, and whatever matrix that they’re using, if you can’t come up in the top third, it doesn’t matter how well qualified you are. That’s the cutoff. They don’t even look.

Betty Jo: Wow. It’s such an interesting depersonalization of the process, right? [laughter] Is, you know, and I know it’s discouraging to some people to keep submitting 30, 40 résumés a day, even though – for positions you know you’re qualified for. You’re just perfectly, literally, perfectly qualified for, but since you may not have
enough keywords in your résumé, you’re just – you didn’t even get into the first queue, essentially.

**LUN013:** Absolutely, and you have no way of knowing.

**Betty Jo:** Right. [laughter] Yes, I have all kinds of opinions about sort of this culture that we’ve created around job seeking and how demoralizing it can be. [laughter]

**LUN013:** It is, and so the thing that I tell everybody is, it is hard, hard work.

**Betty Jo:** Yes.

**LUN013:** Looking for a job is very hard and stressful. You know, but what I often – and it’s funny, I have a friend whose with a local senator, and she sort of needs a couple more years with the state, but did something – she said to me, she goes, I stopped by and dropped off a résumé and they told me they couldn’t take it. She goes, well what’s the point of human resources? Well, I said, they can’t take it because you’re a fifty plus year old white female. When you claim discrimination –

**Betty Jo:** Right.

**LUN013:** I said, you know, and they get audited, they have to be able to show that everybody who applied through the system to say, no we didn’t discriminate against that white fifty plus year old female. The minute I explained that to her, she was like, ohh. You know, and I was like, so it’s all the rules and regulations that have taken out the ability to stop by an employer – [crosstalk]

**Betty Jo:** Right.

**LUN013:** – and drop off – so you almost don’t get rewarded for initiative.

**Betty Jo:** Yeah, you’re almost punished for it, even.

**LUN013:** Yes, yes. I mean, the outcome was nothing. She had to go back and apply online. You know, it was a total waste of her time.

**Betty Jo:** Right.

**LUN013:** The one thing that I caution all job seekers about, no matter what, is you know, the shotgun approach doesn’t really work. You can spray your résumé, but I tell everybody, you’re much better off applying less, but then going to that networking function or going to church and getting to know people, or joining a Meetup group where you’re maybe going to meet somebody, versus just sending your résumé out a hundred times.
Betty Jo: You’re absolutely right. I was just saying that to one of my clients as, you know, and part of this program that I’m working on is, it helps, we leverage the state employment services relationships. They’re one of the grantees in the grant, so we leverage their relationships on behalf of our clients, right? That’s somehow how we can like get them out of the ATS system, you know –

LUN013: Right.

Betty Jo: If they already got sort of de-queued, so yeah, you’re right. There’s sometimes if you’re not making a personal connection to someone some other way, you may just be dead in the water before you press submit. Practically when you press submit, right?

LUN013: Absolutely.

Betty Jo: Let’s look down at experience here real quick.

LUN013: Yep.

Betty Jo: What you said is, they definitely have the same amount of experiences. One thing that was different in John’s versus Jerry’s is he did give that descriptor about the company, and I know you mentioned that when you were talking, so it sounded like that was important to you in terms of providing context in his experience. Is that right?

LUN013: Yes. Again, it was interesting, and I would honestly say, you know, is really a toss-up for me. I mean I went back and forth on these for a little bit as I was filling out the survey, because they really – knowing that it was a part of your program, I thought, oh, that’s a little stinker. These are pretty darn close.

Betty Jo: [laughter]

LUN013: When – and what I did is I actually wound up going back to the job description that you were trying to fill, and that’s where the additional information was more valuable. You know, again I don’t know anything about Inspirion or Excelon. For Jerry, and for John, now I know exactly what he was doing.

Betty Jo: Right, right.

LUN013: The one I really liked was the Abacos. You know, “national brand, fast-growing operation.” The fact that it was both retail and catalog-based.

Betty Jo: Right. Good. That was one thing, and by the way, I did purposefully design the résumés to be very, very similar on purpose.

LUN013: I’m sure you did.
Betty Jo: It is part of the research design, and actually that’s a – it’s a part of our conversation, had you not brought it up, at the end would be, if I didn’t make you choose, would you have called them both for a screen, which is kind of part of the –

LUN013: The answer to that is yes.

Betty Jo: Yeah, right, which is part of like, just making sure that I didn’t purposefully skew folks into selecting John over Jerry, so I appreciate that perspective.

LUN013: No, no, no, they were very close. It was – I was really, you know, again I was like, oh, I – you know, my thought was well I would talk to both, because often I have talked to people who have phenomenal résumés, and they stink.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Right.

LUN013: Just because John’s résumé is a little bit stronger, by no means actually means he’s the better candidate.

Betty Jo: Well you’re exactly right, and pretty much everyone – I’m halfway through my interviews now, everyone has said something very similar is, obviously I would have to interview them to really understand who they truly are. This is just a simple pass. When we scroll down to education, you’re right, they both have their associate’s degree, which was the minimum requirement.

They received them about the same – well, exactly the same time. The only difference between these two candidates is John went to Kaplan College, which is a for-profit and Jerry went to Southern New Hampshire University, which is a little bit more of a traditional college up in New Hampshire. Did any of that weigh in your decision-making at all?

LUN013: Not at all. I’m not familiar with Kaplan, so I looked to see that they both had associate’s, so they – that just sort of nullified both of them.

Betty Jo: Right, well yeah, put them on a level playing field, right?

LUN013: Yes, and again, the one thing that was interesting is, and my rule of thumb is, it was interesting that neither one of them had a GPA on it, which to me, the way any résumé, even going back to eleven, you haven’t been out that long. If there’s no GPA, that basically says to me it’s under 3.0.

Betty Jo: Interesting.
LUN013: That’s still sort of a rule of thumb, the way I view résumés. Most of the other recruiters that I talk to, is if you’re 3.0 or above, your GPA better be on there. If it’s not, then we assume that you’re less than 3.0.

Betty Jo: I did not know that. Interesting, okay. Then just kind of circling back on the type of institution, since you weren’t familiar with Kaplan, if I tried to think of a correlate, it would be ITT versus [REDACTED – COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THAT COMMUNITY] in terms of for-profit versus non-profit in your community. Would that have weighed in your decision?

LUN013: Then I would have been – I would have personally leaned towards Southern New Hampshire.

Betty Jo: Okay.

LUN013: You know, I am not a big fan of the for-profit schools. I know you had a nice tenure here, but I’m not a big fan of them.

Betty Jo: Yeah, I don’t work in that space anymore, but you know, give me some texture around that in terms of why you aren’t a fan. What kind of brings you to that point? This speaks to that sort of all of those experiences that you bring into screening even.

LUN013: Well to me, to be perfectly honestly, there’s just no need to go to a for-profit school. You know, you have a [REDACTED – COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THAT COMMUNITY] here, you have [REDACTED – COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THAT COMMUNITY], let’s talk here. They can accommodate your schedule just as much as an ITT or you know, a [REDACTED – LOCAL FOR-PROFIT].

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: I think the quality of the instructors at a [REDACTED – COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THAT COMMUNITY], at a [REDACTED – COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THAT COMMUNITY], are in general higher educated, more traditional. I think the local community colleges are [email chime] more inclined to, you know, be harder, and don’t have the pressure to get people through, is my perception. That comes from having guest lectured at both – I’ve guest lectured at both ITT and [REDACTED – LOCAL FOR-PROFIT].

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: The quality of the student I have seen there is not great. Some of the students that I’ve seen go through [REDACTED – COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THAT COMMUNITY], and then again, from being a technology recruiter, you know
[REDACTED – COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THAT COMMUNITY] has an affiliate program up with Plattsburgh, who then transfer up to Plattsburgh and come out with a computer science degree. You know, we’re talking apples and oranges in terms of that student population.

Betty Jo: Right, right. Yeah, and I think – I can see exactly where you’re coming from there, and what I like about what you’re saying is that you had the actual experience that led you to that, right?

LUN013: Yes.

Betty Jo: As opposed to sort of just having a general feeling about it, right? [laughter]

LUN013: Oh, no, no. Again, I would say, you know, here’s the other challenge that I have with that is that – and I do have the actual experience, and you know, ITT can do a few – the other thing that I often found – Again, it was more based on ITT when I would go back over, and I would either lecture or do résumé critiquing or mock interviews for them, is I felt that that student population didn’t understand how difficult it was still going to be for them to get a job, you know. That they were not sufficiently prepared to enter the job market. You know, they either didn’t have good internships, they just – and a lot of them still had a very hard time, even coming out with certifications.

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: In terms of landing.

Betty Jo: Do you think that’s because of some of those things like, not having an internship, and maybe just not having enough experience, or do you think it’s because there’s still some feelings about the type of their education that kind of prevents them from getting their foot in? What do you think about that?

LUN013: I would say it’s a combination of all three. I would definitely say it’s a combination of all three. It’s – again, this is only based on my experience and more with ITT, you have a – apologize for the political incorrectness – you have some re-treads.

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: Who, you know, at 25, 30, 35 are all the sudden now want to be an IT person. They go and take these classes, in some cases they barely get through them –

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: Then they think they’re going to go out and make forty grand as a PC tech, and they’re in debt up to their noses, and I’m sitting there going, I still can’t help you.
Betty Jo: Right, right. Is it because they still just don’t have that practical experience that you’re looking for?

LUN013: Correct, and they don’t – just because they – and again, I can only speak to ITT because it’s specific to what I do. You have to have the passions. When I’m talking to those guys, they’re not the guys – the people who are unsuccessful, they’re not running their home network, they’re not taking apart computers. If they were studying web design, they weren’t building anything outside of class.

Betty Jo: Right.

LUN013: That tells me that you’ve chosen this as a – what you hope is a means to an end, versus a passion. If you’re not going to put in that extra effort, especially coming out of a two-year program, nobody’s going to pick you up.

Betty Jo: Right, right.

LUN013: That’s – when I say to them, you know, well are you doing anything extra? Are you writing this, are you running your own network at home? Oh, no. It’s not always – in some cases, it’s financial, but often cases, it’s because well no, why would I do that? Well, do you really like what you’re doing? Well, you know, I want a better job.

Betty Jo: Right, right.

LUN013: In part, because that’s what they were sold when they reached out to ITT. Oh, this will get you a better job, a higher-paying job.

Betty Jo: Yeah, it’s an interesting perspective. I think, I’ve got to say, my gut instinct says, you know, you’re right there. Again, you’ve had those direct experiences, and it is – those are your experiences, right?

LUN013: Right.

Betty Jo: I think to the extent that when you’re – you were in that technical space and there is – there are specific personality types, you know, that pursue programming positions and network administrator positions, and all of that. It sounds like you’ve sort of gotten your – you have your instincts around what those things are.

LUN013: Right.

Betty Jo: – softer outside of education résumé kinds of things that you look for. I think that’s really valuable. Okay, so that’s education. The very last section of the résumé is seminars and/or trainings. How much weight do you assign when people – I keep the conversation separate from certifications, because I know that
especially in technology recruiting, obviously certifications are the name of the
game, but for these guys, they were more sort of softer trainings. Did either weigh
on you?

**LUN013:** Not particularly. I thought it – I was glad to see that they had training, but it didn’t
really weigh on me one way or another.

**Betty Jo:** Okay, okay. After we’ve gone through, LUN013, kind of walked through each
résumé and kind of looked at them sort of side by side and got off on a couple of
interesting roads here, is there anything else that you would want me to know
about the reason you chose John over Jerry, that we didn’t cover?

**LUN013:** No. The one suggestion I would have made on both résumés, and it’s a suggestion
that I make in general now. One of which, to me, almost everybody’s on
LinkedIn. I now suggest that people put in their LinkedIn profiles.

**Betty Jo:** Right, right.

**LUN013:** That’s more relevant to me than an address. If you’re applying to my job, I
assume you’re willing to work where my position is based, if someone’s pushed
for space. No, you know, again I would say you did a good job of designing them
very similarly. They’re – it was simply that John’s was just a tad – it spoke a little
bit more to the description. I kept – I remember when I was doing the evaluation,
I kept going back to the job description, because I felt that their skill sets read
remarkably effectively, remarkably close.

**Betty Jo:** Good. So it’s safe to say you would still be, after walking me through this, you
still be confident, if you had to choose, to choose John over Jerry?

**LUN013:** Yes.

**Betty Jo:** Okay, all right. Good.

**LUN013:** It’s simply because again, if he’s presenting and on paper, he’s looking a little bit
better. I’ve got to hope in person he’s a little bit better, too.

**Betty Jo:** [laughter] Right. You’ve got to make a leap here somewhere, right? [laughter]

**LUN013:** Right. If I can only interview one, John’s got my vote.

**Betty Jo:** Right. Perfect. Okay, excellent. That’s what I was hoping to accomplish today.
Let me tell you about the next couple of steps, just so you sort of understand
where we go from here. The reason I press record is because I’m going to send
these – I send these interviews out for transcription. Just prior to transcription, I
strip off your name and I assign you a participant code, so that your identity is
only known by me.
I get that transcription back, and it is a verbatim transcript, which by the way can sometimes be a little disconcerting for people to see, you know, how they – how often they say um, or whatever. I will send that back to you just for a double check that you know, it does – it is an accurate representation of what we talked about. Sometimes other things have occurred to you in the mean time or as you’re reading it, you’re like, you know what, I did forget to say this one thing also helped me make my decision.

I’ll ship that off to you and you can let me know, one, if it’s fine the way that it is, and then two, if there are any other thoughts that occurred to you at that time. Once I have all the confirmed transcripts, there are fifteen folks in my study, I will take those interviews as a collective whole, and I will attempt to document and code the similarities between those interviews to come up with basically a representation of the experience of the screening process for these fifteen people. Then at the very end of sort of putting that – documenting that phenomena, I’ll add my experience to the end, which is really intentional that I keep my experience out of the mix until the very end.

LUN013: Right.

Betty Jo: Then I’ll ship that out to you, just more for your information than anything else, just to kind of let you know how it looked as an overall phenomena, as opposed to just individual interviews. Then the third step in this process is I’ll situate that narrative, that summary of our experiences, I’ll situate that in the research, so in some ways this is kind of backward design.

I don’t know – I don’t know what any of you will say in these interviews, and so my job is then to say, okay, so based on this experience, how does that fit in the research? That’s sort of the debrief, where I tell you how it sits in the research and ultimately what my findings are in that, because of those interviews. Most of those last three steps will be done asynchronously.

We can certainly get on the phone or GoTo if you ever want to kind of discuss that more, but I’d love your thoughts towards the end of the study about, then what are the implications? Let’s say I find something really significant in the interviews, I’d be interested in your thoughts as practitioners about what that means for your field, right?

LUN013: Sure.

Betty Jo: What are the themes [35:45 phonetic] that that would really mean to you. Of course this is only across fifteen people, but what if we did this across ten thousand people, would we find the same results? If so, what are the things that you as recruiters, as HR professionals, would really want to do to either capitalize on a strength or improve on something that might be viewed as a weakness, right?
LUN013: Yeah. No I get it. Actually as I’m looking at John’s, and we had talked about it before, and I do remember it being in the job description, the other thing that swayed me to him was boost sales and generate repeat business. That just doesn’t – you can be proactive or reactive, and Jerry strikes me as reactive, doing a very good job, and builds productive relationships, but he’s not proactive. I interpreted John to be a little bit proactive.

Betty Jo: Excellent. Great. Yeah, and I think you’re right. There’s just some of the words, you know, that we have in John’s résumé just are a little, just punchier is the right word, or just –

LUN013: Right.

Betty Jo: Yeah, just make it seem more action-oriented, maybe.

LUN013: Yep.

Betty Jo: Yeah, okay. Perfect. Those are the next few steps.

LUN013: Okay.

Betty Jo: Any questions about the next steps?

LUN013: No, I’m good to go.

Betty Jo: Well it was wonderful talking to you. Thank you so much for your time today, it was good to reconnect. I hope to have your transcription back in seven business days, so you should hear from me in about a week.

LUN013: All right, no problem.

Betty Jo: Sound good?

LUN013: Talk to you later, Betty Jo.

Betty Jo: Great, talk to you soon. Take care.

LUN013: You too, bye.

Betty Jo: All right, bye.
Q: Alright. And so, just a couple of things about, again, what we’re trying to accomplish today, so in that first exercise, you know, I sent you two résumés, John Singer and Jerry Smith, and you did choose Jerry Smith here on the right side of the screen for that customer service position. And so this session that we’re doing is really just having you sort of walk me through how you came to that decision. Probably the easiest way to do that is to kind of have the résumés side by side I think, and kind of walk me through, you know, what you were thinking, you know, actually looking at each section of the résumé, you know, here are the things that stuck out for me in terms of Mr. Smith being, you know, a little bit better of a candidate than Mr. Singer. There may have been things about Mr. Singer that also were positive, but just if you looked at all the positives you chose Mr. Smith and (inaudible) to first point that out. And in terms of my role in this session -- so this is a phenomenological study and so what I’m doing is looking into the phenomenon of screening, you know, that whole process. You know, what were the things that you were thinking? What were the externalities? Were there previous experiences that you were using to help give me those decisions? And my role is literally just to record the information at this point and not to in any way guide your answers. I may ask some clarifying questions or if we get to a point where we’re kind you’re done talking, I may ask a couple of, you know, sort of probing questions to kind of get us rolling again. But I’ll really refrain from, you know, sort of validating or, you know, in any way infusing my previous experiences into the session so that I can sort of remain bias free. Does that all make sense to you?

A: Yes, it does. Yep.

Q: Excellent. Okay. So with that, I think the best to go about this is if you just kind of want to start at the beginning here and I will go ahead and sort of move us down as you walk me through it all. We’ll toggle the two and sort of try to keep them side by side here. But again, you indicated in the survey that Mr. Smith was a better candidate. So why don’t we start with kind of looking at his résumé and starting maybe here at the top where he sort of talks about, you know, his skillset. Can you kind of start me off there?

A: Sure. So before I get into that, as I started my process, there were a couple of things that I looked at on the job description that I highlighted so that I could kind of refer back to those when I reviewed both résumés. And a lot of it was more or less phrases or kind of keywords that I thought would be important. So I’ll just kind of state those just so you’re aware of what I felt was important as well. Internal and external customers, communicating effectively, timely and accurate information, resolve disputed credit items, and then partner with the sales team. Those are all things that I kind of wanted to make sure that I kept in mind, obviously, along with the competencies. But like I said, those are things that I wanted to kind of make sure that I sought out in both of the résumés. So as far as Jerry Smith, I first did a very brief walkthrough of his résumé to ensure that he actually met the requirements of this position, so the required education along with the experience that was listed, and he did. So he has an Associate’s degree, he’s got a solid five years of experience. So then from there, I went through and I kind of highlighted similar things as I did on the job description. So looking at his experience at, I’m going to say
this wrong, but Inspirian (sp?). Yeah. I mean it works, right. So the things that I highlighted for him were the incoming customer order inquires. So that to me, you know, looked like he met one of the essential functions of this position. He was able to kind of handle those on the phone, expedite resolution, and also in his last bullet, the timely delivery of products, both of those items said to me that he was really focused on service excellence and making sure that he kind of did things quickly and correctly the first time around. And then, you know, he stated that he was recognized also for call handling, which in customer service and call center environment, it’s a nice thing to see. Down to his Exelon experience, his first bullet point stating that he handled the specific questions and then kind of followed through to ensure that they were satisfied and able to use the products, that to me kind of said that he is willing to kind of go above and beyond his duties. Not knowing what his job description was, I can only infer that, but that that would kind of speak to his work ethic a little bit. And also something that swayed my decision for him was that he stated that he worked directly with the sales team to kind of aid in that cross-selling, which is one of the competencies to (inaudible) orientation that was listed. So that is overall my decision for Jerry.

Q: Okay. And if we go back and sort of look at these gentlemen side by side, they have a similar set of experience in terms of number of years, they seem to have a similar education and a little bit of training here and there, you know. So I should probably stop going so fast on the screen, it probably takes a second to settle in, doesn’t it?

A: Actually, I have them printed out in front of me, so that’s fine.

Q: Oh, perfect. Okay. Thank you. As I was doing that, I was like, oh no. So, you know, can you tell me if you looked at them side by side, you know, and if we looked at sort of each block on the résumé, could you tell me what you were thinking as you were looking as Mr. Singer’s customer service representative for the target -- sometimes I call that the target statement, you know, that beginning part of the résumé versus Mr. Smith’s. What stood out in that section whether positive or negative for each candidate for you?

A: Okay. Well, first of all, you made it really hard because they were pretty much the same candidate, so it was a little bit of a struggle to actually make a decision. And if this were real life, I would honestly screen them both by phone to kind of dig a little bit deeper to see who I would actually send forward to the hiring team. So it was really difficult. I will be honest with you. It did take me probably the full 30 minutes to actually make up my mind. Let me look at my notes here. I do know though while I’m doing that that my deciding factor for Jerry was that he stated more clearly his teamwork with groups outside of his own, and I think that was something that wasn’t as clear on John’s résumé. It could have been inferred, but I didn’t feel comfortable making that inference without actually speaking to him. So let’s see. For John, the thing that I have highlighted in his opening statement were that he did excel in listening to the customer needs and kind of articulating the benefit in creating those solutions which would was important and listed as one of the essential functions. And I also thought it was great that he mentioned that he was able to build and maintain those customer relationships. A lot of his résumé though was focused more on sales, which to me didn’t speak to, like I mentioned, that partnership internally. He had a great focus on his customer, but the second facet of this position
is also, you know, partnership with his peers and then also his other centers of excellence, which I did not get from past experience on his résumé.

Q: Okay. As we look back down in experience, you just started talking about that in terms of, you know, maybe John being a little more focused on sales rather than sort of that pure customer service aspect. But, you know, looking at sort of advocates again Insperian and Delana (sp?) versus Exelon, was there anything about just how they specifically listed their job duties and/or things that they excelled at that stood out at you? Was there anything specific there?

A: Let me take another look. I want to make sure that I’m answering your question appropriately.

Q: Do you want me to clarify?

A: No. I know what you’re asking. I just wasn’t prepared for that question. I mean, both of them listed that they were recognized, which I thought was great and kind of important to include. I did like on John’s résumé that for his Delano experience that he was able to list the amount of the sales increase that he contributed to. I felt that that piece there was a little bit stronger than Jerry’s because it actually showed that he had a hand in that, and also how he kind of did that. Let’s see what else I have. I mean, both of them kind of used keywords which were helpful. John, you know, listen attentively, communicate effectively. Both of those correlated pretty well with the competencies that were listed. You know, for Jerry’s, it just spoke to me a little bit more in the fact that he kept mentioned kind of customer satisfaction, kind of business acumen, just given the vocabulary that he used. Does that answer your question? I’m sorry.

Q: It does. I’m also just taking notes. So sorry to sort of give you the pause there. It was perfect. No, that’s perfect. And so I think that, you know, we kind of covered the target statement and a little bit more about the experience. What about education? It looks like they graduated around the same time with an Associate’s. You’ve got, let’s see, Kaplan versus Southern New Hampshire. Was there anything that stood out, a difference, you know, between those two types of universities for you?

A: No. I didn’t pay attention to where they went to school. I just looked to ensure that they actually had an Associate’s degree.

Q: And I’m curious, is just having an Associate’s listed enough, or do you often, you know, look for more information around that education?

A: That would typically be handled as part of like the background check process. So in my experience, I just look on their résumé to ensure that they have the degree that we’re looking for. And if it’s a position that, you know, can use experience in lieu of a degree, then I would pay a little bit more attention to the dates of the experiences that they’ve listed, just to ensure that they actually meet that qualification.
Q: Okay. And, both of them have a little bit of training listed as well. Did that weigh into your decision? It looks like John called them seminars and Jerry called them training. Does that weigh in as well?

A: It did. I did look at that a little bit. Both of them seemed to kind of be used to kind of excel in their position. I felt that Jerry’s training was a little bit more relevant given the fact that he mentioned that he was chosen to participate in those. To me, you know, that statement along with the fact that he had been recognized in his other position said that he kind of had leadership potential or at least the potential to kind of excel past just the customer service role, like he could bring more to an organization. You know, customer service excellence, both of them kind of had similar training, customer focused versus the customer service excellence. You know, dealing with difficult clients versus the customer is always right, those are probably pretty similar. And then, you know, both of them kind of have a little bit of a wildcard, so the multiple priorities versus the win/win relationship. Those are probably good to excel in more of a professional environment rather than kind of help them with their direct role.

Q: Okay. That is really helpful. So part of that what I was hearing from you is that you seem to kind of have a process that you go through when you’re screening applicants. You know, so I heard you say, you know, “I went through job description and I highlighted sort of key competencies,” and then it sounded like you in some ways sort of cross-referenced those key words, you know, through those résumés. Does that sound right? Is that kind of your standard practice, or did you do that deliberately just sort for this exercise? Can you give me a little more flavor around that?

A: Yes. That is my process. You know, I obviously start by making sure that I’m fully understanding the job that I’m hiring for. And then, you know, similar to how I explained to you, I would typically work with the hiring manager to ensure that I am focusing on the correct maybe top three or top five items, either from the essential functions or the competencies, and make sure that all of the candidates that I’m sending on meet those qualifications at a minimum. So I would go ahead and then obviously ensure that the candidates meet our hiring qualifications, so education, experience, things like that. And then I would go through and cross-reference those phrases or keywords, and it doesn’t have to be, you know, exact terminology. As you get familiar with either the positions or the job industries that you’re working in, you kind of learn different languages, I guess, that kind of mean the same thing. So I would, you know, just make sure that what they’re presenting on their résumé kind of matches exactly, you know, what we’re looking for in the top three or top five categories.

Q: Okay. Yeah, that makes perfect sense. It sounds like you have a really good structured and thoughtful process. You probably have a lot of success finding the right candidates and do sort of follow a really kind of step by step process. And, you know, sort of thinking about that, have you learned lessons over time? Or did you sort of say, “As soon as I started this job, I just decided on a process and I did it,” or did it evolve over time, this practice that you just talked about?

A: It evolved over time. I mean, as you get familiar not only with full cycle recruitment but also with just my hiring managers, you kind of learn what works, what different people kind of
expect. And also I did a lot of my recruitment with federal contractors in the past, so there are additional considerations in terms of like the OFCCP and affirmative action that it really benefits you to have a very solid practice to ensure that if by chance you are called into the court of law that you can really explain how you choose candidates consistently.

Q: Interesting. Yeah, that’s a really good perspective. You know, I think it sounded like the federal side of it prompted that for you, but I think just in general as an HR practitioner it seems like you would always want to have sort of a defensible process so that you don’t have people coming back saying, “Hey, I wasn’t hired because of race” and things that are subjective. So I appreciate that about you and I think if I were doing screening for a living, I would want to have a really, you know, sort of structured checklist that I went through for that very same reason. Have you had experiences in the past working with hiring managers that have given you criteria that you didn’t think was appropriate? And sort of how did you work your way through that?

A: Actually, I haven’t, simply because they were very seasoned managers that I was working with, so I believe they had kind of been through the ringer before my time. So they were, you know, very familiar with the position and kind of very familiar with the expectations of what, you know, we could and couldn’t kind of look at. So I unfortunately don’t have experience with that.

Q: Well I think that is fortunate, actually.

A: Yes, it’s true. Unfortunate for this conversation, but fortunate for my career, yes.

Q: Well, you know, and it’s interesting that you say, you know, that it might be unfortunate for this conversation because it really is just sort of understanding, you know, what previous experiences that you’ve used to kind of shape your practice. Sometimes people shape their practices just based on industry standard and best practice and what feels right, and some people sort of shift their focus on lessons learned. You know, I think everyone kind of comes at these things from a different angle, so it just sounds like you came at it from a positive place, which I think is great. And so just to circle back on a couple of other things in terms of – probably some clarification - So tell me a little bit, you know, I’ve had some conversations prior to you about the beginning of these résumés in terms of having that sort of targeted statement and, you know, all of the – some people call it – I heard one person called it “filler” because, you know, customer service rep/five years experience. You know, can you tell me about how you feel about those opening statements on résumés?

A: Personally, I would prefer Jerry’s approach, if any. It’s simple, to the point. As far as John’s résumé, I don’t really like his kind of fluffy explanation of providing exceptional service. To me those are just words, you know? I don’t know. I’m not a fan.

Q: Yes, and it’s interesting because I’ve heard both sides of that, right, you know, really objective, small statements here, some people say, “I don’t care about any of that, I’m just interested in experience.” I was curious what you thought there.
A: I mean, I do like on both of them that they did have a couple of targeted bullets up top that just provided a very high-level overview of what they had to offer. It made it a little bit easier for me to then kind of go down into their list of experiences for a little bit more detail. So I don’t mind that, you know, they took up some real estate on their résumé, if you will, to kind of give that overview. But I could do a little bit without the, you know, the “providing exceptional service” and all of that stuff.

Q: Right. And then when you look at experience, so John provided a little bit of context around the companies that he worked at versus Jerry where he just put the names. Was that helpful in terms of context? I mean, I know that you didn’t choose John, but was that something that you appreciated or it didn’t matter to you?

A: To be honest, I didn’t even look at it.

Q: Didn’t even notice that, huh? That’s interesting.

A: I didn’t. I can see though how in some situations it might be helpful depending on the position. In this case, I mean, it wasn’t something that helped me.

Q: Yeah another “here nor there” kind of thing. Okay. I think one last question about how they worded their experiences. For the most part, both of them sort of mixed job duties with accomplishments. Is that something that, you know, would you prefer to see a résumé where, you know, the first few sentences are the job duties and then the last few are accomplishments? I mean, do you care? Give me some flavor around that duty versus accomplishments camp, if you will, in a résumé.

A: Yeah. When I give feedback to people regarding their résumés, I typically say two different options. First is kind of what you mentioned, having the key responsibilities mentioned and then, you know, underneath stating the key accomplishments within that role. I also have recommended kind of a sub-bullet to outline a specific accomplishment in relation to a single job duty, just to kind of, you know, make it make a little more sense in terms of flow when you’re reading it. You know, I do appreciate the specific listing out of the accomplishments because it does sway your decision a little bit. It shows that they’re either able to go above and beyond or, you know, what have you, but to make it a little bit easier to read or to stand out a little bit more. Those are typically the two things that I recommend.

Q: Okay. Perfect. And then just narrowing the field here, so let’s go back to education. So we’ve got Kaplan that’s a for-profit in Connecticut where John got his degree, and then we have Southern New Hampshire University which is an online university in New Hampshire, which is a nonprofit. Does that make a difference to you or has it ever made a difference to you, the sort of nonprofit versus for-profit issue?

A: Not in my experience. No.

Q: Yeah. Okay. Sometimes I hear that, sometimes I don’t. I was just curious.
A: Yeah, like I said, I don’t typically pay attention to the institution from which a candidate lists their education unless for whatever reason, you know, we have a specific relationship with a college. So, for instance, at one of my previous positions, we were an engineering consulting firm and we had, you know, specific relationships with a couple of different local colleges; nothing, you know, in writing that said, hey, we’re going to hire your graduates, but we did take a look at them first because they may have gone through a special program that one of our senior leaders assisted with or something like that. So, you know, there were certain things that we would kind of keep an eye on for certain positions, but typically the institution isn’t something that matters.

Q: That would make sense if you had, you know, sort of built a relationship that you might, you know, sort of look at those candidates. I mean, you kind of know what to expect with them, right? So if know a little bit more about the institution, you can say, well, you know, an X type of student looks like this. I know, I went to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and I’ve heard that before in the interviewing process, “Well, I know what to expect from an RPI graduate,” which is one part stressful and one part awesome, right?

A: Right and actually, yeah, RPI is actually one of the schools that we had that kind of unspoken relationship with because we--

Q: Oh, awesome.

A: Yeah. There were sort of engineering programs or – I shouldn’t say programs, but projects that kind of put those students in a better position to start in an entry level role versus other engineering schools. So that’s kind of why we would look at those students potentially first versus other schools.

Q: Yeah, sort of the reputation precedes them, right? You know, again, you kind of understand, you know, what to expect. So as a grad it was always helpful to me, but it was also sort of unnerving sometimes because of I’d think, gosh, I guess I hope I’m as qualified as, you know, this person thinks I might be to that. I’m sure that was something about me. And then, so then the very last thing is the training and I think actually we kind of covered that. I think the only thing I was curious about is, you know, when people do list training on their résumés, do you like to also see the dates associated with them or do you, again, sort of just focus on the competency that they might have picked up?

A: That kind of depends. You know, it’s always nice to have a date next to something because it tells you if, you know, it’s still relevant or not, but it’s not always necessary.

Q: Okay. Good. Well, those were some of my specific questions. I’m coming to the end of my questions, but the one I always like to ask at the end is, you know, after going through this process on the phone with me and kind of walking me through, you know, how you came to this decision and this candidate versus that, do you still feel confident in your choice that, you know, Mr. Smith, if you could only choose one candidate that Jerry Smith would be the one that you would call in?
A: I do, and simply because he was a little bit more focused on that inter-team relationship than John. But like I said, if this were real life, I would honestly give them both a chance and probe them both for a little bit more information because I think, you know, given what they have on their résumé, they could both do the job. So it was tough, but I --

Q: I’m curious. What would be a couple of the things that you would want to know about them? So if you did call them both this week, what would be a couple of the questions that you would ask to help you really get to that final decision on, you know, maybe doing a face to face?

A: For John specifically, I would like to hear a little bit more about his inter-team relationships and how he was able to work with those outside of his team. Like I said originally, he probably does have that experience, but I don’t want to infer that on some of the vague things that he wrote. So I would just ask him to kind of clarify that a little bit. Let’s see, really my process is typically to make sure that I ask the five why’s, so who, what, when, where, why, and sometimes, you know, the how. So I would probably just go through and pick a couple of their main bullet points and just ask relevant questions as it falls with those. Let’s see, I don’t have anything written down for that, I’m sorry.

Q: No. That’s perfect.

A: Yeah, and you know I’d probably want to hear their perspective too just on what service excellence actually means to them and have them describe that to me in their own words because obviously as a customer service rep that’s, you know, something that should be top priority. So kind of giving them the opportunity to provide that in their own words would, one, make sure that we know, you know, what we’re actually getting, where their head is at, right? And then it will also give us a little bit more insight into who they are as an employee. Time management, yeah, probably asking a little bit about that just to see if they’ve handled different projects or how do they kind of manage their priorities and what their process is like for that. And just some clarifying questions about those competencies most likely.

Q: Okay. That makes sense. Perfect. Is there anything else that you would want me to know about the decision that you came to? I mean, we have talked a good 40 minutes, you know, as to your decision which is slightly longer than it took for you to come to it, but is there anything else that we didn’t discuss that you were thinking as you were making the decision?

A: I don’t think so. I covered most of the points that I had written down and everything also that I had highlighted. But, like I said, the one thing that I also look for are things that kind of tell me if a candidate is willing and able to kind of go above and beyond the scope of their actual job. Again, those are typically inferences made by looking at their statements and sometimes things that come through in the initial phone call. But that is definitely something that I try to look for because as HR and I know for the leaders that I support, they are working to build their bench and we’re looking to hire people that aren’t just going to leave in the next year or two years or whatever. So we want to make sure that we’re hiring loyal people, people that are willing to grow and learn, and people that are moldable so that we can continue to kind of shoot them towards success in the organization.
Q: Excellent. Okay. Good. Great. Okay. So just a couple of, you know, just so that you kind of understand what comes after this. So what I do as I mentioned with the recordings is I turn this out to a third party transcription service here in Indy and they turn that into a text-based document for me. And what I’ll do is I’ll e-mail that to you and ask for quick, “Hey, this is accurate,” or you know, “No, this is a little bit different.” And if there’s anything after you’re looking at it that you’re like, you know what, I would have rather have said it this way or what I (inaudible) was this, right? Because obviously, you know, words are just words when they’re put on paper, right? So just (inaudible) clarifications or any further thoughts. And then once I’m done with all of my interviews, I’ll conduct roughly 10 to 12, I’ll put them all together and start coding similar thoughts, similar patterns of methodology, similar conversations, those kinds of things, and then come up with a general phenomenon across the people that I have met with in terms of how you screened these applicants. And so to that point, my perspective is completely separate from everything that I’m doing, so at that point I’ll then add my perspective into the mix as well and turn that into a narrative that represents the phenomenon as I’ve studied it. And then I will send that to each of you as an opportunity for you to kind of look at it, you know, as a whole as well, and it’s an accuracy check called Member Checking where each member, each coresearcher, because I can’t research without you, you know, says “Yep, this does make sense to me,” and then just ask for, you know, verification back from you that, “Yep, this does make sense,” given, you know, what you’ve sent me. And then the final stage is I’ll take that narrative and situate it within the current research around screening processes and sort of HR methodology and put it into context. So that’s the final piece of it, and so I’ll send that to you and we’ll kind of do a debrief, if you will about how I situated that in the literature. And from this point forward, this particular interview forward, you’re now participant number 002. You’re my second interview, so thank you. And your name won’t be associated with any data going forward. I have a list of your names and your participant numbers at this point only so that I know who to send each individual transcript to when I get it back from the third party transcription service. But once I get your verification on that, I’ll actually discard the key so that I actually won’t be able to, unless I have an awesome memory, which I don’t sadly, I won’t be able to trace any of our conversations back to any individual person, which is kind of the purpose of the, you know, sort of looking at a phenomenon from a larger perspective and also protecting the confidentiality of each of my coresearchers. So I just kind of wanted to walk you through, you know, you’re a person now at this particular moment and, you know, I’ll send you that e-mail with your transcription. But after that then it just gets put into the mix of data and, of course, you know, then I’ll communicate to you guys as a whole, but it won’t reveal your e-mail addresses or anything like that to each other. So you won’t even know who your other coresearchers are unless you specifically ask at one point, and I can do that introduction, you know, towards the end if you’re interested. So any questions about the rest of the process at all?

A: No. You know, I’m really looking forward to it. This is fascinating and, you know, hopefully I’ll be able to learn something, too, from what you kind of put together here. So thank you.

Q: Yeah. I’m excited. Yeah. Well, no, thank you. I mean, truly, you know, it’s such a process, right? And so I appreciate your willingness to participate and, of course, your willingness to give me, you know, all of your secrets to screening. It’s really helpful and it will be really cool to kind of see how it looks over a few people and kind of look at the commonality,
so I’m interested in seeing that as well. So, again, thank you so, so much and hopefully I’ll have the transcriptions back by the end of next week. If it looks like it’s going to take longer than that, I’ll just drop you a quick note and kind of let you know so that you can sort of plan the time to take a look at that. But, yeah. So if there’s anything – any questions that you have anytime, just drop me a note and then we’ll talk then.

A: Perfect. Thank you so much and good luck.

Q: Alright. Thanks. Have a good day.

(END OF INTERVIEW)
OVI011 Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Go ahead and press that. OK. Any questions that I can answer about the research project, about consent, or anything like that, and sort of get that out of the way before we dig in here?

OVI011: No, I think I'm all set.

Interviewer: OK. Great. It's great to spend some time on the phone with you today, and so nice of Emma and Kerry to refer you. They're two of my favorite people in the whole world.

OVI011: [laughs]

Interviewer: OK, so here's what I was trying to accomplish today with interviews. When you went through phase one, when I made you choose, you chose John over Jerry, John Singer versus Jerry Smith. What I was wondering if you could do at the beginning of this, this time, is just walk me through your process that you went through, to screen the résumés, one, and then two, what led you overall -- globally, if you will -- towards John versus Jerry.

OVI011: Sure. I always start with the job descriptions. I read that first, and got a feel for what you were looking for in the position, what the requirements were. Those sorts of things. Then I just opened them in order. I don't remember what order you had sent them, but I looked at whatever candidate one was first and then two. I did a glance-through. I'm not sure you probably want to hear it but I almost never read a full résumé.

Interviewer: [laughs]

OVI011: I didn't in this case either. I really skimmed it, probably a harder skim than I normally do because I knew that I was being tested but --

Interviewer: [laughs]

OVI011: -- my normal process is just really fast, looking for those keywords to jump out, checking for key requirements --

Interviewer: Right.

OVI011: -- especially with something like this, where there's not a whole lot of requirements. There weren't a lot of things to knock somebody out on. So I looked at the total years of experience and found that those were exactly the same. I couldn't use that. Then there was something I'm looking now to find. It's not jumping out at me now but... On Jerry's résumé I remember there being
a typo or something worded funny. Something caught me -- Oh, it's the first sentence "five years experience" with the apostrophe. It was one of those immediate, "Ah, maybe written communication isn't that good," and that would be important in this role.

**Interviewer:** Interesting.

**OVI011:** Next to them, I looked through John's I didn't see anything glaring in that same way. The format, readability was a little better on John's; his jumps off the page a little bit easier. That was the main thing. There wasn't anything that was this degree is better than that degree or this experience was better than that experience. They really were very, very similar.

**Interviewer:** Yes, and they were purposely similar.

**OVI011:** I figured that.

**Interviewer:** [laughs] I appreciate that perspective. It's actually a question that I will ask you very concretely at the end in terms of whether you would have brought both of these folks in, or done a phone screen with both of them, but I'll get to that in a second.

Good.

One of the interesting things that I'm finding about folks that do go through a lot of résumés and screen candidates is that you're a very definitive bunch. [laughs]

**OVI011:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** It's funny, because when I had originally planned this phase, I was thinking these conversations would be sixty to ninety minutes. When I did my first one it was over in twenty minutes. I was like, Oh no! [laughs]

**OVI011:** [laughs]

**Interviewer:** "What do I do now?" [laughs]

Here's something that I found really helpful for me just to get a little more texture around these résumés. If I walk you through both résumés in terms of each section side by side, maybe you can give me more thoughts there. So if we look at that top portion of the résumé -- people call it so many things now --

**OVI011:** Sure.
Interviewer: -- the career objective, target position, all these kinds of things. Was John's significantly better than Jerry's? Were there good and bad things about both? Give me some flavor there.

OVI011: I do almost always skip right past them, although I'll tell you, my hiring managers do the opposite. It's the first thing they look at and they'll come and ask me, "He didn't say he wanted to be this why are we looking at him?"

Interviewer: [laughs]

OVI011: So there's a different perspective depending on how many résumés you see in your day to day. But no, I wouldn't say one's better than the other. I like the lines in John's. It does give it some definition. I know where to look and where to follow next without having to read every word. When I glance at John's, I get this couple of key words, "exceptional service" "loyal relationship." Those kinda jump off the page. Then the listening piece in the second bullet; that's one I noticed right away. Then on the opposite side, you see the five years right away. His other piece doesn't jump out as much; it says "college customer service rep offering." It's just not as prominent on the page so you go straight to the bullets and you see that "five years unwavering commitment relationship partner building." Overall, they're very similar. I like the look of John's better, right or wrong; it reads better to me.

Interviewer: There certainly are no right or wrong answers in this, right?

OVI011: [laughs]

Interviewer: Very individual experience, so I appreciate that. Have you seen the trend in this top portion of the résumé change over time? What are your thoughts there? How have you seen that change?

OVI011: It used to be a straight objective sentence. What people were encouraged to do was to change that every time they sent out a résumé, so you put the objective specific to the position or the company, or maybe highlight one or two things. Now it has changed to the skills summary, usually, like "these are the things I bring to the table." It's almost replaced a cover letter. These are the things you used to say in a cover letter. I don't think they're that useful. Nobody was reading cover letters to begin with. Now just because you're putting it on the document, it still doesn't mean that anybody's gonna read it. They're gonna immediately say, how many years do you have? What was your last title? Where were you working? Do I know the company? Those are the things that people are typically looking for when they are reviewing your résumé.

I met with some students yesterday. I was doing mock interviews at IPY. I questioned them all and whatever their first thing was on their résumé. Theirs was almost all education not objectives. We had good dialogue around why
and what do you want people to know about you. Do you want people to know you just got a degree? If that's the thing you're leading with, fine. But if you're applying for jobs that may be have a little more experience required or whatever, that might not be as crucial.

Interviewer: Right. Good. That must have been fun to hang out with students and run through...

OVI011: Yes.

Interviewer: That's great. Good for you.

That's helpful. That top portion -- again, purposely similar some ways. Jerry kind of jumped right out and kind of pounded you with five years experience, whereas [07:41][crosstalk] John --

OVI011: [07:41] Right.

Interviewer: -- used potentially more action-oriented language, maybe. I guess that might be what I called that. He also had a bit of a tag line, so I think he might have been doing a little better job of that sort of professional branding area.

OVI011: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: OK. Good. So let's go down to experience. Yes, their experiences are the same in terms of years. We've got John, in his descriptions, uses some more, what I would call descriptive language, seems to have fleshed out his responsibilities a little more. He also provided a description of each company he had worked for. Whereas Jerry was much more succinct in his responsibilities and didn't supply that next, that piece of information about putting his companies into context.

Tell me a little bit about this section. What jumped out at you?

OVI011: One thing that jumped out about both is they don't really talk about the volume of calls. It's the first question I would have for anybody in a customer service interview. What was your volume like? How many customers were you dealing with every day? How long was each call? Those kind of things are the things you're evaluated on in a call center or customer service role. I was surprised to not see that on either of theirs. Maybe it's because I do more sales than engineering recruiting now. I'm used to seeing numbers and metrics and there just weren't any here. I think that's why, as I read through and I looked that the years were exactly the same, there was nothing to stand out about either one of them. I had to focus in other areas to make any differentiation between them.
Interviewer: What areas did you focus on then, when you say that?

OVI011: Then I focused more on their overall presentation. As you said, John’s selling himself more and seemed a little more professional and polished. Where Jerry seemed like, I've done customer service and I'm going to continue to do it. That's fine if that's what you're looking for, but neither one of them... I think there is one place where Jerry says, "I'm consistently recognized." What does that mean? What are you recognized for? For answering the phone or for doing something special? [laughs]

Interviewer: [laughs]

OVI011: There's just not any differentiators in here.

Interviewer: OK. Excellent. What about that description of the companies, is that helpful to you? Did you not care about that?

OVI011: I did not care. I didn't even notice until you just mentioned it, that one had it and one didn't. I think it's a lot more helpful when you get into leadership roles, because then you want to know what's the size and scope of organizations this person's worked in before. If it's customer service they've managed customers big or small, it might be helpful to know how many customers they had to deal with on a regular basis. Outside of that, I don't know that the industry or the size matters all that much.

Interviewer: OK. Good. Then when we scroll down to education, they both meet the minimum requirement that was in the job description, and received them at the same time. The one thing that neither of them did, which is probably something I should have corrected, was to provide their program that they graduated in. I'll take that one on. Really, the core differences between these two pieces on the résumé obviously Kaplan is a for-profit institution, whereas southern New Hampshire is more of a traditional non-profit. Tell me how that weighs in your decision or if it weighed in this one at all.

OVI011: It didn't. What I noticed about both of them is they didn't go away to school. They went to school in the same area they lived. To me it meant they were both probably non-traditional students. They both worked while they were in school, it would appear. I didn't feel like one was better than the other and honestly, I didn't know Kaplan was for profit. It wouldn't have swayed me either way.

Interviewer: Right. It's interesting I think you're the first person who mentioned they were going to school while they were working. I think you're the first person who actually picked that up. You're absolutely right. Both of them technically would have had to have been working while they were pursuing their associate degrees. In terms of trends, once again, have you seen a trend towards less
worry about for-profit college credentials so if you had a IUPUI grad versus a University of Phoenix grad, would that say anything to you? Or is that something you're not concerned about?

OVI1011: It depends. If it was somebody that went straight from high school, straight to college, didn't start working till after, it would matter then, to me, because I think that the college experience is so different. I'd want to know more about why and what took you on that path. Where if it's somebody who's working, you assume people do whatever it takes to get through that degree. Much different approach when you're working a full time job and going to school. Then it's more about grit and determination than the piece of paper.

Interviewer: Right. Tell me a little more about that. The person did go right from high school to college. What are your feelings about that experience that would make them better or worse of a candidate?

OVI1011: It's a lot of things and it would come down to the interview, because usually you're not gonna see it on the résumé. For example, if somebody went to IPY as you said and they get their four year degree and you see that they're not from Indiana based on address or other job where they're listed, those kind of things, you could start to make some assumptions. They came for the college experience; they spent four years on campus. Then I would wanna know: What organizations were you involved in? What did you do on campus? Did you take on any leadership roles? Did you work an internship? All of those things. I'd want to know what you did to stand out in that four year environment versus if you were doing University of Phoenix. The first question would be: Did you go to campus or on line, because there's both. Any of those schools, I'd wanna know: What were you doing at the same time? Why did you choose an on line university? What were some of the takeaways for you? It would be up to me if somebody was doing an on line type of school and not working at the same time. That would seem a weird path. I don't know why, it just would.

Together: [laughter]

Interviewer: I think there's a certain... Those are really thoughtful questions.

This is an interesting interview because you said, now, a couple of things that I haven't heard before and I only have three more left. I think that's really interesting.

OVI1011: Oh, yay.

Interviewer: Yeah. That's really cool. You seem to have a really analytical approach. Again, I know that you said you really looked at these résumés much more closely than you might when you're doing your traditional screening
OVI011: Yeah.

Interviewer: -- screening. I think those are absolutely worthy questions in understanding why people choose their paths may actually say something about who they are as the person.

OVI011: ...and what their long term goals are. Where do they want to go next? How do we fit into that?

Interviewer: Right. Interesting. OK. Cool.

So the for-profit and non-profit thing is not an issue for you period. That's what I'm hearing.

OVI011: No.

Interviewer: OK. Good.

Alright, in the last part of the résumé, seminars versus trainings, we've got John, who has probably listed the title of his trainings, whereas Jerry potentially listed what the content was of his trainings. How heavy does that training section weigh on your decision?

OVI011: I did notice John's. I felt like it was more impactful. It could be as simple as, he has all the words starting in caps, so they sound like real seminars that he went to, not just content that you picked up. [laughs] Where I would assume then the training under Jerry’s is like training they had on the job. Things everybody went through.

Interviewer: Yeah, I think you're probably right there. Content aside, it's difficult to... Lemme ask it in a question: Is it difficult for you to evaluate them because you don't really understand what the content really was and whether it was company focused?

OVI011: Yes, to some extent it is. I'd also wanna know was this ongoing training. The customer service excellence: Is this a track that everybody at Experian goes through and you had ongoing feedback? You're continuously improving your skills, which is a better thing in my mind than: I went to one seminar about customer focus and I put it on my résumé.

Interviewer: Right. OK. Good. Well, good.

So we got through both of them side by side. In going through that exercise of giving me some context, if you will, with the candidates side by side, is there anything else about the decision that you made in terms of maybe even your
previous experiences or things you're working on now that led you down the John path versus Jerry?

**OVI011:** That's a good question, because we do come with our own personal bias every day. No, I don't think there was in this case, because they were so similar. There was nothing that jumped out at me or something I understood or knew anything about prior to the exercise. I don't think there was anything, no.

**Interviewer:** OK. After discussing your selection and walking me through again, are you still confident in your decision -- again, I know I made you choose -- but would you still be confident in your decision of John over Jerry?

**OVI011:** I would, yes. If I only had time to interview one candidate that's the call I'd make.

**Interviewer:** The very last question -- boy we just breezed through this -- If you didn't have to choose, if you could bring in multiple candidates, or phone screen multiple candidates would you have called both of them?

**OVI011:** I likely would. It would depend on the full candidate pool, but I would still call them in the same order. I'd call John first and I would see how that went. That might sway whether I move forward with Jerry, because if I found that the years of experience and educational background just really wasn't working when we get on the phone and went through it, I probably wouldn't call a guy that looked so similar.

**Interviewer:** Right. OK. Good. Good.

Well, excellent. Thank you.

So let me just walk you through a couple of the next steps, so that you have some --

**OVI011:** OK.

**Interviewer:** -- idea of what we do from here.

At one point I'd absolutely like to meet you face to face. So we'll have to figure that out, because I'm obviously here in Indy too.

What will happen next is I will take this interview and I will send it out to transcription. Just prior to doing that I'll strip your name from the document and assign you a participant code so that your identity is still only known to me.

**OVI011:** OK.
Interviewer: Once I have that back -- I should have that back I would say probably Tuesday or Wednesday of next week. Once I have it back I'll email it to you and ask you to take a brief look at it, make sure it's an accurate representation of what we talked about today and most importantly, if there's anything else that's occurred to you about the decision making process of John versus Jerry. Love to take that in at that time.

Just a caveat about transcriptions: It's kind of a funky thing to see a thirty minute conversation in text. [laughs] Right when I laughed just then, in brackets it will say "laughter" and if I made the mistake of talking at the same time as you were, we'll get the brackets that say "crosstalk" so I have learned some lessons the hard way in this process. [laughs] But generally speaking you should be looking at it with the lens: Is this the overall essence of what I was saying?

OVI011: OK.

Interviewer: I'm gonna go over every single transcript during coding and make sense of that data which is really what will happen once you all confirm that your transcripts are good to go. I will then take them all and look for common themes across the fifteen people that I interview, and try to come up with a collective experience of the screening between these two candidates. Really, because this is this type of research, qualitative research, it really is only a general phenomena in this fifteen participant pool. It may not be what everyone experiences, but it really is what the fifteen of you have experienced. When I get that narrative all written, at the very end of writing that, I'll then add my experiences but I purposely keep those at bay until after coding all of your experiences.

OVI011: OK.

I combine that narrative. I'll send that out to you. That's your opportunity to see that collective experience and I'd love to have your thoughts at that time about what it might mean. If there were some common themes across all of your interviews and they had positive or negative implications for your field I would love to hear about those things at that time. It may be that I don't find any commonalities. I don't think that that is true, based on what I've heard so far.

OVI011: OK.

Interviewer: One of the things I can tell you is that screening is a very individualistic experience. Just like you said, you come in with your own set of experiences and potential biases and that's how you screen résumés. [laughs] It will be interesting to look at that all from a broader perspective.
The very last part of the process is the research debrief. What happens then is I take my narrative and I situate it in the current body of research. I find a place for it, if you will, in the body of research that already exists. That's the fun part because that's really where the implications get documented. We find that there's this one significant theme across all the interviews and we find that might not be an awesome thing, then what are the implications? How do we increase awareness? How do we train our peers? Those kinds of things. I don't think we're going to find anything negative. It will be interesting to see how that all comes together. That last piece is sticking it inside the current research pool.

So those are the next few steps. My goal is to have, like I said, the transcript I would hope to have out to you by Tuesday night, Wednesday morning of next week. Then my next goal would be to have the narrative ready for you to look at towards the end of this month.

OVI011: OK.

Interviewer: -- which is an aggressive goal but I'm pushing myself to get this done, so that would be the potential target date.

Any questions about all of that, OVI011?

OVI011: No, I don't think so. You've been really thorough.

Interviewer: Thank you. That's really nice to hear. Thank you so much for dropping in to this research study. I know you're obviously really busy. I just saw a press release yesterday that you guys are expanding so I'm sure that means more work for you. [laughs]

OVI011: Yes it's a good problem to have.

Interviewer: It is, it's an absolutely great problem to have. Congratulations on that too.

OVI011: Thank you.

Interviewer: Like I said, you should hear from me next week. I'll forward that to you, seeing that you are OK with that and if there are any thoughts there and we'll go from there.

OVI011: Sounds good. Thanks so much.

Interviewer: Thanks for your time today, OVI011. Enjoy the rest of the beautiful afternoon.

OVI011: Thank you.
Interviewer: Talk to you soon.

OVI011: Bye.

Interviewer: Bye.
Q: Okay, so we are being recorded. Excellent. And are you logging in over phone or computer? Would you be able to see my screen if I put something up there?

A: I’m logging in from a computer, so I can see screen if you can - but I don’t think there is GoToMeeting in my system. Just give me a couple of minutes. Let me just quickly check that out.

Q: I went ahead and shared my screen.

A: Yeah, I don’t have GoToMeeting on my system.

Q: Well, you know, unless you really need to see the screen, the only thing that I have pulled up is Jerry Smith’s résumé, which is the person that you said you would be most likely to choose based on the two options.

A: Alright. I have that in front of me.

Q: Okay. So perfect. So we can just sort of work off of that. Perfect. Okay. So what I’m trying to do today is just really – this is all about you talking and I may ask some clarifying questions, but what I’m interested in is if you could kind of take me through the process that you went through in terms of selecting Jerry Smith as your preferred candidate over Mr. Singer. So one of the best ways to do that that I’ve seen so far is if you could just kind of start, you know -- it doesn’t have to be by his name, but kind of start at the top of the résumé and say, “Here are the things that I was thinking about. Here are the previous experiences that I would use to evaluate this section,” just whatever comes to mind. And, again, I may ask you some clarifying questions, but let’s just kind of start with maybe you taking me through that résumé. Is that okay?

A: Yes. That’s okay. The job description that you sent out is for a customer service representative and, you know, the description is pretty simple. It’s the generalistic customer service representative that you’re looking for and the top priority is that this is a full-time job, that is Monday through Friday and 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. It’s very much in the general office hours where you’re looking for somebody to take up the customer service, and there is no travel in this, and the required education and experience that you’re looking for is customer service experience and computer experience. So when you say the required education and experience, I understand these are the mandatory skillsets that you’re looking at in a person that you would like to hire for this job.

Q: Right.

A: So when I read about the computer experience, I typically understood it to be a computer end user operating skills. That is the usage of computer, keyboard, mouse and the software part of it may be Excel, Powerpoint or whatever the internal software is that is required at the
workplace. So these are the top prioritizations that I have taken. And apart from that, you did mention in the job skillset that you were looking at somebody having good problem solving analysis, time management and teamwork orientation, technical capability, communication proficiency. So all of these seem perfectly definitely required for a customer service person because, you know, if they are going to take some calls, then they have to be very much having great skills analyzing the problem quickly so that they can resolve it quickly, so that the call time doesn’t go long. And apart from that, the communication definitely needs to be great because the opposite person who’s talking to them over the phone or maybe the routine communication over the e-mail, both things should be clear enough because it is not in-person communication happening there. And when you say the technical capacity that you’re looking at, it’s just a generalist technical capacity, that’s what I understand here. Now the time management definitely plays a big role because you can’t have your customer on the call for hours, or you can’t even expect them to hold on the line or talk to you for 15 to 20 minutes a case because when they’re calling with an issue, they will be frustrated, then they should be easily talking to you to get those solutions quickly. So the person who’s going to definitely take the call should be having that little competency to understand the problem quickly as well as give a solution to it. So that’s where time management comes in the picture. Now, the résumé that I have chosen was Jerry Smith. The first prioritization on which I have chosen is Jerry is jobless as far as I understand and he’s looking for a job. So he is available Monday through Friday and he would be able to take up the job from the general hours that we’re looking for, that is 8:30 to 5:00. But whereas the other person that you sent out, John Singer, he was looking at only a part time job. So now if you really look at both of these people, Jerry and John, it’s easier for us to talk to Jerry and take his prescreening, look into his professional skillset and then hire him, the reason being he is available for a job full time. You don’t have to convince him to leave his current job or to come onto this one, to take it up full time. So then that would be a tough thing to be done. You don’t have to put in that extra hours if you’re going for Jerry. Now, Jerry has the kind of experience that you’re looking for, that is a customer service rep, he is almost into five years and it’s all call center settings that he did. So when he says call center settings, definitely the technical knowhow, the technical analysis that you’re looking for, he does have that. So if you look at, you know, the summary or briefing of the résumé, in the beginning he clearly mentions that he has very good skills of win/win outcomes. That is, in case the problem is typical, he can solve it. He would definitely give a solution which would still satisfy the customer. That’s very important when, you know, you’re working in a call center. When you talk to customers, it’s important that you talk to them and you make them feel good and give them satisfaction that, you know, the problem is solved, or whatever purpose they have called for has been fulfilled. And he does have the required skillset of if you look at education, he has done the Associate’s degree and he has customer service excellence training done, and he has dealt with clients handling multiple priorities. Now priorities, when he’s mentioned this word, saying “multiple priorities,” that means out of multiple priorities, also he might have definitely done , you know, prioritizing the task based on the situation and the time given, he definitely would have the skills of looking into prioritizing them in a sequence order, not to take them all together and say all of them are important and all of them have to be dealt with at the same time. So that’s where the time management skills can be analyzed when he says he has done multiple prioritization, multi-tasking words. And since he said he has worked a lot in the public utility and insurance industry, it just says that, you know, somebody working in the insurance industry definitely need to have great convincing skills because to sell insurance, you know, to resolve any disputes you have in
insurance, any of them definitely is going to take a lot of patience and a lot of time. Somebody who is dealing with customers should have the patience to talk to them, to listen to them to whatever extended talking, and then give the solution. So that’s where I really liked his résumé and I felt he would be best fit for the job description that is existing where you would like to hire somebody out there.

Q: Okay. Great. Well, let me just ask you a couple of clarifying questions and I think probably I needed to look at Mr. Singers résumé a little more closely because he was also looking for full time, so I think it was just a miswording that, you know, sort of led you down the path thinking that he would be more interested in part time, so that was my fault, so I wanted to clarify that.

A: Okay.

Q: So, you know, but if you did look at them both side by side, you know, thinking that they both were looking for full time work, were there still some reasons, you know, that you would have chosen Jerry over John? Did some of those things -- or did you just kind of put John’s résumé to the side once you discovered that he might not be available for full time?

A: The only reason I didn’t pick up Singer’s résumé is that he is not available for full time. Otherwise, you know, Singer is the best fit for this position.

Q: Oh, interesting. Okay. Can you tell me a little bit more about why you would say that?

A: Okay. Now, if you look at the résumé write-up of Jerry and résumé write-up of Singer, Singer’s résumé looks much professional, very much discrete to whatever kind of job he has done. Now he simply is presenting himself to the point and he’s giving you very clear explanations. According to me, hiring happens on the first phase if there is a regimen selection that has to be done. Now, how good the résumé is written up would definitely give you an insight onto the skills of the person. Now if they’ve got it done, you know, typically speaking, if there’s a professional résumé write up, I should say they have taken enough care and they are definitely good at whatever they want to do. Now, if a person is giving you a professional write up regimen, where then he is looking at all that is required on the résumé, it shows a seriousness to want the job such that he’s willing (inaudible) as well as it shows his dedication to do the job that he’s applying. Now, a person who’s having a good résumé would always want to submit for positions which are suitable. He would not be sending out his résumé just random to any position that’s coming up. So, now, as you said, I mean it’s a mistake and you said that--

Q: It’s absolutely mine.

A: So in that case, if John Singer, you know, if Singer is to be taken a look at it, his résumé is also similar to that of John, but then he has given a lot of insight into the work that he was doing on each and every job. He has clearly mentioned what kind of calls he was taking. He has had telephonic inquiry, giving them quality services. He is mentioning what kind of job he has really done as a customer service rep. When it’s coming to Jerry, you know, Jerry has – these are very general. The skillset – I’m sorry, the job requirements that is mentioned, it is very
general. He said, “Efficiently handling incoming customer order inquiry.” Efficiently handling is something very vague. Now, he could have very well mentioned, you know, the customer order inquiries, the kind of work he might have worked on, or the kind of orders he might have taken, number of orders he was doing, something like that would have been much more precise. But if you’re looking at Singer’s résumé, he has clearly mentioned how he takes the processes. He has given telephone inquiry calls as well as, you know, he shows his dedication to whatever service orientation he was looking at. So now the customer service representative definitely needs to be very much service oriented. It’s just not the patience, you know. He should always be interested in assisting somebody. He must always be having that inquisitiveness to help somebody else. So that’s the reason I said, you know, Singer would be my choice if he was also available for a full time opportunity, you know. I would talk to Singer first and then Jerry.

Q: Right. Okay. And so, so let me backtrack a little bit and kind of ask you some more general questions. When I look at them side by side, you know, I noticed that, you know, John’s résumé, you know, has a little bit of color in it, and he’s got some lines there. And, you know, Jerry is a little – you know, they are kind of similar résumés and format, but there are some nuances in terms of formatting. How important is formatting to you as you’re going through the process of screening? You know, what are the kinds of aesthetics you’re looking for in a positive, you know, candidate?

A: Formatting and writing up a résumé is a top priority for me. As I said, you know, once I receive a résumé, now if I’m hiring a position I might receive 10 to 15 for the same position. But then something which would pick me up, that is, you know, something which would grab my notice would be where the résumé is giving me insight. At one glance I should be able to understand whether that person is right or wrong. It should show me his strength and weakness. It should show me the kind of job performance the person has done. So if somebody is, you know, having a real good résumé write up with great formatting, then I would obviously understand that he is very much into creating and writing up his résumé, and the interest, the interest perspective. One, somebody who was in need of a job or who is very professionally would always want to have a professional résumé, you know? The résumé is the face of the person that we are going to talk. Now, coming to John and Jerry, both of them – we don’t know, but then looking at the résumé the present ability speaks, you know. John Singer could be a much more eligible person because the kind of résumé write-up and the formatting and the presentation that he has put forward, it just shows his interest into the job. It simply states that he loves the job that he’s doing.

Q: Interesting. Okay. And let’s talk about the first section, sort of, you know, sometimes people call it the career summary or the objective or, you know, what have you. You know, if you look at Jerry and John side by side, you know, and it may be that you like Jerry’s more over John’s, you know, if you just look at these discrete parts of the résumé, but which one stood out to you as better than the other?

A: The first impression, you know, is coming with the summary of the résumé that just they started out their résumé with, it’s still Singer who impressed me, not Smith.

Q: Okay. And – And –
A: Because if you look at it and the impression that I get after looking at both the résumés, Smith seems to be a little bit of a clumsy guy, you know, who just does the job for the purpose of doing it. When you come to Singer, you feel he is professional and you see the interest that he has, the kind of presentation he’s giving, he just says the responsibilities in title of the résumé. You might remember John Singer and then you might remember him as a customer service representative the way he started off. But for Jerry, you will not be able to remember that, you know, because it just says one thing, it says customer service, five years in a call center. A lot has been mentioned just from the beginning. But for me what makes sense is that I’m looking for a customer service or customer service manager. Now, just below that he is, you know, like a tagline, he is mentioned things like providing exceptional services, you know, loyal relationships, solving problems, increasing sales. See, in that forward, you know, you’re getting what he is into. Whereas for Smith’s résumé, you’ll have to go through all his résumé to understand what he has done.

Q: Okay. That makes sense. So when we then scroll down to experience, you know, one of the things that I noticed on John’s résumé versus Jerry’s is that, you know, next to each of those companies he has given a quick, you know, I guess sentence about what kind of company that was, whereas Jerry didn’t really provide that. You know, is that important to you, you know, as someone who’s, you know, sifting through a lot of résumés as well?

A: Oh, that is definitely of great importance because when I say I’m looking for a customer service representative, this could be a midsized company, it could be a big company, it could be a multinational, you know? Now, when I speak of the size of a company, the size speaks of the number of calls, the amount of customer service activity that is involved as well. Now, you know, if you look at Singer, he mentioned that this is a national retail brand. When you talk of retail, there will be a lot of things involved in retail. It’s just not one single product that a person has to deal with there. So here it really gives a great impression when he just has given, you know, one line of insight into the kind of company he is working with. That definitely has a great impression and it gives a better edge for a recruiter or a hiring manager to understand whether that is the kind of person that they want to hire or not.

Q: And I know you said you thought Jerry’s descriptions of his duties were a little more vague than John’s. Can you sort of – you know, and I just wanted to reiterate that at this point, you know, in the interview and I guess I can see that as I’m looking at them side by side. There does seem to be a little bit more on John’s résumé in terms of what he did. And I also noticed, you know, that John has mentioned some accomplishments and things in here in his narrative. You know, how important is it to sort of understand job duties versus accomplishments in a résumé?

A: I would choose the job duties because ultimately, you know, customer service representatives are the face of the company. He’s the first person that will be talking to the clients and the customers. So his job duties would be of great importance to me, to see whether his past experience matches to what I’m looking at for the current position.
Q: And what about his accomplishments there, you know, in terms of metrics and sort of meeting and exceeding goals. Is that also important for you to see or do you just kind of want to dig into that when you meet them?

A: If there are accomplishments, they are great. It would be an added advantage. It’s a plus I should say. But it would not be important as such because accomplishments on a team usually, you know, one or two persons get that, not all of them, but it doesn’t mean the rest of them have not done their job or they’re not doing it great. But if you’re able to find the creamy layer, that’s much better I should say.

Q: Okay. Yeah. That’s an interesting –

A: So that absolutely – yeah, the accomplishments would be, I should say, it could be a chocolate cake.

Q: Yeah. Interesting. Okay. And when I look at their education sections, they both have their Associate’s degree. You know, it looks like Jerry has graduated from a state university and John graduated from a for-profit college. You know, how does that play into your decision making?

A: For me, education is just a credential, one more credential to add, saying that there is formal study being done. Now, I would definitely look into the educational qualifications and the kind of colleges or universities they’re coming out of for a refresher but not for an experienced person. The reason being that once somebody has worked, they have gotten exposure and they know how to work on a team, the teamwork, the team environment, the office culture. They learn all of that. And when we are hiring experienced people, that’s of more importance than the college or the educational background.

Q: Right. Now that makes perfect sense to me. So if they were both recent college grads, you know, how would you then sort of evaluate, you know, their education? What kind of process would you go through?

A: If it’s a recent graduate, I don’t think for a customer service rep we really need to look into the tagline of the university or college. Just absolutely, you know, if it’s a recent grad, it would be just based on their communication skills, the computer awareness, still it would be the same. I don’t change my parameters there. For me, I would not be looking at the college or the university on a much important side, I should say.

Q: Got you.

A: Because this is not a management position. I would definitely want to look into, you know, what kind of, you know, university or college they’re coming out if it is a management position.

Q: I see. Okay. So that’s interesting. And so if you were looking at one of the – let’s say these guys had a little bit more experience and you were looking maybe to hire sort of a high
potential person, someone that would sort of be a successor, you know, to a manager in your company. You know, how would you then dig into that education? I’m just curious.

A: Then definitely I would want to, you know, give importance to the college or the university that they might have come out because that really makes sense. The college is a place where they might have done a lot of study, and at the same time there was a lot of, you know, peer connectivity and peer communication which might have happened, and a bigger atmosphere definitely gives a greater exposure. So somebody, if you say, in this position you want to hire and in the near future you’re looking for them to get into the next level or a manager caliber, then yes I would definitely look at the education qualification, too.

Q: Okay. And you would think a bigger college would give them sort of a more diverse experience? Is that what I heard you say?

A: Yes. That’s right. I agree. So you know if they’re coming out of a bigger college, bigger atmosphere, the communication, the hierarchy that they look at over there and the teamwork that they might have done might be social or might be cultural activities or might be study project work, that would be more. It would be a greater exposure there. For somebody to get into a managerial career definitely should have such kind of exposures.

Q: Yeah, that makes sense, I think, just in terms of, you know, kind of understanding, you know, how to be a citizen in some ways, right? And, you know, yeah, I think I’m definitely understanding what you’re saying. And does it matter that—so like Southern New Hampshire is, you know, a very traditional, you know, university that’s been around for, gosh, I don’t even know how long, and Kaplan is more of those, you know, it’s a for-profit that’s a little more trade, you know, oriented. So would the type of college make a difference to you, you know, outside of the size, would sort of the orientation of the university make a difference to you as well?

A: Yes. Because, if a university is ranking good in commerce, now I can expect great people with a commerce background to come from there. I can’t expect to hire some science people from there for a manager career at least.

Q: Right. And so rankings and reputation?

A: Right. So, you know, when—when a college is premium at certain studies, definitely you would have that group of students who would be excellent and anybody you pick up, they would be good with that subject. That’s my understanding, you know, apart from the exposure. But then when coming to work, it’s very different. You know, what you learned, particularly whatever project work you might have done, that would not be all of that. Coming to work, there will a lot more, you know, hitting the floor and working particularly might have more challenges than the studies that they might have done. So, yes, I would definitely want to look into if the universities, except (inaudible), yes, I would seek out the similar kind of people from there.

Q: That makes perfect sense. Excellent. Okay. And so then the last section here is training and, you know, it looks like they both have three trainings. Was there just anyway about how
they presented it or the names or anything that stood out to you? Or did you just kind of, you know, look at them on a level playing field for their trainings?

A: Yes. When they mentioned the trainings, seeing somebody having a regular academic education and then training, the screening really emphasizes interest of the person because training is your choice. Education at the broad level, you might have to choose something or the other. It might be an (inaudible) subject. You might have one or two which are not really interesting to you, which are not challenging to you. But training is absolutely one’s own choice, so they take it up on their interests. Training always speaks about somebody’s interest, you know. What kind of interest they carry and what kind of career opportunities are they looking at, targeting at, would be really understood from the training aspect.

Q: Right. Good perspective. I guess that didn’t occur to me until – as soon as you said it I thought, well, yeah, that makes perfect sense. They may have had to pay for these things, you know, they certainly, you know, made choices there. Yeah. Interesting.

A: Right. Now if you look at Singer, Singer had, you know, gone for a lot of seminars. That really, you know, again, there is a difference between attending trainings and seminars. A person would attend a seminar only when, you know, they know the topic, they know the subject. A seminar is usually a short-term, really short-term, I can say, it’s just one day or maybe three days or a five day program. But whereas training would be, you know, a learning process. It might be one month or five months or six months, something like that. So somebody who’s going for a seminar, it’s just for an accreditation, you know, the latest trend to learn more of, you know, what’s coming up in the near future in the similar field of the career that they are already in. So now if you can get Singer’s résumé, you can see that he went for three seminars. Now this shows that he is having a strong interest in making up his career in customer care, getting into the next level, and all the three are customer focused. None of them are, you know, oh what do you say? None of them are managerial or, you know, general market analysis. That’s not his interest. His interest is effectively taking the customer care work. When you look at Smith’s résumé, his résumé is talking much about, you know, dealing with difficult clients. When he says client, it just means -- now, again, you can correlate what we were talking just earlier about the education, the exposure that he has. He is from a university background, so he is looking at similar kind of work. He is, you know, taking up multiple tasks at a time as well as he is targeting clients that says, you know, it tells you work ethic, I should say. It’s not just incoming calls. It’s not just the customer service assistance that he’s looking at. He is looking at holding on to a client and that’s big business for any company.

Q: Excellent. Yeah. That makes perfect sense. Okay. Well, great and so, you know, just some parting questions in terms of looking at this reflectively. Is there anything else that you would want me to know about John versus Jerry that you used in your decision making, whether it was sort of past experiences, although I think you did speak to some of your past experiences when you were talking about sort of how you define the selection criteria. It seems like you have, you know, experience maybe hiring or working in a call center, but is there anything else that you would want to tell me about how you made these selections?
A: The only reason that I selected Smith was the first reason was that he’s available for full time. Otherwise, it’s always Singer that I wanted to choose. Now reason being, you know, in a way I can say Smith would be a little over qualified for the generalist customer service representative position that we’re looking at. If you say in the near future you want the same person to take up a team, to deal with a team and handle a team, then it will be important. We don’t have that scenario now, so in the current scenario Singer would be the best for this position.

Q: Okay. Well, great. And so gosh, we actually got through that much more quickly than the others, other candidates.

A: I’d like to tell you, your simple mistake or typo error that Smith is available for full time and Singer is not had made such a big difference. The only reason being somebody who is on a full time job and looking out for part time might need more money, that he is very comfortable with his current job and it would be tough for you to convince somebody to come out of their comfort zone.

Q: Yeah. That makes perfect sense and the part of the beauty of this research design is that I do have the opportunity to, you know, kind of talk through the selection and correct any misperceptions, you know, and things like that. So this is a perfect venue to do that and actually leads me to the sort of the next couple of minutes where I talk about the rest, next steps from here. So what will happen after we’re done talking today is I will ship this recording off to the transcription service. And at that point just prior to me sending that to the transcription company, your name will be removed and you’ll be assigned a participant number and I will actually e-mail that to you. I’ve just got to check my list. I don’t want to take time digging through my files while we’re talking, but so you’ll then just have a participant code going forward so no one else will know who you are based on your interview but me. And I’ll then take those transcriptions and I will send them back out to you and just ask for verification of its accuracy. There may be just a couple of small things that you thought, no, that’s not exactly how I said it. And also at that time, you can tell me if you have sort of changed your opinion or if there were any clarifications that you wanted to make as well. And then I’ll take that data and look at that across all of the interviews that I’m doing and look for common processes and thoughts and turn that into sort of a narrative, a description if you will in terms of how people are selecting between these two candidates. And then at the very end of that sort of general overview of a selection process, I’ll then add some of my previous experiences to it and turn that into sort of a final narrative about these research participants. And so then I’ll send that to you as well and you’ll have an opportunity to sort of reflect on the general consensus. And really that will just be reflective of the folks that I’ve worked with in this research study. So the description of your experiences really is only indicative to this group, but there may be some interesting data that sort of comes out of that for each of you and certainly for myself. And then the very last step is to situate that inside of the current body of research around how folks make selections and see if that changes the game or adds to popular opinion or what have you. And then we’ll do a debrief at that point where I talk to you about how it’s situated in the research. So just to summarize, I will send you the copy of your transcription and ask you if there are any other clarifications or thoughts that occurred to you or certainly if there are any edits to the transcription. And that will probably happen in the next week and a half. It kind of depends on
how much they have on their plate over there. And then I will probably around Thanksgiving send you the overall consensus of the process that this research pool is going through in selecting candidates and ask for any thoughts at that time. And then probably the first or second week in December, I will send you the final narrative, which is really sort of the research product, if you will. Okay? Does that all make sense?

A: Yes.

Q: Great. Any questions for me at this time?

A: No, I don’t have.

Q: What’s that?

A: All the best for your research.

Q: Oh, gosh. Thank you so much. I absolutely could not do this without all of you, so I really, really appreciate your time and, like I said, you should hear from me in about a week and a half with the transcript from this meeting. Sound good?

A: Alright.

Q: Wonderful. Thank you again for your time today. Enjoy the rest of your day.

A: You’re most welcome.

Q: Alright. Take care.

A: Bye-bye.

Q: Bye.

(END OF INTERVIEW)
PEN008 Interview Transcript

**Speaker 1:** Here real quick. Ok. First let me just see, do you have any questions about the study, about the consent, anything else, you know, that sort of you had questions about that we didn't have time to connect on yet?

**PEN008:** Nothing I think that we didn't connect on per say, but being that this is kind of a newer experience for me maybe recapping -- because I know it was all through email exchange initially. Just some more insight I guess behind your study, kind of your interest, kind of thoughts behind how you might leverage it.

**Speaker 1:** Right, so this type of study is called a phenomenological study, which is a word that I’ve had to practice a little bit over time. [laughs][00:43] And so essentially what I’m doing is taking a group of people who, you know, have a skill set in screening and selecting people from résumé’s, and I’m studying their individual experiences, which is what you and I are going to do today. And then once all of those are complete, I’ll put them all together and try to capture the phenomena across these 15 people in terms of the commonalities, the themes in what they say, you know, to try to come up with a collective experience. Once I’ve done that, I’ll add my experience to it. So I’m purposefully leaving my experiences out of it until everything else is coated. And then I take that phenomena and then I situate it inside the research. So it’s kind of like backward design, so it’s coresearchers, which is you, you’re the ones that kind of lead me into the understanding of the phenomena instead of the other way around. Does that make sense?

**PEN008:** Yeah. Yeah. Interesting, yeah.

**Speaker 1:** Yeah. So it’s an interesting way to study, and it’s been fascinating. And the nice thing about it is during this phase, it’s really just you sort of describing your experience of selection in that first phase. I’m just here to sort of take that in, ask some clarifying questions. I may sort of ask you to compare and contrast the résumé’s just to bring some more texture out into the conversation. But really just kind of looking at, you know, the why. “Why did you choose John Singer over Jerry Smith? What were the things about these two résumé’s, and/or about your previous experience?” Any other externalities that would sort of
lead you down to say, “If I had to choose –“ and I realize I made you artificially choose, right?

PEN008: Right. [chuckles][02:45]

Speaker 1: “If I had to choose only one person, that you know I would bring John Singer in for a follow up.” So that’s really the central question that we’re trying to get through today is, you know, what were those things. And you can kind of just take me through the résumé’, sometimes that’s the easiest way to do it is sort of talk about how you plan – sorry, my dogs are in the background.

PEN008: Oh no, you’re fine. [chuckles][03:10]

Speaker 1: How did you plan to do the screening, and then kind of take me through John’s résumé’ and say, “Here are the things that jumped out at me.” And then again, I may ask you to sort of compare and contrast the two just to get a little more texture from there. So that’s kind of, I guess does that answer your question, PEN008?

PEN008: Yeah, absolutely. I’m always looking too, and I would imagine that is what you’re connecting with. They’ve asked similar questions or expressed, “Oh I’d definitely be interested in reading, or trying to read.” Hopefully if I [laughs][03:44] your final presentation.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

PEN008: You know, just to kind of learn and extract some thoughts too. Sometimes I come from away from trainings or conferences and things with some new ideas or perspectives, things like that.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: So I think we can always kind of learn from each other, you know. Have some takeaways.

Speaker 1: Exactly, and so the beauty of it is you’re actually going to read, you know should you decide to, obviously it’s sort of optional for the next two phases, but you are going to be able to have the chance to read the full narrative of the experience.

PEN008: Ok.
Speaker 1: So the next step after this is I will send your interview with all of your names stripped off of it out to the transcription service, and they'll send that back to me. And I won’t edit it, I’ll send it right back out to you and say, “Hey PEN008, is there anything in here that you would want to clarify? Did you have any other further thoughts about the exercise?” And then I’ll put that all in that big collective experience, I’ll ship that out to you to have you take a look, and then at the very end that’s the- we call it the debrief because that’s when I situate it inside of the research. And so you’ll be able to see exactly sort of how it sits compared with the other researchers out there in the space. So you will have the benefit of reading everything if you decide. Some people are like, “Whoa –“

PEN008: OK.

Speaker 1: [laughs][05:14] That’s more than I ever want, so we’ll just do a phone call and I’ll say, “Hey, here are my findings and here’s where we’re going next.”

PEN008: Yeah, no I think that’s why I kind of process it just so I can digest it. I’m always open to stuff. I might have more questions in due time.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

PEN008: You know, again, reading it from a research lens versus a general audience director and acquisition or HR, I might have more questions like, “What does this mean?” [laughs][05:39]

Speaker 1: Yeah.

PEN008: It would definitely seem like that.

Speaker 1: Yeah, what are the implications. Yeah, you guys might actually be really valuable in helping me sort of see- so chapter 4 of my dissertation is where I describe all of this research. So essentially that thing that I send you at the end is chapter 4. Chapter 5 is sort of the implications of the research, and I suspect I’ll get a lot of that from you in that debrief stage where you say exactly what you kind of just said, “What does this mean? So if this is true, is this also true?” So that’s again, the beauty of this kind of research is that I have that active involvement of the coresearchers that are working in the field to
kind of guide me through to say, “I hear what you’re saying here, but gosh if this is true then it also means this.” And so I think that’s why I love this research design too, because it’s like a partnership.

PEN008: Yeah, no like I said, it’s my first experience. I mean I’ve heard very abstractly of opportunities such as this, but never participated or knew anyone personally I can recall.

Speaker 1: Cool.

PEN008: You know, that was involved.

Speaker 1: Alright, excellent.

PEN008: So you want me to walk you through kind of gaining some clarity on why I selected John I suppose to lead with.

Speaker 1: Yes ma’am.

PEN008: Ok, and I see you have his résumé’ up here. Can you just scroll down a little bit for me?

Speaker 1: Sure. Tell me when because I don’t know how fast your screen will update.

PEN008: No, no, no, that’s ok. No, I just wanted to double, triple check. So my thought was – and then I see so many in this little space. [chuckles][07:21]

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: I have to refresh my memory. Yeah, so my thought was between John and Jerry. First of all that they both seemed to meet minimally the qualifications of the outline that was designed in the job description.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: However, John seemed to be a little bit more polished I guess I might say. It seemed like here just, and more that professional polish baring where I might be able to perhaps better qualify his background or experience and perhaps his potential to deliver above and beyond. The
kind of minimal or general expectations if you will of the job
description.

Speaker 1: Ok.

PEN008: And I tend to always go from that lens, because maybe level set, let’s
say we bring John in and maybe he’s only content with this role for a
limited point of time. I know that there’s some other information to let
me know if I might be overthinking it.

Speaker 1: No, that’s perfect.

PEN008: But I at least try to see, “Ok, who can minimally do, who can maybe
go above and beyond, who might just maybe be just content or might
have some gaps in opportunity even for someone in the level as it is.”
So that I can kind of level. And usually I try to gather that information
and have some dialogue with the hiring manager prior to bringing a
candidate in or maybe do that initial interview process and asset what
are their thoughts. “What are your thoughts? How do you see that you
fit? Where there any questions, concerns, etcetera? Do I have to dig
deeper?”

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm.

PEN008: And so I kind of felt like he would be a better baseline to Jerry. I think
as well that if I would have presented Jerry, you have to like check the
box, check the box, check the box. And sometime, especially I’m kind
of seeing this myself in the industry, hiring managers aren’t
necessarily thinking beyond the now. And so it’s like, “Yeah, check the
box,” but they might know that there could be an opportunity or
potential for growth new roles to come about. And we may be sort of
short sighted in our hiring considerations for the position.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: So I always like kind of put somebody out there that gives more
thought to roles and just may barely meet it if you will. And so those
are the pieces again that just, maybe it’s my imagination or being
more passive without having those parameters initially, but what got
me a little bit more excited as well was my intention to polish the
composition of the résumé’. The responsibilities, accomplishments,
things that were listed, it seemed like they were claimed in a manor
where John may potentially be, at least demonstrated in the résumé’, a little bit more strategic, more creative without necessarily saying, “I’m creative. I’m strategic.” Where I read that a little bit more in Jerry’s. Where it would lead me to ask certainly both candidates, because I wouldn’t not bring Jerry in and certainly would as another kind of benchmark and data point to either reaffirm my thoughts to John or maybe give me some different consideration. But I thought that through like a digital base interview format, I would certainly better be able to qualify John’s experience.

**Speaker 1:** Mm-hmm.

**PEN008:** You know, in terms of dynamic customer service. I asked, “What does that mean,” or open ended questions. Like, “Describe to me what you meant by that,” or, “What does one mean by that, and how do you go about building and maintaining customer relationships?” Like, “What’s your strategy for building versus maintain, or are they one in the same?” You know, things like that. “Tell me about a time that you had difficulty persevering or building a relationship you can challenge in the beginning.” So again, I would ask similar sets of questions to both candidates, but the sequential order may vary or again the questions may vary ever so slightly. Just kind of uncover or clarify. I know you mentioned clarifying questions, certain pieces that are listed on the résumé’.

**Speaker 1:** Right. Ok. Good. Anything else jumps out at you sort of globally?

**PEN008:** Well the descriptors. So that’s another thing that you need to polish. It’s always helpful for me, most of the time now I do it a lot, I did it with my prior role in the nursing field. So I was always like, “What is that,” or, “Critical care, what does that mean?” And half [inaudible][11:55] is the same thing, like, “What is this company?” They were from descriptors. So, I don’t have my glasses on. What is that – I know maybe a fictitious or real organization, Abbaco?

**Speaker 1:** Abacus.

**PEN008:** Abacus, ok. Sorry I can’t see. And it’s not you, like I don’t have my glasses on.

[both laugh][12:18]
PEN008: I did not know what organization that is, it had a little bit of description. Ok, it’s a national retail brand. So it’s reached online, it’s fast growing. Catalog helps to qualify it.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: Is this [inaudible][12:28] it looks like on Jerry’s, I don’t know what kind of organization that is. So, you know, I would certainly ask or look that up. But again, just by looking through it helps me get an idea of that. Then Delano, I think John’s next one. Largest showroom for residential commercial flooring. So it gives you an idea, “Ok, look clients he’d be working with.” He may be more client focused and maintaining those relationships then perhaps maybe general public if you’re dealing with catalog ordering. Again, so one may be call center. One may be on ground or face to face potentially.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: It may be a mix, so again I thought that that was a nice touch, and it already kind of gives me information without me having to dig for it. It allows me to maybe reflect. I don’t recall this in the job description, what type of organization I would be hiring for. But I can discern then those skills or experiences or industries align well with us or not.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: Or maybe I do or do not know of Jerry. So from that perspective, that was another thing. Again, so I can polish my touch to provide that information in a very kind of clean and polished way.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: Realizing while your scrolling down here, those pieces seemed- I mean I don’t know obviously the program. I shouldn’t say obviously but in truth I don’t know the programs to kind of have an idea to which program may be in a better likeness or what have you. Not likeness, but what may be more highly regarded than the other in terms of institution. But the decreasing equitable, the training seminars. Again, I just thought more polished and help create a win-win relationship from the name of that.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm.
PEN008: The customer focus were training under Jerry is more descriptive. You know, customer service excellence and this could be titled too, dealing with difficult clients. To me it seems more about maybe what the outcomes were then again maybe the title description. And it could just be bias, but I just thought it was nice, clean, just again, kind of maintaining with the flow, peaked my interest more to start with.

Speaker 1: Right. That’s great. And let me just sort of shift through a little bit of what you said. So what I’m hearing [crosstalk][15:02] from you, John and Jerry is just sort of overall – the format is probably too small of a word, but probably the polish on John’s résumé weighed in your decision.

PEN008: Ok.

Speaker 1: Is that accurate?

PEN008: Yes.

Speaker 1: Ok, and I think there’s two dimensions to that I think in John’s résumé. One is he tends to be a little more verbose I think in describing, you know, his experiences, whereas Jerry is a little more succinct in his language. So I think that’s one aspect, is that correct from your perspective?

PEN008: I’m just reflecting on your question. My review, I was kind of delayed on even submitting it because I wanted to go back and forth and look.

Speaker 1: [laughs][15:56]

PEN008: A little bit because it’s like you’re committing. I thought that they were both really succinct. I guess I thought that their choice of language and descriptors in some instances both mirrored each other maybe in terms of the presentation. I don’t know, I think that the both appear succinct to me.

Speaker 1: Right. Ok. And then John’s résumé just sort of has, you know, some formatting around kind of drawing your eye to certain areas of the résumé, and/or sort of creating some lines of demarcation between sections. Does that matter to you?
PEN008: No, not really.

Speaker 1: Ok. And so in their experiences, I know you mentioned it was hopeful to have sort of a quick descriptor of the company. Is that accurate?

PEN008: Yeah, it was a nice touch.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And then when I look down at their experiences, talk to me a little bit about job duties versus accomplishments on a résumé. Where are you in terms of the import around also having accomplishments on a résumé? Because I know that John, you know, he really only has one, but Jerry doesn’t really seem to have any sort of real structure around his accomplishments.

PEN008: Right. So I think for me, and I don’t necessarily see it as a make or break, it just again provides a little insight as to whether again, “Is this genuine? Is this résumé’ formatting 101? What’s behind it?” Because you have the best presented person on paper that walks through the door, and it’s a complete disconnect.

Speaker 1: [laughs][17:48]

PEN008: You know, so I’m definitely mindful that I can get on the phone and it’s, you know, I had one yesterday. [chuckles][17:54] And it’s like, “Wow, this doesn’t really seem to reflect the person I read on paper.” But in having some of the data that’s listed, it would provide initially some indication that there’s an awareness of that and how data might drive business or influence business decision. Or day to day management of one’s contributions if you will or focus.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: Or monthly, etcetera. So for me, having that there and then prior, you know, the lead in thing to memorize companies product offering is kind of interesting to me. Like, “Wow, I wonder how many offerings they had.” Or, “What degree of them? Was it high-level?” Those are all a question I would ask. And how do the two correlate? Is there a correlation?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm.
PEN008: So again, to try to map and understand his thought process and approach.

Speaker 1: Ok, good. And you know, I failed to mention or ask a couple of questions about the top part of their résumé’ so let me just circle back here.

PEN008: Mm-hmm.

Speaker 1: In that there’s like a million words for this part in a résumé’. They career objective, the summary, what have you. Is that an important piece of the résumé’ for you, and if so, was there anything about John’s that was just, you know, like, “Wow, this is impactful.” Versus Jerry, or did you hold them on a level playing field?

PEN008: No, I do think that sometimes the summary or objective, and I have seen a trend in more summary versus objective over the last several years being more of a practice. So again, in enlisting that, yeah, customer service rep. Kind of summarizing the career. And Jerry offered the 5 years, so yes, that’s very more succinct here. [chuckles][19:54] But again, I like the providing exceptional service, building more relationships. It’s more than just be defined by their role, it’s other attributes, experience skills, etcetera or interest perhaps.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: That Jerry provided just solely being defined perhaps, or I shouldn’t say described but defined solely perhaps by a title that one carries. Because that was really a customer service representative can vary greatly organization to organization, the corporate roles. Their deliverable, etcetera. It’s not something that’s just isolated to just processing service inquiries or what have you. Others may be partnered with the operational areas that they support to work through process change, improvement etcetera. You know, so those kinds of things for me I just felt were interesting.

Speaker 1: Ok. Good. Ok, so let me just scroll down here. And I don’t know if your screen, like I said, sometimes I scroll too fast and people are like, “Ah!”

PEN008: No, no. You’re fine.
Speaker 1: Ok. So then when we look at education, you’re right that they both have the associates. The one thing we don’t know is the program that they graduated from, which may or may not be important for a customer service role anyway. And so here we’ve got the core difference between the two is obviously Kaplan is a for profit institution, and Southern New Hampshire is a non-profit, more traditional up in New England. So when you said, “I’m not sure which institution would be more highly regarded,” can you give me some more flavor around that?

PEN008: Sure. Some organizations or hiring managers, obviously they represent the organization, have preferences if you will. Usually it’s not necessarily across the board, certainly some sectors recruit from top 4 tiers. In general, it’s not necessarily institutional preference more than it is, “I prefer not to have individuals from X, Y, or Z institution.” Because usually it’s that they don’t feel as though their programming is adequate.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: Maybe there’s some inadequacies or they’ll have you maybe in proprieties or practice or something along those lines. I mean I was just thinking that they were both institutions that I’d heard of, but I couldn’t really speak to. From that standpoint, I felt like they were evenly weighted from my initial point of view.

Speaker 1: Right. And just digging into that, because this is sort of interesting to me. So you’ve had experience with folks that are like, “Yeah, these colleges. No.” Did you feel like they had personal experience they were drawing from, or was it just sort of a value judgement and then they kind of moved on? Can you give me more flavor there?

PEN008: Yes. So in my past, it was another industry where yeah I think it was value-based. The perception was that the programs were not quality.

Speaker 1: Ok.

PEN008: And so one of the determining factors, it could have perhaps been researched maybe when they themselves are looking for an institution to join that they did some due diligence, and maybe based on what they uncovered in terms of practice or feedback maybe that was...
solicited that they saw solicited was less than favorable. That’s about all I can imagine because I will say I believe all in all, the majority of those – I guess it wouldn’t really matter because it’s proprietary and public institutions that would neither be here nor there. So maybe other published information and it influenced the decision, or it could be more subjective research and acquiring that them themselves.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: When it’s usually value-based. Not necessarily from a direct experience.

Speaker 1: Based on reality, right. And is there still that for profit versus non-profit issue, or do you see it sort of bleeding over into other sort of buckets of institutions? You know, what are your thoughts there?

PEN008: I think it’s in the spectrum, because I was going to comment that from a nursing perspective, coming out of more recently nursing education, that it’s really kind of where I got my first insight there in terms of quickly having a hiring manager say, “Oh no way. We’re not going to hire from these schools.” And –

Speaker 1: What schools were they? Well, I mean you don’t have to tell me.

PEN008: Yeah, I’m trying – to be honest with you, when I first encountered it wasn’t even in my market here, but in another state. And I’m thinking that they were I would say like theater schools, so maybe what do you call that. Like a community college maybe perhaps. And you have to be at a community college where, again I’m trying to really stretch my memory because that was more when I first kind of entered the industry. I think it was more quality of program, it probably wasn’t quality of program because we were looking at staff. So it probably would have been culture of some of the institutions.

Speaker 1: Ok.

PEN008: In some instances I think it was culture based, where they weren’t like student centric. Where there was high turnover. And so they take an influx of inquiries maybe they were receiving from these schools. Where it’s like, “Clearly something must be going on because we’ve had X number of inquiries.” And talking with them, some maybe talked poorly about their employer at the time or experiences. Or
again, bringing some insight into some things, you know, through those exchanges that was like caution, caution.

Speaker 1: [laughs][26:12] Right.

PEN008: So that would be like a big thing. So I know we’re kind of derailing a little bit to the programming, but some of it comes from the programs, you know, some institutions don’t practice the most, aren’t the most ethical. I suppose maybe the better way to frame it in their academics practices.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm.

PEN008: And so there is perceived value consideration, or I guess one can have basic perception if you want with the quality of program, ethical practice or lack thereof, etcetera. And on the other side of it with more cultural, speaking of the institution and whether we’re student-centered focus, if they were open to going above and beyond, adding value by extending beyond just the minimum, you know, requirements, etcetera of staff. Again from a more institutional perspective, nothing stood out like, “Oh my gosh, I’ve heard things about this institution.” I mean again, it’s all fictitious.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: None the less, we’re looking for this more from the student experience or quality of their programming and experience, not necessarily the faculty or staff that will be delivering it. But I’ve probably over-answered your question, but kind of just extending back to some of the considerations over my career.

Speaker 1: No, you’re not over-emphasizing anything. So the cool thing about this research design too is sort of the conversation just takes you where it takes you, and that’s the beauty of it.

PEN008: Ok. [chuckles][27:47] I’m just being mindful and not trying to be too long-winded, but just to add real quickly, there are certainly some public schools or institutions or state-funded schools if you will that will be considered coming back to my market, the Chicago area, I know seem to be very highly regarded as well as some of the proprietary institutions that just have great reputations again based on programming, based on faculty staff know what to put into it.
Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: So again, just to re-summarize, and I know that there has been stigmas here and there and sort of hesitation of where for profit or for proprietary institutions rank. But again, my speaking now is more from a nursing perspective. But there definitely seems to be a high regard, it’s more to the individual program and not blanketed, you know.

Speaker 1: I think that’s great.

PEN008: I mean individual institution I mean.

Speaker 1: Yeah, I think that’s great to hear. And I think what I’m also hearing is when someone has experience with the institution, hopefully they’re using their personal experiences with institutions from an objective space to make some of those decisions, right?

PEN008: Right.

Speaker 1: Because it sounds like, and maybe [phonetic][29:19] Rassmussen is a good example of a for profit up north that you might feel a little more comfortable with versus another, I don’t know if that’s a good example or not. But just because maybe you’ve had a couple of good experiences from those kinds of institutions, and I hear reputation a lot. So in terms of the different interviews that I’ve done. Sort of having experience with and/or the reputation that precedes some institutions that show up on résumés’ I think is part of the equation, right?

PEN008: Sure, and I mean so they have like the accreditation considerations, right, from that then maybe, and I’m not quite sure, I don’t want to misspeak in terms of language, but from a proprietary perspective that has been – I don’t know if this is quite the case, but if they get like a warning or they haven’t earned it or partial provisional. You know, you have the different maybe classifications of it. I mean some of those things are widely known, others not so much. And again, the degrees of separation where information seems to come one way, but again when it’s not widely out there, there’s discretion or hope for the additional consideration that that’s measured against since it may be coming from a source that may not be accurate.
Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: And I think above that, my part and my role I thing in really doing my due diligences and building those relationships with my hiring mangers as well as developing relationships with candidates, and to really look at each person, whether they come from an institution that’s less known of maybe more poorly regarded than another, each person brings their own package. So I really try not to categorize, or I may lead with, “I want to be upfront, X, Y, and Z did complete their degree from this institution, however I really want to call to you their career experiences.” Because that degree meant that they earned from whatever institution, maybe it’s provided them the credentials, that launching point to build their career. I’m assuming to some extent, right at their license if it’s nursing and they have their credentials, that they’re qualified from an academic and proficiency perspective to earn the right to work and practice.

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: And that’s because their career and collective experiences, let’s have that whole list with you. Then just the micro-focus on where they gain their start. And I think again through that behavioral way interview process and assessment and references and everything else, it helps build the picture. And that tended to be effective more of the times than not, but again you always have individuals that just maintain a virus, you know.

Speaker 1: [laughs][32:25] Right. Like we won’t hire a Phoenix whatever that is, right?

PEN008: Right. Right.

Speaker 1: [chuckles][32:30] Ok. And then the very last thing, seminars versus training. I know that John sort of used maybe some punchier language maybe is a good way to describe that versus Jerry. But just in general, how much do those trainings weigh in your decision? Is that something that you look at and you’re like, “Huh, that’s great,” or, “You know what, not something that’s part of the qualification process.”
I think it depends. I think that a real life example, I’m working on an IT position, and not even a hiring manager, stake holder commented that one candidate has no certification. And I said, “That’s true, they don’t.” I think maybe one was working on one, but he didn’t have any completed. I said, “But let me share this résumé’. And here’s all these certifications. Gosh, 5 or 6.”

I go, “But who was ranked through their demonstration of application of knowledge was the candidate with no certification.” So again, I think it’s sometimes nice to have, but if they don’t add value per say or kind of irrelevant in some instances, it may or may not impact. Or if they have one that I’m less familiar with, I might have ask, “You know, I noticed that you attended X, Y, or Z seminar, or had this training. I’m not really familiar with it. Can you tell me a little bit about that?”

You know, sometimes just give me some insight to something I hadn’t considered to be aware of. But in this instance again, I think the only difference, and not even a difference but to me to kind of reinforce some similarities of the two and the fact that they had attended some trainings or seminars around, I would assume they’re careers or their roles or jobs.

Where maybe if no one had, you know Jerry had, John hadn’t, I might ask John in the interview process again having noted that Jerry had, ask Jerry if he had attended any seminars or training. I didn’t see any listed but just thought you might have had some experience and didn’t list it.

Ok. Yeah, that makes sense. If everyone sort of has something listed and one candidate doesn’t then it might sort of just prompt a question it sounds like, right?

Correct yeah. I usually try to sketch out questions prior to an interview just to make sure that I’m asking those things and not forgetting.
**Speaker 1:** Right. It’s funny you bring up the certifications and IT, that’s such a controversial subject. Obviously this is not an IT position, there was some intentionality behind not picking an IT position because it’s so polarized in terms of alphabet versus experience, right?

**PEN008:** Right.

**Speaker 1:** Yeah, I have some clients that I coach, a couple of folks that have been out of the workplace for a bit, so they don’t have current certifications. And it is a varied entry for them. It’s a challenge. Even though they’ve got 30 years of experience, if they don’t have that standard list of alphabet soup it’s a challenge.

**PEN008:** Yeah, I got my start in IT staffing. I just recall a new graduate, a lot of them would be heavily certified because it doesn’t require any work experience.

**Speaker 1:** Right.

**PEN008:** You know, you can do that. But you’ve got all this academic knowledge, but you have no application for it. So what’s the potential for you to apply all of that in a real world environment, and my role at the time people are playing it’s more of premium, right, to use a 3rd party service. They’re not going to be training you, and so they expect you to be proficient.

**Speaker 1:** That’s right.

**PEN008:** And be able to complete the job at hand. So yeah, again that could be my bias a little bit. But no, it’s truly more limited to IT where for me it’s 6 in one hand, half a dozen in the other.

**Speaker 1:** Well good for you. Ok, I mean we’ve sort of known each other second hand over the years, but it does sound like you’re a really objective person in your role, right? And you really do take these things at face value and recognize that you do have some bias to use and you try to set them aside to advocate individually. I really appreciate that about you.

**PEN008:** Well thank you.
Speaker 1: So in kind of going through this exercise, and first you kind of told me what were your initial thoughts, and then I kind of asked you to sort of compare and contrast and go down a couple of paths here. Was there anything else about your experience and the selection that you thought, you know, I should know about, or anything else occur to you that you were thinking at the time?

PEN008: No, I think for me it was just making a decision the way it was structured, there were the textboxes of course to add thoughts to support the answer, but it wasn’t really necessarily like way out if then.

[both laugh][37:44]

Speaker 1: Right.

PEN008: So it was an interesting exercise truly for me to make a choice solely on the face of a résumé’. And so I don’t know, it’s just interesting. But nothing else really to add, you know.

Speaker 1: Ok. And are you still comfortable in your choice of John versus Jerry?

PEN008: I am.

Speaker 1: Ok. And then this is just a housekeeping question from a research design perspective, I did hear you say early on and I just wanted to confirm it. If you didn’t have to choose, would you have had a phone screen both with John and Jerry?

PEN008: Absolutely.

Speaker 1: Ok, so I did my job there. I tried to really keep the résumés as consistent from a sort of basic skills, kind of the KSA area. Tried to keep them on a level playing field. And then of course artificially pushed you guys to decide. [laughs][38:46]

PEN008: Yeah.

Speaker 1: And you’re certainly not alone in sort of thinking that through, like gosh this very artificial. I wouldn’t just select somebody based on a résumé’, and probably would talk to both of them. So you’re not alone there. And you’ll definitely hear our feedback in the narrative as well.
Ok, so great. And I think I mentioned a couple of the next steps, but let me just reiterate those very quickly. So right now the only people know who you are is me, and we will keep it that way. And so at this point in the research process, I’ll strip your name from your files and I’ll assign you a code. And that’s what everything else will be associated with a code that no one has the key to but me. So I’ll send that out to transcription with your code, I think it’s PEN008, something like that. But it has the first 3 letters of your last name and then there’s a numeric code that helps me sort of correlate who I spoke to. I’ll send you back your transcription, it is verbatim so sometimes it’s really awkward to see a verbatim transcript of a conversation.

[both laugh][40:02]

**Speaker 1:**

I just throw that out there that anytime I said, “Um, or you said, “Um,,” it will likely show up. But generally just looking for big clarifications, right, of affection. You read it and you’re like, “Hey, that’s not what I said.” It’s not likely to happen, but what is more likely to happen is that after you see it on paper you think, “You know, something else did occur to me,” right? Or I was thinking that this was more important. So you can go ahead and send me at that time. I should have your transcript back within 7 days, so I’ll just send you an email when I get that back. And then like I said, I’ll put that all together in a narrative.

My goal is to have the first narrative written by the second week of November. So I’ll ship that out to you guys. And just as a side note, when that narrative is written, that’s when I’ll actually discard your codes altogether because I don’t need to know your identities anymore beyond the fact that you’re a participant. But at that point, I wouldn’t be able to track any one piece of data back to anyone anyway. [laughs][41:08] So there’s no reason to even keep the codes. And so then at the very end of the process of course as I mentioned, I will debrief you on how this particular phenomenon sits inside the research. So those are the next couple of steps, and then if all goes well I’ll defend at the end of December, early January and I’ll finally be done with this really long process. [laughs][41:32] I’m really looking forward to that, so. [laughs][41:34]

**PEN008:**

Sure, no, no that’s completely understandable and I appreciate that. I just want to offer one more thing that occurred to me. You asked
about format presentation, and I forget how you framed it but the way John structured maybe with a line and stuff like that.

**Speaker 1:** Mm-hmm.

**PEN008:** Stuff like that. That had baring. And I don’t think that necessarily it does, but the comments about him listing kind of a description of the organization and incorporating that maybe in a customer service so I can kind of reinforce his customer service orientation.

**Speaker 1:** Ah.

**PEN008:** By providing information that’s helpful. Whether that was the intent directly just like him and to describe it, but it then communicates a reflection and an extension of somebody toward that.

**Speaker 1:** Interesting. Yeah, that didn’t occur to me at all.

**PEN008:** Yeah, it didn’t me either. And I was just sitting here kind of looking where it’s so bullet heavy, and again not that it’s wrong I see more structured like that than the other, just again it eases it. It kind of softens some of the bullet, bullet, bullet and creates a little bit different standout.

**Speaker 1:** Right.

**PEN008:** So the experience is just different and a little cleaner. What was the description, you said something and succinct?

**Speaker 1:** Yeah, verbose versus –

**PEN008:** Verbose, yeah so maybe from that perspective. And I don’t know if you were thinking actual language versus presentation, but you know, perhaps you’re not to your point but your observation or descriptor that is accurate. But I do think that yeah, the descriptor is I think a nice service, orientation.

**Speaker 1:** Yeah, excellent. Well thank you. So again, the beauty of the process is it sort of unfolds, and our brains are so efficient that sometimes we don’t really sort of think through everything until we’re asked to. So perfect. Ok, great. So I will let you pop out of here and get back to your Saturday stuff. Thanks again for fitting me in this morning, I
really appreciate it. And like I said, you should hear from me in about a week. How does that sound?

PEN008: Ok. Awesome. Sounds great.

Speaker 1: Thank you so much, PEN008.

PEN008: Thank you for being flexible, I appreciate it.

Speaker 1: No, I thank you. I’m seriously humbled by everyone participating, so thanks. Have a great day.

PEN008: Thank you, you too.

Speaker 1: I choose to.

PEN008: Buh-bye.

Speaker 1: Alright, buh-bye.

[end of transcription][44:19]
Betty Jo: It will record you, even though it doesn’t really recognize that you’re on there. I’m sure I’ll find out.

ROC007: Right.

Betty Jo: Before we get started, any questions about the study, or about consent, or anything like that that I can get out of way?

ROC007: Nope, nope.

Betty Jo: Okay, all right. What I want to do with this interview is, if you could just kind of walk me through how you came to the decision to choose Jerry Smith over John Singer.

ROC007: Yep.

Betty Jo: Kind of start from the beginning. Here are some of the things I looked at, and these are the things that stood out at me. Then I may go back and ask some clarifying questions, but you know, it’s really – the purpose of this interview is for you to really lead me through how you came to that decision. Does that make sense?

ROC007: Yep, it does.

Betty Jo: Excellent.

ROC007: When I read the résumés, you know, kind of the first pass, honestly just, if you look at the details of what’s in the résumé, I liked John Singer’s résumé better. I liked his – he had some extra training that he had done too, that – like seminars he’d gone to that showed like real passion maybe for what he’s doing.

What I liked about Jerry is, and the job description didn’t show anything about location of the job, but when I saw Jerry’s résumé, and it looked like all his positions had been in kind of the same general location, whereas John’s, he was in Ohio, he was in New York. I don’t really know without a conversation with him what the details are around that, and then his current address is Connecticut.

I mean, I don’t know if the job’s in Connecticut, so maybe that would have been okay, but just in terms of stability and you know, if you’re hiring someone in a perm position, you’re obviously going to want to someone that’s going to stay. He looked pretty steady. Both of them had about the same amount of time at their jobs, their different jobs on the résumé.
They look like they both had some good call center, like customer service experience, so I wasn’t concerned about that with either one of them, but that’s why – I kind of chose Jerry just kind of assuming, okay maybe the job’s in New Jersey, in Fairfield, maybe he’s the better fit.

**Betty Jo:** Right, okay. Then as we kind of look at them side by side, let’s maybe walk through some more granularity in that here. We look at the top of their résumé and we kind of look at that career objective, or whatever people are calling it these days, right? What stood out between those two candidates, either positively or negatively? I mean, is this a place that you spend time looking?

**ROC007:** No, I mean, honestly I mean, I read a résumé within like, seconds, a minute. I mean like, you’re – and most of my clients do too. I mean they’re going through kind of a high level, and then kind of on things that they care about, maybe going in deeper. There weren’t any concerns about either one of them.

I think I remember reading Jerry’s résumé first, and just thinking, okay, I see some – looks like he’s got some basics, compared to the job it’s requiring. I thought okay, it’s not a ton of detail, but enough, like you don’t need five million bullets.

Then you go to John’s résumé, and I remember thinking, oh wow, he’s got – I really liked the way that he puts – it seemed like there was a little beefier in the résumé, that I kind of liked. Then I got down to the seminars that he completed, although I think Jerry had some training too.

**Betty Jo:** Yes.

**ROC007:** You know, they both did. Yeah, when it came down to it, it was just – I was concerned about the different locations for John and was he stable location-wise or you know, because most companies aren’t necessarily going to re-lo somebody for a customer service job.

**Betty Jo:** Exactly, right. It’s interesting, you are the first person to bring up location. That’s interesting. Good perspective. I hadn’t really thought too much about that, but you’re right. That’s a detail –

**ROC007:** Right.

**Betty Jo:** It’s so interesting, it’s a detail that only you picked up on.

**ROC007:** Oh, that’s funny. Yeah, I mean because we usually, for my company, we’re placing people in – I mean, we have offices all over, but my office is placing people in Indianapolis. Usually if we’re filling a difficult role, or there’s not a lot of people in Indianapolis for it, typically you’re trying – if you’re trying to get someone to re-lo to Indy, usually they have to have a reason.
Betty Jo: Right.

ROC007: Like they’re from here, they’re trying to get back here, you know. People don’t just come to Indianapolis, because woo, I’ve heard Indianapolis is so great.

Betty Jo: [laughter]

ROC007: Usually, you’re looking for a reason why they’re going to move so you don’t waste your time.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROC007: Yeah, I’m usually cognizant of location for any role, and I’ve placed people in other cities too. Yeah, location is big, because that’s a heavy motivator.

Betty Jo: Right. It may be that you sort of picked that up because you are in a market where that is something that you have to think about a little more deliberately, right?

ROC007: Right, right. Like if I were in New York, or I was in California, or maybe even Chicago, there might be more people that have never lived in those places that truly, legitimately would move there.

Betty Jo: Right, right. Well it’s interesting that you say that, I actually relocated here four years ago, not having any family here. [laughter]

ROC007: Oh, that’s funny, yeah.

Betty Jo: Thinking about it is as you said it –

ROC007: I mean, it does happen, but it’s just –

Betty Jo: It does, and we’re so happy – I mean, this is the best place to raise my kid that I probably could have ever chosen, so –

ROC007: Where’d you move from?

Betty Jo: From upstate New York.

ROC007: Oh, okay. Very cool.

Betty Jo: Yeah, it was just funny that you said that. It was a conversation, you know, what is this Indianapolis? I had –

ROC007: Well, and then if you have two offers on the table, one is in your desired location or where you are already are –
Betty Jo: Right.

ROC007: Versus one where you’ve got to move twelve hours away.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

ROC007: What are you most likely to do?

Betty Jo: Yeah, we would have stayed there for sure, but –

ROC007: Right.

Betty Jo: That’s very interesting. Good, okay. Have you seen, in terms of the top of that résumé, have you seen changes in the trend, in the content, that shows up on the top of that résumé? What are your thoughts there?

ROC007: I haven’t really seen any major trends on the résumés, as far as just the top of it. Trying to think. We’ve seen some people actually put their pictures on their résumés, which that’s bad [laughter] all around.

We’ve definitely seen more people taking off the references at the bottom and stuff like that. These résumés don’t have that on there. I mean, it used to be a lot of people would put like, their references on there, they’d put “references on request,” and a lot of people aren’t doing that –

Betty Jo: Right.

ROC007: – anymore. We recommend that people don’t do that, that they don’t put that stuff on the résumé.

Betty Jo: Yeah, it’s taking up real estate, right?

ROC007: Right. No, I mean, these look pretty standard in terms of format of what we see, I think.

Betty Jo: Okay, good.

ROC007: Now the résumé Jerry Smith – well, Jerry Smith’s format is more closely to the format that we recommend for a client’s. It’s a little bit off on exactly what we would do, but it’s pretty dead-on close. The other résumé, I like the beefiness, but the format I would change just a tiny bit, with the dates so it’s more easy to see.

Usually we’ll have the dates on the right side of the résumé and bolded so it’s very easy to see that, okay, they’re here from this date to this date, or this date or...
this date. You know, and what the role and what the company is, you want that all to kind of be easy to see.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROC007: Yeah, I mean both are pretty, I think, standard.

Betty Jo: Okay, good. Good. Then when we scroll down to their experiences, they both have the same amount, same number of years of experience at two different companies, so that sort of held a little – pretty standard.

I think if I had to look at them side by side, I think Jerry, potentially was a little more succinct in the words that he used to describe his experiences, whereas John sort of used more descriptive language. John also had supplied the description of the company that he had worked for as well.

ROC007: Right.

Betty Jo: Just looking at those experiences side by side, what were some of the things that jumped out at you?

ROC007: I mean, I don’t know. I mean, I liked the bullets on both sides. I didn’t really necessarily have concerns – I honestly, if I had the position – if I was really working on this position, I probably would have taken time to talk to both of them.

With Jerry, get down to the details of everything. With John, one of the first things would probably be about the situation with where he’s living and where he’s wanting a job, you know, to make sure the location wasn’t going to be like a big issue. I mean, I think with both of them I would have definitely wanted to interview them for the role, at least a phone screen.

Betty Jo: Right. Well and I appreciate that you said that, because that was – that’s actually one of the last questions that I ask, and it’s kind of a – sort of an internal validity question for me –

ROC007: Yep.

Betty Jo: – to see how similar the résumés were in nature, so I appreciate you throwing that out early on here. Again, I appreciate the fact that John might have been your preferred candidate had the re-location sort of been, or the geography been a little more clear, too. Okay.

ROC007: Right, right. I mean, with most people, if we get résumés, we – unless a résumé is just like really terrible or just way off from what we’re looking for, typically we’ll
inter view at least like do a quick phone screen or something, just – I mean, we aren’t HR, we’re more recruiter, so that’s a little bit different.

You’re trying to screen and kind of go through and understand like what the person’s doing, what their motivations are, what they’re looking for in the right role. If the role that we have isn’t the right role, they could be a fit for a different role, you never role.

Betty Jo: Yeah, good point.

ROC007: Also I work in IT and it’s a very small pool of candidates that – it’s a very tight market. Our clients don’t always get the A candidates, you know, because they’re not available, or they don’t exist.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Right, they’re a unicorn in the sea of –

ROC007: Right, right. It’s like a purple squirrel sometimes, yeah.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Going through that process, and I’m probably going to circle back to that talent shortage in just a second, but when you’re looking at the experiences on résumés in general, whether it’s these ones or others, talk to me a little bit about job duties versus accomplishments, and what you like to see in both.

ROC007: Typically it’s – if it’s more of like a doer role where they’re not managing or a director or above, like an executive level, it’s typically – I want to see more about the duties, responsibilities bulleted out of how they spend their day, how they spend their time. When we’re screening them, we’re –

I’m screening also for what percentage of time are they working on X or Y, because sometimes people also put in a lot of key words on their résumé of technologies or skills. Things that may be in their environment, but that doesn’t mean they did that all day, or that they even did that. Sometimes they might have even been like a team member or a team that did it.

Betty Jo: Right, okay.

ROC007: What was I going to say? Now I can hear myself reverting back, like I can hear myself talking. I don’t know if it’s the recorder.

Betty Jo: Oh, I don’t know if you have an echo. Darn it, I’m so sorry.

ROC007: It just started doing that.

Betty Jo: Just now?

ROC007: Yeah, just in the last couple minutes.
Betty Jo: Nothing has changed. In fact, I haven’t even touched my screen. This is so unusual how GoToMeeting is behaving. I’m so sorry.

ROC007: Yeah, I don’t know. It’s weird.

Betty Jo: Is it really distracting for you? Are you okay?

ROC007: Yeah, it’s making me forget what I was going to say, because I’m hearing myself talk.

Betty Jo: Do you want to try to disconnect and come back on? Do you think that might help?

ROC007: Yeah, let me call right back in.

Betty Jo: Yeah, and I’ll also say, just a quick thing. If you do still have it up on your screen, sometimes getting rid of that might help with the echo as well, when you’re trying to log in at first.

ROC007: Oh, it’s not on my screen. I’m not in it.

Betty Jo: Okay.

ROC007: Okay, I’ll call back.

Betty Jo: All right. Thank you.

ROC007: All right. No problem.

Betty Jo: Okay.

ROC007: Bye.

[silence]

ROC007: Hello?

Betty Jo: Hi.

ROC007: How are you?

Betty Jo: Good, how are you?

ROC007: Oh, it’s still – I can still hear myself.
Betty Jo: Oh, crud. I still can’t see you on the GoToMeeting pane. This is like the strangest thing. It’s the only time this has happened. You’re actually my last interview in the entire set, and it figures that the very last one would be sort of technologically challenged.

ROC007: Well what I’ll – maybe if I hold it away from my ear and talk, then it’ll – [crosstalk]

Betty Jo: Are you talking on a cell phone –

ROC007: – it won’t bother me so much.

Betty Jo: – or just on your handset?

ROC007: What now?

Betty Jo: Are you talking on a speaker phone maybe?

ROC007: No, I’m just talking on my phone, the regular.

Betty Jo: Gosh. I’m trying – I can’t think of anything else to do to troubleshoot it, because it’s never happened to me before.

ROC007: Oh, that’s okay. Well I can just – if I pull it away from my ear, maybe it won’t – I won’t hear it so much.

Betty Jo: Okay.

ROC007: You were asking about the duties, responsibilities, versus accomplishments.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROC007: I would definitely rather see duties, responsibilities, bulleted out for somebody, versus accomplishments. Our clients typically want that too. They want to see how someone spends their day, and if there are certain skills or specific things that a company’s looking for, they typically want to see that in the bullets, under the role or under the company that they’re working for.

Sometimes people will put like a skills area, and then they’ll list kind of all their skills in one area. Then sometimes under each company, under each job, they may not have all that detail, whereas I would prefer, and my clients typically prefer that all of those skills are put under the role that they were worked in, so that the company, the manager can know, okay well they did this skill at this company and they’ll know what industry they worked in doing that skill. Does that make sense?
Betty Jo: That makes perfect sense.

ROC007: Yeah. If it were more of a higher-level, maybe like manager, director, executive level, I think that’s more of an appropriate level to have some of the accomplishments pieces, because that’s what you’re graded on. I mean, you’re managing the duties, responsibilities of other people.

Yes, you’re still going to have some duties and responsibilities, but those accomplishments are bigger, because that’s what they’re getting incented for, in terms of bonuses and things like that.

Betty Jo: Thank you for bringing up the next level too, because that was going to be one of my clarifying questions is, if you were to sort of look at it from more senior leaders, is that when that becomes more important? It sounds like the answer is yes there.

ROC007: Yes.

Betty Jo: Okay.

ROC007: Yes.

Betty Jo: Good. Anything else about this experience section that you thought was helpful or hurtful in your decision?

ROC007: Not anything that really jumps out.

Betty Jo: Okay, good. Good. Let’s take a look at education. They both have their associate’s, which was the minimum requirement for the position and graduated in the same month and year. We’ve got Jerry who graduated from Kaplan College and we’ve got John who graduated from Southern New Hampshire University. We’ve got a for-profit in Kaplan and we have a more traditional university in Southern New Hampshire. Did that weigh at all in your decision, do you think?

ROC007: No, not really. Especially for this type of role, I don’t think that that’s as important. I think if it – depending on the role, that might – I think for some hiring managers, that might make a difference. In IT, definitely there’s certain types of degrees or certain colleges that weigh heavier in terms of education, but again also in a tight labor market in IT, if someone has the skills and has the experience to do the job, I’m still going to let the hiring manager know about them.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROC007: You know, about that – probably still present that candidate. Degree or not, unless my client absolutely requires a degree, like no question.
Betty Jo: When you say – one of the things that you said when you first started talking is some hiring managers may – I can’t remember exactly how you said it, but so have you run across hiring managers with your clients or what have you that have said, this college, good, this college, bad. Can you give me a little more texture around that?

ROC007: Usually they won’t say “this college, bad,” but they’ll definitely have preferences. Like in IT, in Indiana, it’s highly – some companies will – have had really good experiences maybe hiring someone from Purdue, or Rose Hulman, or they’ll want certain degrees out of certain colleges that are very specific to that role.

Betty Jo: Good. In that IT space, so for example, do you think it would make a difference if you had a candidate that had graduated from ITT versus Ivy Tech, do you think some hiring managers would look at that candidate differently with ITT on their résumé, versus Ivy Tech?

ROC007: Not – no, not really. I think those would be about the same.

Betty Jo: Okay, good. Good. Have you seen any of that change over time? I know some other folks have mentioned that there used to sort of be a stigma around for-profit and maybe that had started to go away. It may have something to do with this tight labor market as well, but do you have any texture around that?

ROC007: I mean, I think the labor market has a big thing to do with it. I think in the down markets like 2008, I’m sure that people had more candidates than typical to choose from, and so they could be a little more picky. Right now, it’s like, if they can do the job and they’re not a total idiot and they can present themselves well and have good references, I think managers will hire them.

Betty Jo: Right. [laughter] Remind me to circle back on that comment at the end, off topic. Okay, so good, so we got through education. Then trainings, you had mentioned that both of them did have trainings. The difference between the two really is, Jerry seemed to maybe supply the content of the training, whereas John had probably listed the titles of his trainings. Did –

ROC007: Right.

Betty Jo: Looking at these side by side, did one weigh more heavily than the other?

ROC007: Yeah, I just, for some reason, John’s really jumped out. I don’t know if he had it bolded or it just – I don’t know if it was what they were, like the “Creating Win-Win Relationships” or “The Customer’s Always” – I don’t know, it just sounded kind of better.

Betty Jo: Right, right.
ROC007: I don’t know why.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

ROC007: I think it was that their seminars completed, it just – versus training, I think, maybe. I don’t know. I’m not sure. It just jumped out at the time.

Betty Jo: Okay, good. Good, thank you. I know that you had mentioned formatting in the beginning, where Jerry’s was probably a little more standard to what you normally look for, whereas John has gotten added some things that an ATS might actually kick back out. Is there anything else about the formatting in these résumés that you would – you thought sort of contributed to making your decision?

ROC007: No, I mean really I think – yeah again, I think I would definitely have interviewed, at least a short phone screen, with each of them. I don’t think that the formatting would have held me back from that.

Betty Jo: Good.

ROC007: I also try to – you know, sometimes I’ve seen really good people that have good skills, have great references, are good candidates, but sometimes don’t always know how to write the best résumé.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROC007: Which I try to keep that in mind too.

Betty Jo: Especially, I suspect, when you’re in that technology space, right? You’ve got folks that –

ROC007: Right.

Betty Jo: – certainly haven’t really focused on English literature for their career, right?

ROC007: Right, exactly.

Betty Jo: I appreciate that you kind of look at it more holistically than maybe some others do. Now that we’ve kind of gone through this process of – thank you, for taking me through them section by section. Anything else about how you made your decision that you think would be valuable for me to know?

ROC007: Let me think. No, I mean I think that I – that I already covered [24:30 phonetic] everything that kind of went through my mind at the time.
Betty Jo: Okay, good. I think, just in terms of John’s geography, it sounds like if the geography wasn’t an issue, you may have had a little more preference towards John, is that correct?

ROC007: Right. At least, going into the first phone screen.

Betty Jo: Right, right. That you would still have screened them both, which is again –

ROC007: Right.

Betty Jo: – sort of a purpose – purposeful in the design was keeping their résumés relatively constant, so I appreciate that as well. Good, so that’s great. Thank you. That’s exactly what I’m trying to accomplish in this phase of the research is really just gathering and capturing each of your experiences. In terms of next steps, what will happen now is I will prepare this recording and send it out to transcription, which begs the fact that it did record your voice –

ROC007: Right.

Betty Jo: - given all the technological stuff here, but I did take a lot of notes just in case. What I’ll do right before I do that is strip your name off of the file so that your identity is still only known by me. I should get that back by probably Tuesday afternoon. Then I will send that back out to you and I’ll just ask you two questions. One, is this a general representation of what we discussed Sunday night, with the knowledge that transcriptions are kind of clunky vehicles –

ROC007: Right.

Betty Jo: – and sometimes there will be a word left out, but general – what I do in the coding part of this research is go through and discern really what these passages were and mean. I can always go back to the audio file and clear up anything that’s – sometimes you’ll get a little passage that says “inaudible” and things like that, and I can always go back and confirm those things.

ROC007: Got you.

Betty Jo: Really just looking for, is this a general representation of what we talked about? Then the second question is, is there anything else that occurred to you, either after we talked, or after reading your transcription, that you thought did contribute to your decision that we haven’t discussed. Those will be the two –

ROC007: Got it.

Betty Jo: – major questions. Then what I’ll do from there is take all sixteen of you. I will code all of this data, try to find commonalities in the conversations, and basically come up with those common themes, those threads that got sort of sewn into each
of these interviews and capture an aggregate experience across this particular research pool. Then at the very end of that process, I will my experience to it as well. It’s really purposeful that I don’t do that in the beginning, because I’m really trying to look at the data objectively first.

**ROC007:** Right.

**Betty Jo:** Then I will send that passage out to you as a, again, a way of keeping you involved in the process, but to also kind of show you what that collective experience looked like.

**ROC007:** Yeah, I’d be interested to see that.

**Betty Jo:** Yeah, and it will be really cool. There have been interesting themes that I’ve just taken notes about over time. Yeah, I think it will be interesting to all of you to look at it from – just taking a step back. Then the very last step is I take that passage and I situate it in the current research and try to make sense of it.

That’s what we call the debrief, so then I would come back to you and say, okay, so given what documented as our collective experience in this research, here’s how it sits in the research and here are what I think the implications are. What do you think the implications are? You’re ultimately the practitioners and there may be something in there that doesn’t mean much to me, but means a heck of a lot to you, right? [laughter]

**ROC007:** Got it, yep.

**Betty Jo:** You can say, “Oh wow, that’s a common theme? That’s fantastic. I’m going to leverage that,” or “Oh, that’s a common theme? That’s not awesome. We probably want to address that.” Those are –

**ROC007:** Got it.

**Betty Jo:** – the next two steps from here. My goal is to get that first step, that narrative, pretty much done by the end of this month, which is aggressive. With the holiday I probably have a little more time than I normally do, so I’m hoping to get that done by the end of the month. I will keep informed if I get a little delayed or what have you as well.

**ROC007:** Okay.

**Betty Jo:** The very next step would be an email from me Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning with that transcript, and again, just ask you to confirm that and let me know if you have any further thoughts.
ROC007: Okay.

Betty Jo: Any questions about the next steps at all, ROC007?

ROC007: No, none at all.
ROO002 Interview Transcript

Betty Jo: Let me –

ROO002: I’m going to warn you before you do that. I’m getting over a cold.

Betty Jo: Ohh –

ROO002: I might have to pause for a coughing fit or get a drink or get a cough drop. I’m just going to let you know that in advance in case it gets to that.

Betty Jo: No worries. Sorry to hear that. [laughter] That must be tough to be sick when you’ve got guests in the house too, jeez.

ROO002: Yes, I just wanted to sleep. I was like, but I’m a trooper so let’s do this. [laughter]

Betty Jo: Okay, so let me tell you a little bit about what we’re trying to accomplish tonight, and then – actually, before I get started, do you have any questions about this research process, about consent, or anything like that that I can get out of the way before I start about tonight?

ROO002: I would love to know exactly like, kind of what your end goal of this is, or if you have a thesis you’re trying to prove or disprove? I don’t know. I think I read it at one point, but I would love for – to hear it from your mouth specifically.

Betty Jo: Sure. Well what I’m purposefully – what I’m doing right now, I’m doing a phenomenological study, which is like one of those words that I had to practice a few times to be able to say.

ROO002: [laughter] Right?

Betty Jo: Essentially what I’m doing is studying the phenomena of the screening process across a closed group of people.

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: I’ll probably finish out at about fifteen people. What I’ll do is take all of your interviews, right, and look for the commonalities in the process and look for issues that, you know, parts of the résumé that weighed really heavily, versus parts that didn’t, et cetera, et cetera.

Try to come up with a common phenomena and/or some of those very interesting themes that sort of polled through all of those interviews. What I’m doing right now is looking at it from a holistic perspective.

ROO002: Okay.
**Betty Jo:** Then as I get a little farther in the process, and I’ll talk about that as well, I’ll then take this phenomena and situate it within the research. That’s – it’s almost like, backward design, if you will, of a research project.

**ROO002:** Okay.

**Betty Jo:** I’m kind of looking at it at face value first.

**ROO002:** Sure.

**Betty Jo:** Then sticking [2:15 phonetic] it into the research. Does that make sense?

**ROO002:** Yeah, cool. Sounds good.

**Betty Jo:** Any other questions about that?

**ROO002:** Nope, that made sense and answered what I was wondering, so cool.

**Betty Jo:** What we’re going to do tonight is just describe your experience, and so essentially, I don’t – I have, you know, questions. I don’t like, sort of have a questionnaire, if you will.

**ROO002:** Okay.

**Betty Jo:** What I’m more interested in is you just sort of walking me through the process of your selection. I know I kind of forced you to make a selection at the end of the survey and you chose Mr. Singer.

I’m kind of interested in what were the things that, you know – first of all, how did you go about the screening process? Then, secondly, what stuck out to you about Mr. Singer over Mr. Smith? Then, I don’t know, are you able to – are you on the GoToMeeting as well, ROO002?

**ROO002:** No, I’m just on my phone. I just literally walked in the door ten minutes ago, so I didn’t have time to get my –

**Betty Jo:** Yeah, no worries. What I was going to say, if you are, I can put the résumés side by side. Sometimes that’s kind of helpful.

**ROO002:** I have them all laid out in front of me. I printed them, so we’re good there.

**Betty Jo:** That’s – especially if that first process goes really quickly, some people are just so clear in their decision-making that they’re like, boom! This is what it was, Betty Jo, and it’s ten minutes, right. I’m like, oh, so then we kind of look at side by side. Say, oh, you know, this one, John did a little bit better here then Jerry, but Jerry did a little bit better here. Kind of look at them side by side.
ROO002: Sure.

Betty Jo: I may ask clarifying questions or kind of circle back — [crosstalk]

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: — and say, you know, what I heard you say is this. Is that accurate? There may be some things that you say that I’ll just ask you to tell me a little bit more about.

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: Not necessarily because there’s a research interest, except that, it’s just — the nice thing about this research design is it’s really open-ended.

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: When something interests us, we can just kind of have a conversation about it, right?

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: That’s what we’ll do tonight, and then after that, I’ll send this out for transcription. At that point, I will strip your identity from the file so that when it gets sent to transcription, it’s just the words that we use tonight. Then they’ll send me back a verbatim text copy of our conversation.

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: I’ll email that back to you and ask you to just take a look and make sure that it’s accurate. Sometimes people find [4:52 phonetic] [crosstalk]

ROO002: That I said what I said, yeah.

Betty Jo: Yeah, sometimes people find they get it and they’re like, you know what, that’s not exactly what I meant. Like, I’d rather kind of, you know, sort of, what I meant was this.

ROO002: Sure.

Betty Jo: Something else may have occurred to you in the meantime, which is just as helpful.

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: Then I’ll get those back from you and then once I’m done with everyone’s, I’ll do exactly what I said I did before. What I’ll do before is sort of look for the commonalities across all of those narratives and come up with a description of the
phenomena across these people. I’ll send that out to you to do member checking, which is just an accuracy of check of, does this sound right to you? What are your thoughts about it?

ROO002: Sure.

Betty Jo: Then the very last stage is that debrief stage, where I show you how I’m going to situate this within the research. That’s where the, sort of, the thesis statement, you know, is sort of pulled into what we’re trying to do here. Does that all make sense?

ROO002: Okay, yeah. I do have a question like, so if I’m hearing you correctly, this conversation that we’re recording right now is only going to pretty much be used for your purposes and to get transcribed? It’s not going out to the public or anything like that?

Betty Jo: Exactly.

ROO002: Am I hearing that correctly?

Betty Jo: Yes.

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: Let me say that back to you, just so that we’re 100% clear. The only person that will know your identity ever is me, but just to protect you even further, at this point, after – as soon as I save this file, I strip your name and I give you a participant code.

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: I can tell you actually what yours is. Where are you? You are 002. [laughter]

ROO002: Easy to remember.

Betty Jo: Well I have a little spreadsheet here. I don’t actually remember anything, ever. I have to keep copious notes.

ROO002: I’m the same way.

Betty Jo: Yeah. Then I’ll match the transcription, you know, the edited version that you send me back. Then it will be saved under 002, and all of the coding will be under 002. Then of course when it’s put in the context of the collective, you know, sort of participant pool, there’s no way to – for any reader to look back and say, oh, I think that’s ROO002 Rood that said that, because no one will know –

ROO002: [laughter]
Betty Jo: You can choose – [crosstalk]

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: – to tell people that you participated if you decide, but it’s not like I turn that in, you know, to anyone at Northeastern.

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: Just wanted to really, sort of clarify that.

ROO002: Okay.

Betty Jo: One of the purposes of all of that sort of lock and key kind of stuff, is that this can be a really transparent conversation as well.

ROO002: Okay, good.

Betty Jo: Cool.

ROO002: That makes it a little less proper.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Well you know, I think that this is one of those subjects that has a lot of subjectivity around it.

ROO002: Yeah.

Betty Jo: I think it’s really important, you know, and I appreciate they’re asking you questions, because I think it is important to be clear that the confidentiality is really high for that purpose. Two is, it’s fine if it is subjective, right, because we are human. There is value in people understanding that there are these value judgments, for lack of better words, that get layered onto a résumé. It’s not just a piece of paper, you know. The screener is a product of all their past experiences.

ROO002: Sure.

Betty Jo: That’s part of what I’m trying to uncover is, what are those things that go into your decision-making? What were you thinking when you looked at this? Did you get a – did you hire someone ten years ago and they had this on their résumé, so you said, I’ll never do that again. You know, those kinds of things.

ROO002: Yeah, yeah.

Betty Jo: Those are really good questions. Thank you.
ROO002: Cool. Thank you. Appreciate the clarification.

Betty Jo: Yes. Let’s get started, ROO002. Why don’t you tell me how you started to approach this exercise? Let’s start there.

ROO002: Sure. The first thing I did was thoroughly read over the job description, make sure I understood what the client, we, whoever this is, was looking for specifically. What the essential functions that the candidate was going to be doing? What was their day-to-day like? What their knowledge base was, you know, what they had to have?

Like what was I looking for with regards to soft skills, hard skills, everything like that? Do they need to have a degree? Do they need to have X amount of years experience? Anything like that. That’s basically what I started doing. Then I took that information that I learned and basically went over to both résumés. Read them, you know, top to bottom, and correlated the requirements against the résumés.

Kind of did a mental checklist of like, yup, he has that, yup, he has that. Oh, maybe not the best of that. Kind of did a little bit of metrics in my head of which – first of all, which one met the most checkmarks, so to speak. Then I broke it down further after that.

Betty Jo: Okay. When you say you broke it down further from there, what does mean?

ROO002: Like I went through kind of some of the bullets in like specifically requirement one. Maybe it’ll be better if I kind of – oh sorry, what were you saying?

Betty Jo: No, nothing, I think I just moved in my chair. My microphone is really sensitivity, sorry.

ROO002: Yeah, it’s okay, and I’m echoing, so everything I keep saying I’m hearing back.

Betty Jo: Oh no.

ROO002: That’s okay. Like what I kind of mean by that is, you know, basically considering all the requirements – I mean, how I kind of did this in my head, and maybe it would be the best way for me to break it down to you is just to tell you, why I chose John.

Betty Jo: Sure.

ROO002: Give you the specific examples as they relate to the job description. That may be the best way. Do you feel that is the case?

Betty Jo: Perfect.
ROO002: Okay, so for example, under “job functions” or “essential functions”, if you will, the first one says “provide timely and accurate information in response to incoming customer order statuses and product knowledge requests.” I felt that John was a really good fit for that because he was very specific in his description of the types of calls that he handled when he was working at Abacos. I’m not sure how to say that.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

ROO002: Those types of calls were exactly what the job description required. The bullets that stuck out to me, that kind of identified that was where he said – sorry, one second – “provide quality service to customers and associates inquiring about the availability of products and order statuses.” To me, that was almost a direct correlation of what, you know, the number one essential function of the job was. That stuck out to me.

The second thing that stuck out to me was on bullet number five, where it said “partner with sales team to meet and exceed customer service expectations.” There were quite a few things on his résumé that stuck out to me that made me feel he was the better candidate. For example, he made specific reference to his ability to meet customers’ expectations, supervisors’ expectations. It looks like he’s actually been recognized for his efforts. For example, like under Abacos, I’m probably saying that but we’ll go with Abacos.

Betty Jo: I think that’s all right.

ROO002: He wrote, “strive for quick complaint resolution, commended by supervisor for the ability to resolve problems on the first call and avoid escalation of issue.” He was kind of trying to mention that he has been recognized for his good job on customer complaint resolution, which is what bullet number five was looking for.

I always think it’s a great thing when candidates either give specific statistics in their résumés. For example, if he would have wrote, response – you know, I’m very numbers driven, which I’ll get to that in a minute. I like that he mentioned that he was recognized for his service. Also in – when he was working for Delano, he mentions, the first bullet here where it says, “ensured customers were satisfied with every part of informed [14:25 phonetic] experience, from initial greeting through order completion.”

That showed me that he was very diligent in making sure that customers were satisfied, not just after the service, but through the whole process. I like that he did that. To go back to what I was saying about metrics, he mentioned that, in the second part of the bullet under Delano, he wrote that he contributed to a 12% sales increase for the quarter by communicating product benefits and providing excellent customer service.

I like that he wrote that, because that’s a provable metric. I can get a good idea of what, perhaps if I hired him, what kind of statistics or increase I could see from my
sales. I really liked that. The beginning part of that bullet I also really liked, because he wrote “memorized the company’s product offering.” To me, that kind of showed that he was willing to kind of go above and beyond. He added a desire to exceed expectations because I kind of don’t – I don’t know what the requirement was at this job, but to me, to memorize an entire catalog probably wasn’t necessarily a requirement.

Might have been highly encouraged, but I’m imagining that he probably had a catalog available and didn’t need to memorize. I kind of feel like maybe an assumption was being made on my behalf that he took initiative and memorized the company’s catalog and entire product offering.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: I really liked that. Overall, I think that John’s – oh, I’m sorry, I keep thinking that you’re talking because I keep hearing me talking back. [laughter]

Betty Jo: [laughter]

ROO002: Overall, I think that John’s communication was at a higher level than what I felt the other candidate’s, Jerry’s résumé was. John’s English usage is just all – it was just a lot better. It moved a lot more descriptively. He gave a very thorough portrayal of his duties, his accomplishments, for both the positions he held. Like for example, he wrote, “responded to telephone inquiries, provided quality service to customers and associates inquiring about the availability of products and order statuses.”

He was very compare and contrast. That was a very detailed statement, where Jerry said the same thing on his résumé but all he wrote was “effectively handled incoming customer order inquiries.” I feel like they said the same thing, but it – John said it in a far more detailed and eloquent manner than Jerry did.

Betty Jo: Gotcha. Okay.

ROO002: That’s my logic and reason and details of where – why I chose John over Jerry.

Betty Jo: Okay, great. Okay, so let me ask some clarifying questions and/or –

ROO002: Sure.

Betty Jo: Let me ask you about a couple of areas here. When I look at John versus Jerry, and I look at them side by side, they both have that beginning section in their résumé that sort of like, that objective area, or target position, that kind of –

ROO002: Yeah, their summaries, so to speak.
**Betty Jo:** Yeah, and you know, John is – his has got a little bit of a tag line, whereas Jerry has, you know, kind of leads with that five years experience. How important is that section on a résumé? How heavily does that section weigh for your decisions?

**ROO002:** On me, not a lot, because I feel kind of like that’s sploshed [18:27 phonetic]. I kind of feel like it’s just telling me all the wonderful, great things that I feel are my best skills. Like when I – if I was to write that, or that’s my candidate’s best skills. Unless, let me add a caveat there, if they bring some detail to that specific bullets that aren’t otherwise mentioned throughout the rest of the résumé.

For example, let’s say, if he had written something like, “holds Board of Directors position on a customer service non-profit” or something to that effect, because I don’t have a cover letter for these candidates. Those to me maybe would be some place that they would want to highlight those kind of skills that maybe would be covered in a cover letter that I don’t have.

I mean, yes Jerry did write those – the metrics, where he wrote five years experience, but I don’t really think that brought anything to the table, because I can do math and see the years of experience. I didn’t need it spelled out for me, although it was very convenient. It didn’t really add anything to the table to make me jump to Jerry more, so then –

**Betty Jo:** Gotcha. Okay.

**ROO002:** Something else – oh sorry. [crosstalk]

**Betty Jo:** Oh please, go ahead.

**ROO002:** Something else that I forgot to mention when I was talking before that also made me want to choose John. With my limited knowledge of the job, and you know, site unforeseen, I really liked that John indicated on the bottom of his résumé that he was available for evening and weekend shifts. I don’t know what the job times or typical day, working hours, are for this job, because it wasn’t specified.

I like that he is throwing it out there like, hey, if you need me for an evening or weekend shift, cool. I don’t need to have that question in my head like, oh I need a second shift person. I don’t know if Jerry can work second shift, where John put it out there, I can.

**Betty Jo:** Interesting.

**ROO002:** I really liked that too. Even if later down the road, let’s say I hire John as a first 9-to-5 shift kind of guy. Then I lose somebody and I need somebody to cover the 2-to-11 shift. I know John is willing to do it, because he put it out there.
Betty Jo: Right. It’s good that he had a little more flexibility there. Okay.

ROO002: Yup.

Betty Jo: Okay, so when I go down to experience, if I can kind of, you know, obviously it’s about the same number of years. In fact I think it’s exactly the same number of years. The one thing that John did that Jerry didn’t is, he kind of gave a brief description of the companies that he had worked at. Did that help or hurt in your opinion?

ROO002: In this circumstance, or in general?

Betty Jo: In general, I guess. You know, in addition to this circumstance, but just sort of, you know, how does that kind of – does that sort of give you context? Do you not care?

ROO002: I absolutely think that’s great. In this case, I don’t know what domain the CR, CSR position is. I don’t know if they’re reach out. I don’t know if they’re selling flooring. I don’t know if they’re selling magazines. I don’t know what the domain is, but if I did, that would be super helpful because I can see – let’s say, for example, that the job description is for a retail brand.

Let’s say it’s for, I don’t know, Abercrombie and Fitch or something. I know that John has retail experience, that he has worked in a retail division before, because he spelled that out for me. I could maybe find that out on Jerry’s, but I would have to do the research. I’d have to Google “Inspiration Co” and “Excelon” if I didn’t know what they already did, and figure it out for myself.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: Where John puts it out there for me, so I already – he did my work for me.

Betty Jo: Okay. It isn’t as evident here, but just out of curiosity, you know, how important is it for a candidate to clearly designate or really kind of draw your eye towards job duties versus accomplishments? I know you mentioned that you’re very numbers oriented, and you really liked this 12% sales increase that John had mentioned. Is that something that really sticks out for you in résumés, when people do have those really clear accomplishment statements?

ROO002: I like accomplishments. It shows me that you were recognized for something that you did, and that others recognized your capabilities. More so I want to have a clear picture of what you did. Like I felt like Jerry’s bullets were very – I could have just – that’s the job description. I could have just copy and paste that, where when I read John’s, I felt like I understood what he did every day.

I understood what his tasks were. I understood what he brought to the table. I understood what he was specifically doing. Where Jerry’s was very vague, like I
answered some phone calls. I helped some customers. I entered some data. It wasn’t quite that generic, but it kind of read that way a little bit to me.

**Betty Jo:** Okay.

**ROO002:** Where I kind of felt John took some time to really write very descriptive detailed words, not so vague, I guess is the word I’m looking for.

**Betty Jo:** Yeah. It seems like John is a little bit more of a writer maybe than Jerry. Right?

**ROO002:** If I had any critique – oops, sorry. [crosstalk]

**Betty Jo:** No, go ahead. Go ahead.

**ROO002:** I probably jump in ahead in answering questions you have, but one of the critiques I did have about John’s résumé is that he could have formatted it a little different to put it all on one page. I don’t know if that’s just how I printed it, but everywhere I opened it, it was on two pages. With a résumé like this, I would have really tried to get it on one page, because it just kind of looks more aesthetically pleasing. Especially if a recruiter is going to be printing the résumé, it’s a lot easier to keep track of one paper than two.

**Betty Jo:** Right.

**ROO002:** Especially when you only have a tiny little bit of information on the next page, it kind of seems wasteful and not aesthetically as pleasing.

**Betty Jo:** How important are aesthetics? Can you give me some flavor there in general?

**ROO002:** Sure. I think that it’s very important. You want to make sure, you know, candidates want to make sure that the things that are popping, pop. I like that he put in his titles in bold. Kind of wrote everything kind of centered, I didn’t particularly love love that, but it kind of drew my eyes to the middle of the page. I can scan faster that way, so I thought that was something I actually didn’t even notice until about two seconds ago when we were talking about it, that I can scan John’s résumé extremely faster than I can Jerry’s.

**Betty Jo:** Huh, okay.

**ROO002:** I don’t know why that is, must be because everything’s centered. I actually never noticed that until about five seconds ago. Then I was like, oh, I can just read it faster, you know, because everything’s just right in the middle. I think that you want to make sure that the fonts are like nothing crazy.

You don’t want to use like, gothic print, or cursive writing, or something weird, you know what I mean? You want to use pretty standard ones. I don’t want to be like, is
an “R” or a “P” or what is that? I think you need to make the font big enough that it’s not three letters per page, but it fills the page. I don’t have to squint or get reading glasses to read it, because if I do, I probably am not – I’m going to pass.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

ROO002: I mean most of the time, I read fifty to a hundred résumés a day. I only spend like two minutes on each résumé. I want to be able to look at things really quick.

Betty Jo: That is a lot that you’re reading [26:44 phonetic] [crosstalk]

ROO002: If I have to squint – yeah.

Betty Jo: Two minutes is probably generous. I think I’ve heard that it’s roughly around 30 seconds per résumé that most –

ROO002: Well the particular positions I recruit for are very high level and very technical driven, so I have to really – you have to really read them. The average number of pages of the résumés I look at are six to eight, so it takes a little bit longer. That’s just in my particular circumstance. It varies based on, you know, obviously what a recruiter’s looking for.

Betty Jo: Right, absolutely. Then when I – scrolling down just a little bit more, and obviously going to John’s second page, and then going to the end of Jerry’s first. They both have their associates, same month, same year. I see John graduated from Southern New Hampshire, which is a state school up in New England. Jerry graduated from Kaplan, which is a for-profit. How did that weigh in your decision, if at all?

ROO002: In honesty, it didn’t.

Betty Jo: Yeah. In terms of them having a degree, or what type of institution?

ROO002: Well, it mattered that they had a degree to me because it was a requirement in the job description.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: Where it came from didn’t really matter to me.

Betty Jo: Okay.

ROO002: I mean, I think those universities are both fine. It doesn’t typically weigh in my decision unless, to be honest, unless they have some really popping university, like Harvard, Yale, Cornell, you know, an Ivy League school. It doesn’t really pop to me. If they did in a circumstance like this, I would wonder where their decisions were that they were CSRs and went to Harvard and Yale.
Betty Jo: [laughter] Right.

ROO002: [laughter]

Betty Jo: That’s interesting that you say that, because I think when you are sort of recruiting at higher levels, and you’re looking at maybe reputation of an institution, it does sound like that’s part of your decision-making. Just sort of looking at that, I guess, brand value.

ROO002: Yeah.

Betty Jo: I don’t know, I don’t know how –

ROO002: I can understand that. I get what you’re saying. I think for the industry I recruit for, I look more so for what the degree is, than where it came from, because I recruit for technology positions.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: I obviously am looking to see that their degree is in line with that. Like it’s somewhere in computer information systems, information systems, networking, engineering, things like that.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: I recruit all over the country. I don’t know a ton about every single university. I’m a third-party recruiter, so I recruit for end clients. My end client doesn’t really care what the degree is in, or what the university, rather, as long as they have an information systems degree.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: It’s not a priority to me in my particular job. Again, that would probably change if I wasn’t in the industry recruiting for what I am.

Betty Jo: Right. Well and let me – I want to ask you about that, but I’m also curious, so like, if you saw MIT versus, I don’t know, University of New York, would that signal something to you, or would you –

ROO002: Oh yeah.

Betty Jo: Okay.
ROO002: Yeah. Definitely, like I was mentioning before, for the Harvard, the Yale, like especially in my particular industry. A technology driven school would definitely put you up on my list.

Betty Jo: Right, because you kind of know what –

ROO002: Again –

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: Right. It goes along what you’re saying too, because I mean, there’s a different levels of technology schools. There’s like the ITT Tech, and then there’s the MIT. Those are two completely different ball games, so they would change, yes. They would factor in my decision, yes.

Betty Jo: Right. Speaking of ITT and your recruiting in that technology space, does that – do you like ITT candidates?

ROO002: It would have to be a fair combination of like, the overall résumé.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: I don’t – they wouldn’t get ruled out just because they went there, or to Devry, or whatever. I mean, it doesn’t matter, but I would want to see some kind of experience in their field. Kind of where they went.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: I don’t think anything is really – anywhere is really a bad school. It’s more what you got out of it, and I wouldn’t know that until I talked to you in person.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: I certainly wouldn’t rule you out from an interview because of your university.

Betty Jo: Good. In your industry, are portfolios important?

ROO002: Not necessarily. I don’t – we don’t require them. We try to do face-to-face interviews, at which time is when they would kind of prove their skills, so to speak.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: I – how do I word this subjectively? I don’t necessarily always trust portfolios in technology, because they could have anybody write a code sample. I would rather you do it in front of me.
Betty Jo: Right, right. Things are done in teams, so it’s sort of hard to tell whether one developer is actually responsible, right? That kind of thing.

ROO002: Correct.

Betty Jo: Yeah, just curious.

ROO002: Sure.

Betty Jo: Then the last thing on here between John and Jerry, they both have some training mentioned. How important were the trainings? You know, you didn’t mention that at all in your selection. Actually you didn’t mention education or training in your selection process. Did you just put them on a level playing field and kind of move on from there with those two sections, do you think?

ROO002: I didn’t really mention the education because they both had basically the same thing, the only differentiation was the university, as you mentioned. To me, like I was saying, it was a check on the list of requirements. Like okay, both education, cool, we got that.

The training, it’s a good point that you brought that up, but it looks like they have very similar trainings. John’s wording of the training and maybe the classes were just called different things, that may not necessarily be Jerry’s fault. The classes that John took look a little bit more – I don’t know what the word is. Sophisticated, high end, looked a little bit more – the wording was better. Other than that, I mean it looks like, when you break it down, they have similar trainings.

Betty Jo: Yeah, they probably are the same, when all is said and done. I think, you know, potentially –

ROO002: Yeah, John just used fancier terms. [crosstalk]

Betty Jo: [33:53 inaudible] object. Yeah, right. [laughter] Okay, good. [notification chime] Oh shoot, I should have shut my email off, sorry about that. Okay –

ROO002: No worries.

Betty Jo: Good. As we go through that – as we went through that exercise of kind of, you know, sort of surgically going through their résumés, was there anything else about your decision-making that kind of occurred to you? I know you mentioned a couple of things here and there, but anything else that we hadn’t discussed at this point that helped you make your decision?
ROO002: I think, nothing more than what I’ve already mentioned. I know I kind of jumped around a lot. It didn’t occur to me after the fact, like the availability and things like that. Nothing else that I—we both haven’t already discussed.

Betty Jo: Okay, good. You’re still strong in your selection that John is—that you would, if you were forced to choose between John and Jerry, you would choose John?

ROO002: Strictly off paper, yes.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: I would never hire strictly off paper, but yes. [laughter]

Betty Jo: Oh gosh, I can definitely see that [35:02 phonetic] Several people said, just so you know, I would never—yeah, you’re not the first person to say that, which is funny.

ROO002: [laughter]

Betty Jo: Would you have maybe brought them both in for maybe a face-to-face, or would you have both maybe done a phone screen with both of them, or would you just say John is the better one and move on?

ROO002: Sometimes, to answer your question with a question, it was—I felt like I needed more information. In the regards to the fact of am I—are these my only two candidates, or how many vacancies do I have? How many other candidates are in the pool?

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: For me to be able to answer your question, I’d have to kind of know that. You know what I mean, because it’s—if these are just two of a hundred other résumés, would I bring both these two in for sure? I don’t know. If these were my only two options, and I had one vacancy? Yes, I would bring both of them in.

Betty Jo: Okay. I guess I was asking the latter, and so you just answered that. Perfect. Okay. That’s just helpful for me in terms of, you know, how well did—you know, because I purposefully tried to make both résumés pretty similar from I guess a content perspective.

ROO002: Yeah.

Betty Jo: That’s helpful for me, thank you.

ROO002: Yeah, no problem.
Betty Jo: This is great. I’m trying to think if there’s anything else that came up for me as we were talking, but I don’t think – anything else you’d want me know about this process? Sort of last call [laughter] on your selection process.

ROO002: No, just like that only caveat that I would say that I wish I had a little bit more information. Like I mentioned through, when we were discussing, I would have liked to known what the company was, like what did they do, you know, that I’m hiring for.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROO002: I don’t – I mean, I don’t think it ever specified like what the customer service was doing, unless I missed it somewhere.

Betty Jo: No, you didn’t miss it.

ROO002: Other than it saying it was an office environment. I mean that doesn’t tell me like the domain, or what they’re helping customers really do. That might have swayed my decision based on just simply like, okay, he’s done this before.

He understands the product, he understands the type of customers, because I mean products actually have a huge sway on the type of customers you get. You know, that people who are buying things from Arhaus versus Pier One are probably different. You know what I mean? Like depending on the price points, if you will.

Betty Jo: Absolutely.

ROO002: I would have liked to have known, like I mentioned before too, like how many candidates am I able to hire? Are these my only two options? That might have just been helpful.

Betty Jo: Right, yeah. Well you’re definitely not alone in that. I would say the profile of the folks that I’m interviewing all had several of the same questions. Some of that is purposeful, right, is to sort of put you in [38:06 phonetic] a place of uncertainty, and kind of ask you to choose.

Then partly it’s because I’m not a recruiter, so there are some things that just didn’t occur to me in terms of, yeah, this is definitely something, you know, in terms of context, you had needed to know. I think in general we sort get the essence of the selection without a few of those things too. Good points of clarification, maybe for the next study, if I can ever summon the courage to do it again. [laughter]

ROO002: Yeah. The only other thing that I also noticed. As you just mentioned, it may have been purposeful, but having very generic names, because it – I’m not saying me, but it may have swayed your studies differently if you had put an ethnic name versus a “John.”
Betty Jo: Yes.

ROO002: I wondered that too. You know what I mean? When I was doing it, I just – thoughts that occurred to me, you know what I mean?

Betty Jo: That was a very specific control, so I can be very transparent about that. That was top of the list to keep the gender – [crosstalk]

ROO002: I understand that.

Betty Jo: – gender controlled, and to try to keep it as very generically ethnic – I don’t know what I’m trying to get at there, but – [crosstalk]

ROO002: No, I know what you mean.

Betty Jo: – almost be [39:32 phonetic] the same person, because there are a lot of studies out there, specifically about ethnicity and gender.

ROO002: Yes.

Betty Jo: The implicit biases, you know, that we sort of accidentally apply sometimes, right.

ROO002: Yes. I assumed that was your – like part of your control in the study when I saw the résumés and the names like that. I assumed that.

Betty Jo: That’s very –

ROO002: They’re both male. They’re both very like, Bob, Joe, Mike.

Betty Jo: [laughter]

ROO002: Yeah. Very plain, common names. [crosstalk]

Betty Jo: I might as well have called them John and Jerry Joe or Doe for that.

ROO002: Right, yes.

Betty Jo: It’s cool that you noticed that. Thank you. It’s good that you’re aware of that, right? That’s really the key to sort of being as deliberate and thoughtful as possible, is just knowing that some of those things exist, right?

ROO002: Oh yeah.

Betty Jo: I will select based purely on merit, you know. Kind of being very intentional in that way. That’s good that you’re –
ROO002: I feel like your study would have been completely different had one of these candidates been female or, you know, a different ethnicity.

Betty Jo: Yes, and there are a lot of studies out there that have some very strong correlations to gender. Most specifically, to the person making the selections, right? Is gender to gender –

ROO002: Sure.

Betty Jo: – is sort of a pretty common. Ethnicity, same thing, right? It’s part of that sort of, that centrism that we have as humans, right? If I’m a white female, which I just happen to be, I will more often select white female candidates, because that’s just in my brain. [laughter] Right?

ROO002: Yup. I get it.

Betty Jo: You know, those lens exist. It’s hard to really self reflect on that continuously as you’re, like you said, reading 50 to 100 résumés a day. You know, your brain kind of goes on autopilot sometimes and you just kind of do what you do, right? Our brains are very efficient, quote unquote, that way. [laughter]

ROO002: Yeah. [crosstalk]

Betty Jo: You’re running [41:43 phonetic]

ROO002: Like half the times I don’t even read the names.

Betty Jo: You know, good for you. In fact, I’m a teacher as well. I – there are a couple of controls in learning management systems that I use, where I do turn off the name when I do grading, for that very reason. It’s just – it exists.

ROO002: That’s really smart.

Betty Jo: Yeah, it just exists, right? Their name is totally unimportant to me when I’m grading, you know.

ROO002: Yup.

Betty Jo: Yeah, so – boy, we could talk about that for years. That’s one of my –

ROO002: Right. [laughter]

Betty Jo: My notes. [42:12 phonetic] Well –
ROO002: That’s a whole another paper to write.

Betty Jo: It sure is. Holy cow, this one’s enough. I think I’m at a hundred pages so far, so this one’s quite enough for me.

ROO002: Wow. I have two master’s degrees myself and I wrote my first year of theses, so I’m like – I feel you on that. [laughter]

Betty Jo: Yeah, it’s – you know, I love to be a lifelong learner, but at one point it has to come to an end. [laughter]

ROO002: I understand.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Well also, ROO002, thank you so much for your time. Thank you a million times for rescheduling with me, I’m sorry that I was such a mess that Sunday. I really –

ROO002: Oh, no. Life happens. I totally get it.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Thank you. Like I said, I’ll send this out to transcription. I should have it back within seven days, and so you should hear from me, you know, in the next few days. When I get that back, I’ll forward it back out to you.

ROO002: Sure, that sounds great. [crosstalk]

Betty Jo: Let me know what you think. Great. Well hey, thanks again for your time. Hope you feel better, get some rest.

ROO002: Oh, thank you so much. [laughter]

Betty Jo: Great. Well talk to you soon.

ROO002: Have a good night.


ROO002: All right. Bye bye.
ROS003 Interview Transcript

Betty Jo: I’m just going to press that. Okay, there we go. Before we get started, just curious if you had any questions about the study, or about consent, or anything that I can get out of the way before we sort of jump in here.

ROS003: No questions right now.

Betty Jo: Okay. Here’s what I’d like accomplish today. You had gone through phase one and you had selected Jerry Smith over John Singer, when I kind of made you choose between the two. What would be great is if you could kind of just walk me through the process that you went through to one, choose any candidate, but two, you know, why Jerry was the preferred candidate over John. If you could just kind of walk me through that in your own words.

ROS003: Sure. Well the way I usually – the way I start off evaluating the résumés is actually I go right to the required things. Usually the easiest things to get rid of are education, make sure that’s a bare minimum. Does the person have, as here, an associate’s degree? Have they graduated? Usually I like to make sure that there is a date there also for graduation, because I’ve occasionally seen in the past someone will say – just say they’ve attended, not that they’ve received the associates.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROS003: That was a bare minimum. Kind of worked back from there as far as start kind of checking off then the education, experience, before really looking in depth at each résumé. Just making sure – is this person even have the minimum that we’re looking for based on the job description? Then one of the first things though that did stand out to me was on John Singer’s. It was more at first getting rid of him than really choosing Smith, was the bottom line on his résumé that said available for evening and weekend shifts.

[Email chime]

Betty Jo: Ah, okay.

ROS003: That – because I saw, on the description, the position type and expected work hours was Monday through Friday, 8 to 5. Now, I – my very first instinct of course was, okay he’s only looking for work for the evenings and weekends, so I kind of immediately disregarded him. At the same time, I did think, well he could mean that he’s also available for that.

Betty Jo: Right.
ROS003: I then, you know, began kind of the nitpicky little things going through the résumés. I have – I will tell you I have a marketing background, so part of what I look at is – and an English, I also have an English lit degree, so little things start coming out to me. Spacing, how things are laid out, and even word usage. I just kind of found myself being drawn more to Jerry Smith’s.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROS003: As far as getting the impression from the language used that he’d be more of a team player, where John Singer’s, I kind of felt, based on some of the language used, that his was more of a go-getter, single type of person.

Betty Jo: Interesting. Like an individual contributor versus – ah, interesting. Okay.

ROS003: Yep. That was kind of my process.

Betty Jo: Okay, excellent. Let me ask some clarifying questions, just sort of –

ROS003: Yep.

Betty Jo: Based on what you said and kind of looking at the résumés from top to bottom. When you are scanning résumés and sort of again, comparing the minimum requirements to these résumés, are you looking at that top portion of the résumé? You know, that objective or core summary, or whatever people call it these days? Is that a space that you spend a lot of time on?

ROS003: Personally, no.

Betty Jo: Okay.

ROS003: I focus more on experience. That’s really where I – the majority of my time is – goes to reading and evaluating.

Betty Jo: Okay. I won’t ask you to sort of dig in there, since it sounds like that was – it didn’t really weigh, the top portion of the résumés didn’t really weigh very heavily in your decision. Is that accurate?

ROS003: Correct. I did read them and kind of – as far as when I said, the language used, just when it came to really noticing their very similar backgrounds and experience, those – that kind of fell into the verbal articulation of team player versus individual.

Betty Jo: Right, and you know it’s interesting, if I look at the résumés from that lens, which I hadn’t until you mentioned, you know I can see – Jerry’s, first of all it says “five years of experience providing customer support” whereas John’s says “dynamic
customer service professional”, right? One sort of implies that supporting role and then one sort of, you’re right, sort of implies that individual – [crosstalk]

**ROS003:** Input.

**Betty Jo:** Contributor perspective. I didn’t really pick up on that at all. That’s really interesting.

**ROS003:** That was one of the things I had seen in the description so that’s why I was looking for that, was a team player.

**Betty Jo:** Excellent, excellent. That’s a really good perspective. I appreciate that. When, just in general, is this space on the résumé to you, is it just not as important as it used to be? Do you – have you seen that trend change over time? Give me some texture there.

**ROS003:** I’ve seen it change over time. When I first got out of college, I – it was supposed to be one sentence and your basic objective. I was – personally, I remember thinking, this seems so silly. My objective is to get a job.

**Betty Jo:** Right.

**ROS003:** That’s why I’m giving you my résumé. Now even being on the other side, I kind of feel like I don’t really understand still the reason for this. I’d rather see this information, maybe in the cover letter. You know, give me in a well thought-out paragraph, a brief explanation in the cover letter. Why you think you’d fit this job. Briefly explain to me here what sets you apart, because that’s what this top section is supposed to do. What sets you apart? Why are you – what we should get.

**Betty Jo:** Right.

**ROS003:** I would rather see it in a cover letter and just have the résumé be, you know, here’s my experience, here’s my education, training, really lay out a little more in depth that stuff.

**Betty Jo:** Okay. This is definitely one of those polarized areas. You either like it or you don’t, right? [laughter]

**ROS003:** Definitely. I’ve had these kind of conversations before, where some people are like, no, no, I think it’s the best part and you know, I need that to really evaluate. Even cover letters, some people absolutely hate cover letters.

**Betty Jo:** Right. It is a very sort of individual – it’s stylistic almost in nature. I actually say that to people about résumés. Résumé writing is a very stylistic business. [laughter]
ROS003: Yes.

Betty Jo: You’ll get five different opinions from five different people. You know, as a job seeker, you kind of have to – you have to decide what feedback is important and critical to you personally. Yeah, I’m with you on that. When we go down to their experience, which it sounds like you spent some time really sort of digging into, so both candidates have the same amount of experience in years and tenure at each position. You know, I would say, if I looked at the core differences between the two, of course their use of words is slightly different, right?

ROS003: Right.

Betty Jo: Jerry’s a little more succinct. He’s a little more to the point, whereas John looks like he sort of went through a list of action language and kind of really punched up some of the things that he did. One of the things that John also did was he provided the – like the brief description of the companies that he had worked for. Can you tell me about this section? You know, what jumped out at you positively or negatively between both candidates?

ROS003: It was Jerry’s succinct use of language that I liked. The flowery, you know, extra explanation, I didn’t really feel was needed, but I did – I do like and actually that’s a very recent change for me, is seeing the – what the company is. More people I’ve noticed have been doing that. That’s still – I think I almost say that as a drawback, even though I know things are changing to that, because I’m still so used to it not being there, which –

Betty Jo: Ah, got you.

ROS003: Yep. I know it is a change and I think it is a good change, but still my initial reaction was, hey that’s not needed.

Betty Jo: Why is that there?

ROS003: I like this better.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Right.

ROS003: Yeah.

Betty Jo: When we look at these experiences sections, and again this is sort of stylistic in nature, tell me about how you feel about job duties versus accomplishments in this area? Would you have liked to have seen more accomplishments? Do you think they both did an adequate job? Where are you in that – in terms of that weighing in your decision?
ROS003: I would have liked to see a little more as far as accomplishments. Not a lot, you know, it goes back to the issue I was having with John of, you know, I want you to toot your own horn, but not too much.

Betty Jo: [laughter]

ROS003: Give – tell me, give me the highlight of, you know, maybe one or two things that you did, why this – that was phenomenal within this position. What made you stand out there? I definitely would be more concerned with, did your previous job description – can you, based on that experience, will you be able to fill ours, and will it, you know, kind of line up together?

Betty Jo: Right. Okay. Good. Anything else about that experience section that helped you make your decision that you can think of?

ROS003: Nothing’s coming to mind. I know the – that I was a little frustrated in that, it was the same amount of time between places, because that is usually something I look for. A red flag, if somebody is a jumper.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROS003: You know, both from job to job to job, do they have some longevity somewhere? If anything, one thing I noticed was the 2009 to 2011 position, I was surprised there was only three bullets there. For having been there for three years, I would have expected a little bit more.

Betty Jo: Ah, interesting, okay.

ROS003: You know, the longevity was kind of went through my head, okay, you were there for three years and this is all you – [crosstalk]

Betty Jo: This is all you have to show for it?

ROS003: – had time to do?

Betty Jo: [laughter]

ROS003: This is all you have to say about that position?

Betty Jo: Yeah, interesting. Of course, you know, some of that was just brevity I think for me, right is to –

ROS003: Oh, yeah.

Betty Jo: No, I think, it’s a very interesting perspective. I guess you’re absolutely right, you know, normally something a little bit – seems like he would have provided – both
of them would have provided more. What I say to candidates sometimes is when I’ve noticed that they’ve been at a place for several years, and they have very little to say about it. I ask them if they just didn’t like that job, [laughter] because that ends up kind of being some of the unconscious thing that they do, is they sort of downplay the position because they just didn’t like it. [laughter]

ROS003: Exactly.

Betty Jo: That might have been one of my questions for them is, seems like you like your current job much more than the previous one, you know. Tell me about that. I think you and I are on the same page there. When we go down to education, you had said actually education was one of the first things that you look at to sort of rule in or out.

ROS003: Right.

Betty Jo: I think that’s a perfect approach. Both of these guys have their associate’s degree. They do list when they graduated so you’re right, there is sometimes that overstatement of education that I counsel a lot of clients on. Just attending an institution [laughter] is not a degree makes.

ROS003: Exactly.

Betty Jo: They need to be careful with their wording, but both of them have their associates. The only difference between these two candidates is Jerry went to Kaplan, which is a – what we would call a for-profit institution, and John Singer went to Southern New Hampshire which is a more traditional four-year university. [email chime] Did any of that weigh in your decision at all?

ROS003: No. I can definitely say not. I did notice, I recognized Kaplan, but at this point I think a lot of even the for-profit universities are – and online universities do a good job, and I don’t want to discredit an applicant for making that attempt to get a degree. As long as I’ve heard of the college and know that it’s a reputable one, even if it’s a for-profit as you said, I would – it didn’t bother me.

ROS003: Right. Have you seen that change over time as well, kind of similar to that career summary above? You know, have you seen people look at the type of institution differently over time?

ROS003: I have. I’ve noticed when online universities and online education kind of first came into being, people were – a lot of people in the HR world were like, well that’s not a real degree, or you didn’t really work for it. As time has gone on it’s shown that they are working at it and this is real education and even sometimes it’s more difficult to get those classes and get that degree. I don’t discredit those kinds of degrees.
Betty Jo: Yeah, and kudos to you. I think that’s – sometimes we hold on to those, you know. [laughter] those previous notions too long. I was just curious if you had seen that sort of ease up over time. I think that the parallel for you in your community would be sort of, ITT versus [REDACTED – COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THAT COMMUNITY]? 

ROS003: Exactly, yes.

Betty Jo: For you, you would look at them on a level playing field.

ROS003: I would definitely.

Betty Jo: Okay. Perfect. Then the very last thing on their résumés is training and seminars. You know, of course there was a different choice of words in terms of – that describe it. How much weight do you put on trainings?

ROS003: Not a lot of weight, but I do like seeing it. Another reason I went more towards Jerry is, I don’t really – you know, the customer’s always right on John’s. He’s – I don’t really know what that means.

Betty Jo: [laughter]

ROS003: Like, what’s covered. [laughter] Creating a win-win relationship. Like those are great titles for seminars, but what did you learn there?

Betty Jo: Right.

ROS003: Where Jerry’s is an explanation of the trainings he’s had. I would lean more towards that, because you know, yeah the customer’s always right. Who knows what you actually learned there?

Betty Jo: Right, yeah. Descriptive versus the title.

ROS003: Yep.

Betty Jo: Jerry being a little more descriptive about the training, do you think that helped you a little bit make that decision?

ROS003: Yes.

Betty Jo: Yeah. Okay. Sounds good. As we go through that exercise, were there any other things, as I was talking or as you were thinking through your decision, that you would want me to know about how you chose Jerry over John that we didn’t talk about?
ROS003: One other old notion that I will admit I held onto, and I find it kind of funny that I do lean this way, even though my résumé is two pages. It’s been ingrained in me still that a one-page résumé is preferable. That was something I noticed when I printed them out to look at, that Jerry’s was one page and John’s was over two pages. What’s funny is I can – just like with the details on the companies under the experience, I can feel myself leaning towards Jerry because of that, even though I know, even personally mine’s over two pages.

Betty Jo: [laughter]

ROS003: It shouldn’t matter, but that was something I did notice.

Betty Jo: Yes, and I think part of it too is John actually doesn’t have a ton more of content in his résumé, as much as he sort of did some formatting. Talk to me about layout and formatting.

ROS003: Part of – there was one part of me that liked John’s formatting better, just the clean lines in between. I guess this goes probably to the marketing side of my brain in that having experience centered and it’s actually a smaller font it looks like than the name of the companies and even the title that he held there, kind of drew me away.

Where I like having on Jerry’s, I could very quickly eyeball, okay I’m looking for education, boom, there’s education. All right, I want to check his experience, boom, there’s experience. That kind – having it that way helped me keep more organized and as someone reviewing it, I appreciate that.

Betty Jo: Right. Yeah.

ROS003: Not kind of searching through.

Betty Jo: Yeah, trying – not making you work for it, right?

ROS003: Right.

Betty Jo: Right. Yeah, I can absolutely see that, and you know, some of that was intentional in the research design is creating some of these distractions to sort of see what would pull you one way or another, so I appreciate that as well. Anything else that you can think of about this decision?

ROS003: Not really. Like I said, when it came down to it, the biggest reason honestly in the end that pulled me was the evening and weekend.

Betty Jo: [laughter] Right.
ROS003: That was just kind of funny in my head and the articulation that they each had, the voice.

Betty Jo: Perfect, perfect. Let me ask you a couple of more, just one or two more questions. I mean clearly I made these résumés sort of as similar as I could without them being exact carbon copies of each other. If I didn’t force you to choose, is it possible that you would have had a phone call with Jerry and John?

ROS003: I would have – if I needed a second applicant, would be how I would word it. Jerry would have been – would still have been on top for me. He would have been number one and kind of, if he didn’t work out, then I would have called John.

Betty Jo: Right.

ROS003: Type of thing.

Betty Jo: Okay, and it actually [email chime] I’m sorry, I should have shut my email off, and if I do it now it’ll make more noise.

ROS003: [laughter] No, it’s fine.

Betty Jo: The last question, and you’ve just answered it, so I’ll just sort of throw it out there for the transcript of our interview more than anything else is, it sounds like you are still – you know, after going through this process and kind of explaining it to me, you’re still confident in your choice of Jerry versus John.

ROS003: I am still confident in Jerry over John.

Betty Jo: Okay, perfect. Well that is fantastic. That’s exactly what I was trying to do, you know, accomplish in this phase of the research. Let me tell you about the next few steps, just so you have an idea of what happens from here, is that okay?

ROS003: Okay. Oh, definitely.

Betty Jo: What I’ll do now after we’re done here is I will get this ready to send out to transcription. Just prior to sending that out, I’ll strip your name off of the document and anything else that I send to them, so that you have a participant code assigned to you. They wouldn’t be able to know who you were.

Only I know your identity, and we’re going to keep it that way. Once I get that transcript back, I should have it in about, I would say, five to seven business days. I’ll email that back out to you and just ask you to take a quick peek and make sure that it’s an accurate representation of our conversation, which it should be, since it’s transcription, but you just never know.
I would also ask if there was anything else that occurred to you, sort of after we got off the phone today, or after reading the transcript, if there were anything else that you would want me to know, you know, about that decision. I’ll just have you sort of email that back to me at your convenience. That’s the next step, and that should happen in the next week.

ROS003: Okay.

Betty Jo: From there what I’ll do is I take all of the transcripts of the fifteen people that I’m interviewing and essentially I’m looking for common themes across these interviews to come up with a collective experience with these fifteen people about screening these particular candidates. I’m using some very specific wording there, because this kind of research is very sort of individual to this particular population.

It may not apply to every single person in your role in America, but it really only applies to these fifteen people. I will describe the experience, the collective experience, in terms of the central themes that have come up. At the very end of that coding process, I will add my experience to it as well. Then I’ll ship that back out to you to sort of just have you take a look and kind of take that in.

Here’s what we came up with, you know, what do you think? It’s important for me, you know, to me, to have you continue to be involved in the evolution of this research. That would be the second step. The very last step is when I take the narrative and I situate it within the body of research that already exists. That’s the fun part where I get to say, okay, so here’s what I came up with, but here are all the other things that are in the same body of research.

If we look at them in total, this is now sort of the implications going forward. That’s called the debrief and that’s – sometimes people prefer to do that over the phone, sometimes over email. That’s entirely up to you. To me, that’s probably the most fun of the whole thing, because you sort of understand exactly what the research is trying to accomplish and then you can really, you know, talk about the implications of that research in your field.

If we came up with – if all of these interviews said this one thing, you know. Of course it will be more than one. There was just this one thing and you thought, oh my gosh, that’s huge for us. We either have to fix that or we have to leverage it, you know, one or the other. To me, that’s the funnest part because you really get to sort of look at it globally and say, wow, that is – there are some big implications here from an HR perspective.

That’s the fun part in this process. My expectation is I will get through all of that process by the end of November, but of course, you know, things happen and [laughter] advisors are not always available when I want them to be, and you
know, all that kind of fun stuff. My goal is to have all of that done for you by the end of November.

ROS003: Oh, wonderful.

Betty Jo: Yeah. Any questions about the next couple of steps, ROS003?

ROS003: No questions about the next steps, it sounds actually very exciting and I’m looking forward to being part of this.

Betty Jo: Yeah, it is really exciting. It’s really fun, and this has been a long time coming for me. I’ve been in ABD status for longer than I shall mention in polite public. [laughter] I got a little bit of a kick in the pants this year, and I was like, okay, this is definitely – you know, it’s time to finish this.

The end is in sight. Thank you so much. One, for just being involved, but two, you know, taking the time out of your schedule today. I really – I know that it’s after hours for you, so I really appreciate you hanging out and talking to me tonight. Unless you have any other questions, I’ll let pop off of here, and you should hear from me in a week.

ROS003: No other questions, and I appreciate you understanding about yesterday, so thank you.

Betty Jo: Of course, of course. Thanks again.

ROS003: All right, well you have a great night.

Betty Jo: All right, enjoy your night. Talk to you soon.

ROS003: Bye.

Betty Jo: Bye.
Betty Jo: There we go. Before we get started today, I wanted to know, do you have any questions about the study or about consent or anything like that I can kind of get out of the way before we dig in here today?

WILL014: No, no questions at all.

Betty Jo: Okay.

WILL014: I’m good with that.

Betty Jo: Excellent.

WILL014: The only question I did have, I know your meeting notice said that I had selected Mr. Smith, but you know, just reviewing the résumés quickly, I had thought that I had selected Mr. Singer, so –

Betty Jo: Oh.

WILL014: – but yeah, because I had just – but I could be wrong. I don’t have my notes that I made in front of me. Unfortunately those are at the office. I will do my best, I guess.

Betty Jo: Well, gosh, yeah. I mean, you know what I will do, as we – let me just quickly, I’ve actually got them printed out here real quick. You know what? You are right. You did – I am sorry about that. I ended up –

WILL014: Oh, that’s okay.

Betty Jo: – sending out so many emails and just, gosh, it’s been interesting to manage this in addition to everything else on my plate. My apologies.

WILL014: Oh, I’m sure.

Betty Jo: You’re absolutely correct.

WILL014: Yeah, no problem. I just – that makes me feel better, because to me John Singer stood out a little bit more to me than Jerry Smith, so I’m glad that it was John Singer.

Betty Jo: Yeah, great. With that in mind, that’s exactly what we’re trying to accomplish today is, could you kind of just take me through the process that you went through in choosing – I mean again, I know I sort of forced you to choose at the end of that little survey, but could you one, how you kind of prepared to screen these
candidates and then two, what were the things that stood out in terms of John being a slightly better candidate or more preferred over Jerry?

WILL014: Okay, sure. I’ll certainly do my best. I guess in preparation for any interview, I’m always looking at the individual résumés from just a kind of look, feel, formatting perspective, kind of gives me a little insight. Just in terms of their presentation skills, I guess for lack of a better word.

Betty Jo: Right.

WILL014: I kind of just do a quick glance at that. Look at the, obviously, the job description.

Betty Jo: Right.

WILL014: I kind of just do a quick glance at that. Look at the, obviously, the job description.

WILL014: [notification chime]

WILL014: Oh, sorry about that. Looking at the essential functions, the competencies, all that kind of information, and then just compare it to the individual. I think what’s interesting is looking at an individual’s accomplishments. The first set of bullets I think on both of their résumés is always good information, and things that aren’t necessarily bulleted in their experience. That’s always good, as opposed to – I know the old-fashioned way of doing it was to put a “career” objective, so to speak.

Betty Jo: Right.

WILL014: That to me doesn’t mean a whole lot, so much more prefer to see what their accomplishments have been, so that was good. The other – I’m just trying to look at – so chronological order is always helpful, because it kind of flows well, makes good sense. That’s important. Education and training, so I think what was helpful, if I’m looking at Mr. Singer, is he also included some trainings that – or seminars that he attended, so that’s always – well I guess we’re kind of getting off, I’m getting ahead of myself here.

Betty Jo: Oh, that’s all right. [03:55 phonetic]

WILL014: [laughter] You know, just kind of looking at their overall education and looking for extra details as Mr. Singer put in was – is always helpful as well. Let me think, I just think that John Singer’s résumé flowed better, looked better, had a better formatting to it, so I hate to say that, but it does, and that makes a difference to me. I guess I started off by saying that. That being said, do you have any questions about that?

Betty Jo: Sure, yeah, I do. Unless – was there more that you wanted to say about your overall, I guess, feelings towards John’s résumé versus Jerry?

WILL014: Sure, sure. As I’m looking at it, and I do apologize, I didn’t get a chance to re-review it again this morning, but –
Betty Jo: That’s fine.

WILL014: As I look at his résumé, what’s interesting to me is the – if we’re looking at his experience, just in terms of things like listen attentively to a caller need. It wasn’t just saying that he provided good customer service experience, but he actually kind of gave a visual on – or that gave me a visual on what he was doing to listen to a customer’s inquiries, so to speak.

Let’s see, saying that, striving for quick complaint resolution, that was definitely advantageous for him as well. Saying that he excelled within the service-oriented company is positive. Working with customers from diverse backgrounds, that’s appealing.

As I look – one thing that stood out to me is metrics, you know, being in talent acquisition, we’re always looking for metrics, right? Time to fill, time to source, numbers driven to some extent. In the – his experience with Delano Incorporated, it’s impressive that he says “memorized the company’s product offerings.” I’m sure that’s no easy – that was no easy feat, so that was impressive.

Then in addition, I think a big plus for him was where he said “contributed to 12% increase for the quarter.” I mean, not necessarily sure exactly how he went about doing that, and that would be an interesting conversation to have, but that was certainly an important factor, I guess, in deciding and John Singer over Jerry Smith.

Betty Jo: Okay.

WILL014: Recommending solutions, again is – was appealing. Then when I look at the seminars completed, you know, those seem to be – fit right in with what the job was doing, or the skills necessary, as opposed to looking at Jerry Smith’s. He does have this training that was completed, but it didn’t give me the same description or feeling. It wasn’t – the titles were not there of the trainings so to speak, it was just more generalities compared to what John Singer had indicated.

Betty Jo: Okay, good.

WILL014: Yep. Let’s see, is there any other highlights? Yeah, the time of work experience was about the same. I mean it was a really hard decision. I definitely will give Jerry Smith that. I did look and re-look and review the résumés several times to make that decision, so it wasn’t that Jerry Smith was not a good candidate. I just felt that John Singer had to – or had a little bit more professionalism, polish, training, directly related contributions to sales increase.

Betty Jo: Good.
WILL014: Yeah, is there – let’s see. Do you have any questions I guess about –

Betty Jo: Yes.

WILL014: Any more questions about that?

Betty Jo: Yeah, if you wouldn’t mind.

WILL014: Okay.

Betty Jo: Yeah, and so that’s great. It’s so funny, I’ve told most of the folks that are participating that you know, when I originally had designed this research study, I had in my head, I thought these interviews would take sixty to ninety minutes. Then when I had done my first couple of them, I realized that folks that are in talent acquisition and recruiting are a very definitive bunch. [laughter]

WILL014: [laughter]

Betty Jo: They go through résumés, so many, and so often, and it – you know, the time to decision, if you will, is rather short. You guys are very succinct in being able to describe why you selected a candidate? What I’ve done to sort of get a little more texture beyond the “why,” if you will, is to then kind of ask you, if it’s okay, to go back and kind of look at them side by side in each section, and let me just ask some clarifying questions, if that’s okay.

WILL014: Sure, sure. Not a problem.

[phone ringing]

Betty Jo: Do you need to get that phone? I’m so sorry.

WILL014: That’s okay. I’m just trying to give them – let them know I can’t talk right now, so I should be good.

Betty Jo: Do you want to answer it and talk between?

WILL014: Yeah, no, I just sent them a text message, so I should be okay right now.

Betty Jo: Okay.

WILL014: Sorry about that.

Betty Jo: Okay. Then when we look at the top of the résumés, and I think you mentioned this in terms of, you know, it used to sort of be that “career objective.” Now we’re getting into more of the major accomplishments, hopefully those are lined up to the job descriptions. Have you seen that trend change over time, where we’ve
gone to a more targeted top of the résumé? On a related item, how important is this section to you when you make decisions?

**WILL014:** I mean, yes, I would say that this seems to be more of the norm now in terms of accomplishments on résumés. It’s – sorry I was just – had another text message come in. Yes, but – so, I’m sorry, but could you repeat the question?

**Betty Jo:** Sure, yes. It’s sort of a two-part question. One is, you know, and I think you just answered it is, which is, have you seen the top of the résumé move from “seeking employment in” versus, here are the two or three or four things about me that line up to this particular job? Have you seen it become more targeted? I think what you said is, yes.

**WILL014:** Yes.

**Betty Jo:** The second question is, in that, how important is the top of the résumé for you? Is that something that weighs heavily for you, or are you the kind of person who skips right to experience? Kind of give me some flavor around that.

**WILL014:** Yeah, I would say that it is relatively important to me, because I think that it gives me the ability to see how an individual is able to, I would say, give an elevator speech about themselves, for lack of a better word. You know, summarize their accomplishments in just a few short bullets, so their ability to articulate concisely. You know, because bulleting out their experience is much easier, in my opinion, than summarizing or giving an overall summary concisely about their accomplishments over the course of their career.

**Betty Jo:** Okay, good, good. It sounds like – and when I look at the difference between John and Jerry, you know I think John – I think in general John is a little more verbose, maybe uses more descriptive language, whereas Jerry is more succinct and perhaps a little – I don’t know if aggressive is the right word, but you know, he comes right out and says, hey, I have five years of experience, and then he –

**WILL014:** Right.

**Betty Jo:** – specifically describes that experience, where John kind of has developed a tag line for himself.

**WILL014:** Right.

**Betty Jo:** He uses again more descriptive wording, and it sounds like that was part of your decision to move towards John as well. Is that correct?

**WILL014:** Yes, absolutely. Yeah, that is definitely noteworthy. I would say that that gives me the impression that John is probably – has a softer approach to his work,
which is much more important to me than someone that is a little more direct, especially in this – I mean, in some positions, it might be okay, but in this particular area, I would say the softer approach is right on.

Betty Jo: Okay, good. When we go down to the experience section, you know, again pretty different – they have the same experience and probably did exactly the same thing, but John again has used more descriptive language, whereas Jerry is more succinct. John also described the companies that he had worked for. Was that important to you?

WILL014: Yeah, actually it was important to me. I made a note of that on my other notes, so yes, I think that that – yes, I guess the short answer is yes, it definitely is important.

Betty Jo: You did mention this before when you were talking, but just to sort of focus on this for a section. Can you talk to me a little bit about job duties versus accomplishments in résumés, and which one is more important to you, or do you like to see a combination? What are your preferences there?

WILL014: I think seeing a combination is always good, because you know, typically when I’m looking for job duties, I just want to make sure that they line up with the responsibilities of the position that I’m recruiting for.

It’s almost job duties – so if they don’t have job duties that line up with the responsibilities for the position, the summary of their career or highlights or accomplishments of their career really don’t matter to me. The job responsibilities or duties are almost like a requirement, per se, and it’s just kind of a check and balance. Then the highlights or accomplishments is what kind of sets them apart.

Betty Jo: Great. I know that you mentioned that John had that one metric in here, and that was something that sort of jumped out at you. Do you think that that really swayed you heavily to – that Jerry really didn’t mention anything about sort of achievement, whereas – I mean, John only did it once, which is potentially [16:45 phonetic] – but it sounds like that’s something that did sort of jump out at you.

WILL014: Yeah, I would think so. I think that gave me the idea that John has the, let’s see, wherewithal to think that that was important to highlight and to a future employer, that is definitely an important fact to know.

Betty Jo: Okay, good. Anything else about their experience section that you can think of that sort of helped you make your decision?

WILL014: Let’s see. No, I don’t think so. I think that we pretty much covered everything that in the – from those sections.
Betty Jo: Okay, okay. Then when we go down to education, they both meet the minimum requirement with their associate’s. They received it in the same month and year. John Singer went to Southern New Hampshire, which is sort of a more traditional university, whereas Jerry went to Kaplan College, which is a for-profit institution. Tell me about how this weighed in your decision, if at all, and then maybe kind of give me your thoughts on that, for-profit versus non-profit or more traditional.

WILL014: You know what, for me personally, it doesn’t weigh in the decision whatsoever. Now if it would have been a prestigious university, if it’d have been Harvard or Yale or University of Michigan or Stanford or something like that, that would have stuck out to me. The fact that – I personally don’t know of these colleges, so it didn’t matter one way or another to be perfectly frank –

Betty Jo: Right.

WILL014: – or to be quite frank, I guess.

Betty Jo: It’s interesting that you say that, because we’re – after this call with you, we’re heading over to Purdue for the homecoming game, and you know that’s – sort of something that was on my mind this morning. If it were Purdue versus Kaplan, for example, it’s – would that have stuck out at you?

WILL014: Yes, that would have definitely stuck out.

Betty Jo: What is that, what is the signal about those reputations and those big name universities that you just mentioned? What does it signal to you?

WILL014: It signals, you know, that they are a high achiever. Well, they were a high achiever in their education, meaning they had to do well in high school to get into those types of universities. The assumption is, without actually seeing GPAs, that they did well, graduated from a pretty rigorous program, for the most part. That to me lends itself that they will do well in a work environment or professional environment.

Betty Jo: So it’s something about the rigor – and is that because of your experience with those institutions, or just sort of what you know about them? Kind of give me more flavor there.

WILL014: Yeah, I would say it’s a little bit of both. You know, knowing just a few folks – well, being in Michigan, I’ve known numerous people that have went to the University of Michigan. I have three kids, two of them being college age, one graduated, so I know what it was like going through the process, the application process –

Betty Jo: Right.
WILL014: to get into the universities, so I certainly am aware of that. Know a couple individuals that have went to, one Harvard, one Yale, and obviously know what went into those individuals. So a little bit of experience in terms of just what some of the bigger name institutions or what is necessary.

I recruited at University of Michigan for numerous years and sat on an employer advisory board in the School of Engineering, so pretty well aware at that time – it’s been a few years, but just what program rigor and requirements were to do well in those universities.

You know, the name, the reputation certainly adds to one’s, I guess, decision making at times, even if you have really no experience with – MIT for instance, I don’t know if I really know anyone that’s went there, but I know that it’s certainly a great place to get an education.

Betty Jo: Yeah, and it’s interesting that you say that. I remember once, it was several years ago now, but I had gotten called for an interview for a position that I applied for, that frankly I wasn’t really that qualified for. I just thought it sounded like a really, really interesting job, and I thought, hey, you know, no harm, no foul if I apply and they don’t call me.

I ended up getting called, which was sort of surprising, and when I was in the interview the guy said, one of the only reasons I called you is because you’re a graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and so am I, and I know what that means, and even more –

WILL014: Right.

Betty Jo: and even more than you did it at the master’s level, I know what to expect from an RPI grad.

WILL014: Yes.

Betty Jo: So is that kind of – is that sort of the lens that you’re looking through, is that you kind of have the – is it like a brand recognition kind of thing? Is that a way to articulate it?

WILL014: Yeah. I would say that that’s a really good way to articulate it, especially after I spent two days talking about employer branding in Dallas.

Betty Jo: [laughter]

WILL014: [laughter] I think that that’s exactly what I’m talking about.

Betty Jo: Right, interesting. Related to the beginning question, have you had experience with other folks – you know, I know you’ve been in this business for a little bit.
Have you had experience with folks that said, you know, if University of Phoenix is on their résumé, I just put them to the side. Have you seen that sort of for-profit, non-profit issue?

**WILL014:** Yes, yes. Absolutely. I think that from a hiring manager perspective, with someone that’s not in HR, I hate to say it, but are huge discriminators against individuals that have been to like Phoenix and those types of institutions.

You know, we quite regularly deal with hiring managers, say when I was – well I was at [REDACTED – LARGE FORTUNE 500] for five years, so you know, [REDACTED – LARGE FORTUNE 500] in particular wanted people from Harvard and from Yale and from all these Ivy League schools, and they literally would not – the hiring managers, not necessarily HR, because we don’t want to get into discrimination –

**Betty Jo:** [laughter]

**WILL014:** – but the hiring managers literally would not look at individuals if they were not from a well-branded, Ivy League type institution.

**Betty Jo:** Right, and even worse if it was a Phoenix, it sounds like. [laughter]

**WILL014:** Yes, absolutely, right.

**Betty Jo:** How do you handle that, you know, from the HR perspective?

**WILL014:** You know, we just say that we have to look at all qualified candidates, regardless of where is education, or where they received their education. At the end of the day, I will tell you that a person that went to Harvard and a person that went to Phoenix, the Harvard person is going to win out, just because of the – not because of the brand, but because of the type of individual that gets into Harvard and completes the program.

Hands down, I have seen more times than not, if you put one against the other, that the Harvard person is going to be more qualified, but from an HR perspective, it’s our job to convince hiring managers not to discriminate based on where a person went to school.

**Betty Jo:** Right, right. It’s interesting to look at that globally as we look at sort of talent shortages. [laughter] You know, and how we really open people’s eyes to the non-traditional student, right?

**WILL014:** Right.
Betty Jo: Maybe the different things that they may bring to the table. You know, and the interesting thing is – I’ve been in higher ed for quite some time, and Harvard has experienced some pretty significant academic challenges over the years, lost their accreditation for a period of time in their business school.

It’s interesting to kind of look at that from the other side of the fence, and say you know, frankly Harvard may be no better than any other state school when boil it all down, but you’re right, there is a certain prestige associated with a set of –

WILL014: Right.

Betty Jo: – institutions here in the US. Interesting, cool. Sorry to digress there, I was just sort of interested when you said – what tipped me off was when you said, for me personally, and I thought, you know what, I’m going to have to circle back and [laughter] dig into that a little bit.

WILL014: [laughter]

Betty Jo: The very last part of the résumé is the training section. I think that you articulated this pretty well, is that John kind of – it seems like he probably put the titles of his trainings that were a little more punchier, versus Jerry, where he just – I think what he did is provided the content, rather than the title.

WILL014: Yes.

Betty Jo: One was a little punchier than other, but generally, how heavy do trainings weigh into your decision-making?

WILL014: I would say, if all else is equal, I would probably say it weighs in a little bit more during those instances, but for the most part, I would say it’s not a big influencer.

Betty Jo: Right.

WILL014: I’m really looking for their accomplishments and if they can do the job based on the responsibilities of previous jobs, and the education piece. The training’s not a huge influencer to me.

Betty Jo: Right. After kind of walking me through this selection, and bearing with me going through each section, is there anything else that you want me to know about your decision making process?

WILL014: You know, the only thing that I would say is not really related to just looking at their résumés, is just their – an individual’s overall communication skills via the– you know, oral and written, phone, email communication, individual’s sense of urgency through the process. If I have somebody that is tardy in getting back to me if I’m trying to set up an interview or if I’m trying to just make a connection,
if they don’t seem interested, that’s definitely impactful on if I move forward with that candidate or not.

I mean, if the job – if an organization has a critical need to fill, and someone applies to it, and we see it all the time, that they call off, especially in this day and age where there’s a shortage in supply, or shortage in talent. If an individual is not real responsive, then that’s certainly – impacts my decision.

Betty Jo: Yeah, absolutely. It’s so funny you said that, I’m a career coach for the majority of my working hours. One of my clients just told me that Raytheon had reached out to her, and it had been a week and a half that she hadn’t responded. [laughter] I just wanted to physically shake her, you know.

WILL014: Yeah.

Betty Jo: First of all, Raytheon is just one of those gold stars that you would have on your résumé.

WILL014: Yes.

Betty Jo: We certainly don’t want – and I had to break the news to her that it’s very likely that it’s too late to respond.

WILL014: Yes.

Betty Jo: I mean, I encouraged her to respond –

WILL014: Right.

Betty Jo: – with the knowledge that, you know, after three days, that recruiter probably moved on.

WILL014: Yeah, or she better have a good excuse why she didn’t respond sooner.

Betty Jo: Right, and frankly she didn’t.

WILL014: I mean, if you had –

Betty Jo: So bless her heart, you know.

WILL014: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Betty Jo: Some self-doubt, you know, and things like that. Yeah, it’s interesting that you say that. I know one of the things that you mentioned was sort of formatting as well, and how the polish weighs in. Anything more about that polish or formatting that you wanted to mention?
WILL014: No, I think that I pretty much said I think what my thoughts. Nope, I think that’s good on that.

Betty Jo: Okay, and after discussing both résumés, are you still confident in your decision of John over Jerry, if you were forced to choose?

WILL014: Yes, absolutely.

Betty Jo: Okay. Then very last, and this is just very a logistical question in nature, if you weren’t – if you didn’t have to choose, and you could screen both of these candidates, would you have done that?

WILL014: Yes, I would have.

Betty Jo: Okay, just an internal validity check for me. [laughter]

WILL014: Yes. Yes, I think – Jerry had enough good qualifications and accomplishments that would certainly – because you know, it’s always great to compare and contrast, just to kind of help validate your decisions.

Betty Jo: Right.

WILL014: In going into the interviews, I would have thought that John would have probably done better, articulated better, but you never know. There’s always those shining stars or people that are unable to really summarize their experience well on a résumé, so I’m always open to giving those individuals a chance.

Betty Jo: Excellent, good. That’s great to hear. Let me tell you about the next steps, WILL014, just so that you have an idea of what we do from here. What I do from here is prepare this interview for transcription. At that time, I’ll strip your name and that again, the only person who knows your identity is me.

What I’ll get back is a full, nearly verbatim transcript of our conversation. I will email that out to you and just ask for your confirmation as to, it’s a representation of what we discussed. I would caveat that with, you know, sometimes transcription is tricky. There will be a couple of words left out here and there, especially if we talked at the same time. I’ve been trying to be really mindful of that throughout this process, but it’s unavoidable in some cases.

As long as it’s a general, you know again, it’s a good representation of what we discussed. I always have the audio file to go back to, you know, if I need to as well. When I email that to you, I’ll ask for your confirmation of that and then also if there are any other thoughts that occurred to you between the time that we talked or after looking at that transcription, that you would want me to know about that selection.
**WILL014:** Okay.

**Betty Jo:** I should have your transcription back, I would say by Wednesday of next week, so I will ship that off to you and just have you take a quick look. [dog yelps] I’m sorry. I have a dog in the background. [laughter]

**WILL014:** That’s okay. I have one too. He’s just being quiet.

**Betty Jo:** Yeah, I’m surprised they were quiet this whole – this long. Then what I’ll do from there is take all of the interviews, the fifteen interviews, and look at the general commonalities between each of you and come up with a general phenomena, if you will, across these fifteen people, as to how you went about the screening process.

At the very end of that, I’ll add my experience to it, but it’s very deliberate for me to stay out of that until I have that first narrative written. Then I’ll send that out to you and just ask you for your thoughts about that. Again, it won’t be an individual experience, but it’ll be sort of a group experience over those fifteen people, so that’s the second step.

Then the third step is, at the very end, there’s a debrief that you can take part in. That’s when I take that narrative and I situate it in the current body of research and come up with implications of my research within that context. That would be a great time for you, as an expert in the field, to say oh wow, this really – these – you’re right, these are the implications and we should either be leveraging this, or minimizing this, whatever that turns out to be.

The cool thing about this research design is I’m not supposing any of the answers. There’s no hypothesis necessarily. It’s more about understanding the phenomena and then letting that phenomena take me back into the research. Sort of a backwards design, if you will. Any questions about the next couple of steps?

**WILL014:** No, no. I think you articulated it well and I think I’m all set.

**Betty Jo:** Well sounds great. Like I said, you’ll hear from me mid-next week, and thank you so much for your time. I know you’ve been really busy and I know Bill keeps all of you guys really busy.

**WILL014:** [laughter]

**Betty Jo:** He and I have known each other since we were thirteen, so I know all about him.

**WILL014:** Oh, yeah, Bill’s amazing. He’s just been our leader for the last few months, and I know I tell him all the time how amazing he is. We are busy, there’s no doubt about that, but yeah, he’s a good person to work for.
Betty Jo: Yeah, he’s – he keeps people busy. I would say, you know, you are working for one of the best people I have ever known, so kudos from that perspective as well. Thank you. Enjoy the rest of your afternoon, and good luck getting caught up from your trip.

WILL014: Oh yeah, and have fun over at Purdue.

Betty Jo: I will. Thanks so much, WILL014. Take care.

WILL014: You’re welcome, Betty Jo.

Betty Jo: All right, bye.
Betty Jo: All right, let me just press that. Okay, so you asked me what the end goal of the study is. Good question. The research design that I’ve chosen for this project is phenomenological research, which I had to practice many times over and again to say in one try.

WOO018: [laughter]

Betty Jo: [laughter] Essentially what phenomenology is, is it looks at one task across several people and then it sort of looks at the totality of their experiences and tries to come up with the common themes. Whether those are processes, or externalities, or you know, whatever those things may be, to come up with a description of the phenomena for that particular set of people.

Then you take that central phenomena and you situate it in the current research. It’s almost like backward design in some ways, so that you know, I’m interested in the screening process [email chime] but where the research will take me is sort of up in the air until I’m done with all of the interviews. Does that make sense?

WOO018: Yes. Yeah, that does.

Betty Jo: That’s the neat thing about it, is that it’s really organic. It can, you know, some of the interviews, someone will say something and I’ll think, wow that was kind of interesting. Let’s kind of dig in there a little bit more, right? Then in the next interview there’s something else about the résumés that, you know, they really paid a lot of attention to, so I’ll kind of dig in there.

Certainly there are some key differences between the two résumés that are purposeful from a research design perspective. I may ask you some clarifying questions there, but the – one of the most important pieces to this type of research is not making an assumption and/or me sort of guiding you into an answer. It’s really about your experiences and you guiding me.

WOO018: Okay. Okay, very interesting, because we laugh in the recruiting world and continue to make the statement that recruiting is not a science.

Betty Jo: Yes.

WOO018: If it were a science, we would have automated – [crosstalk]

Betty Jo: Right.
WOO018: to deal with [02:26 phonetic]. There’s this whole issue out of there that’s brewing, particularly amongst the Fortune 500s. You know, we all bought into these applicant tracking systems.

Betty Jo: Yes, the AT process [02:40 phonetic].

WOO018: I paid over a million dollars for mine, for Alcatel Lucent – [crosstalk]

Betty Jo: Wow.

WOO018: – for a global system. You know, what they promised in that system were built-in algorithms that would allow us to screen résumés, given criteria, and take that a thousand résumés coming in on one position and really narrow that down for our recruiters. We would get all of this, you know, terrific new progress in you know, efficiency, and da-da-da-da, but it didn’t work. [laughter]

Betty Jo: [laughter]

WOO018: It still took the recruiter’s human eye on a résumé to make sure that they didn’t miss that diamond in a rough, if that makes sense.

Betty Jo: It makes perfect sense. You know, and that’s kind of some of my thoughts about this process. What are some of those – I may find at the end of this that there are no common themes across these fifteen people. It’s certainly possible, right?

WOO018: Yeah.

Betty Jo: Though I can say there are some threads just early on as I’m just listening, because I’ll go through a very formal process of coding the data, but even as I’m just taking it in, I sense some commonalities here and there. Some more interesting than others, but it is – what it seems like to me is in some ways sort of a personal or individual sort of experience, because we all – [crosstalk]

WOO018: Yeah.

Betty Jo: – sort of come to the table with these different experiences. You know, as you kind of walk me through your choice, I’m interested in how you made this choice, because that’s sort of the premise of this interview, but also what are those experiences and/or externalities that play into you emphasizing one thing on a résumé versus another? What are some of those contexts that you used, you know, those constructs, in terms of making those decisions? It just gives it a lot more texture, right? It may – [crosstalk]

WOO018: Yeah.
**Betty Jo:** It may make it so I can’t find commonalities amongst all of you, but that’s still a research finding.

**WOO018:** Okay.

**Betty Jo:** Great question. Do you have any other questions about the study or about consent that I can get out of the way before we jump in here?

**WOO018:** No, just that. I’m fascinated in this area, because I’ve been working in it so long that, you know, any research people do that really help us in this area is so valuable.

**Betty Jo:** Excellent. Well I’m glad that’s why it piqued your interest, you know, it’s interesting when you try to get a group of research participants together. It’s – these are very busy people that I’m trying to take time from. [laughter]

They really have to be looking at it globally, right, to say, am I going to be able to learn something from this? Are we able to improve what we do on the whole from this? That’s really, to me, what is most interesting about research, is you know, looking at things from a best practice perspective –

**WOO018:** Right.

**Betty Jo:** Are there things that I’m hearing in this group of fifteen people that’s important for other people to hear as well. That’s kind of the position that I will take towards the end is, what was significant in what they said, that has other implications, if you will. Actually you guys will also sort of, you know, you can help me with that as well. What happens with the process now is, so today we’re going to – I’m going to ask you to sort of just walk me through, in your own words, how you came to the decision to choose John Singer over Jerry Smith.

**WOO018:** Okay.

**Betty Jo:** Sometimes, that’s very brief. I find that you folks are very, very clear in your decision-making. I mean, you just – this is why. Done. Right? [laughter]

**WOO018:** [laughter] Yeah.

**Betty Jo:** Which is great, right? That actually is very helpful from a research perspective. I may ask you to sort of look at them then side-by-side and kind of compare and contrast.

**WOO018:** Okay.

**Betty Jo:** There may actually be some things about Jerry that you also liked that you would have liked to see on John’s résumé. You know, that kind of thing. We’ll sort of do that, so that’s what we’ll do today. Then I will strip your name from the interview and send it out to transcription. At this point, and of course, all through the research, only
I know your identity anyway. I want to make sure that no one else outside knows your identity.

It’s just not germane, you know, for them anyway. I’ll give you – assign you a code that goes with your transcription. When I get that back, I will email it to you and just kind of ask you to take a quick look, and sort of verify that that’s what we talked about. It should be verbatim, which is sometimes weird, when people see the “ums” and the “uhs” and all that, but – [laughter]

WOO018: [laughter]

Betty Jo: Also to just ask you to take a look at that. Sometimes what I also find is when people have taken a look at those transcripts, they think, you know what, there was something else that occurred to me. That would be a great time for you to provide any clarifying statements, or any other things that had occurred to you since we spoke. Then once I have everyone’s transcripts confirmed, I will put them all together and do that actual coding of those, you know, sort of similar themes, if you will.

Turn that into a narrative that describes the experience across these fifteen people. At the very end of that, I’ll then add my experiences. It’s very intentional for me not to have my experiences color any of the research until that point. Then I’ll add my position and I will send that back out to you, you know, as a member checking process, for you to say, oh okay, yeah, that makes sense to me. Here are some of the things I think about that, right?

I’ll sort of ask you about potential implications in your field. When you saw that this was a result, what – you know, how did that sound to you, right? That may or may not be a phone call. Some of you might want to do that over a phone call, some of you would just do that asynchronously over email. That’s entirely up to you. At the very end, then I’ll do a debrief in terms of when it gets situated into the research. You can kind of see how it fits, you know, against all the other things that we’re reading about in this process. Does that all make sense?

WOO018: Okay. Yes it does.

Betty Jo: Excellent. With that, WOO018, why don’t you just kind of walk me through why Mr. Singer was a winner for you?

WOO018: Okay, so based on the job description, this appeared to be a customer service role that was going to work internally and externally. Comparing the two résumés, John had more experience in the internal/external customer service. I saw more on his résumé about dealing with internal people to resolve problems than I could see on Jerry’s.
Jerry’s experience looked to be more call center oriented, and that, you know, in a call center environment from experience, a lot is scripted. You’re dealing with multiple customers that you’re, you know, fielding calls for, and there isn’t a lot of backwards work into the accounting department, the shipping department. Seems to be a very automated sort of system, whereas from what I could read on John’s position, he would have to interact with people internally to solve problems.

Betty Jo: Okay.

WOO018: That was my – the guiding force on, okay if I had to choose one or the other, it would be John.

Betty Jo: Excellent. See what I mean about that succinctness. [laughter] The resolution.

WOO018: [laughter]

Betty Jo: It’s funny because originally I thought it would just, you know, some of these would be sort of 90 minutes, right? That you guys would just take me through this like, full on narrative of why –

WOO018: [laughter]

Betty Jo: It’s really naïve of me, because when I did my first one, we were done in fifteen minutes. I thought, uh oh. [laughter] I better retool what I’m doing here.

WOO018: In the state of recruiting today, with the tools that we use, if you were to post this customer service role, you know, you could literally be dealing with a thousand résumés.

Betty Jo: Right, right.

WOO018: You know, a recruiter has to very, very quickly sum up, make decisions, and go.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

WOO018: We call it – it’s the Noer [12:11 phonetic] brain style that works beautifully in this world.

Betty Jo: Interesting, interesting.

WOO018: Left brain, right brain. Sum it up, go.

Betty Jo: Yeah. Well and it’s definitely – it’s clear to me, right? I think that’s – it’s very consistent. You know, what I’m seeing is very consistent with what you’re saying.
Let me ask you just some clarifying questions. Let’s kind of, you know, just look at these guys side-by-side here.

At the top of the résumé, we’ve kind of got that career objective, the career summary, you know, whatever everyone calls those these days, right? They kind of go in and out of flavor, at least, you know, I’ve seen. If you look at John’s and you look at Jerry’s, was there anything that jumped out at you about this section? How important is this section to you in a screening decision?

WOO018: It’s not that important. Golly, I should slap my own hand because –

Betty Jo: [laughter]

WOO018: I coach new college grads on writing résumés and getting a job. [laughter] This is the elevator pitch section, and we work it, you know. From a recruiter standpoint, the first thing we’re going to do is go down to the experience and look for the keywords.

Betty Jo: Okay.

WOO018: You know, somebody can put – Jerry put strategic relationship partnership building skills, but I’m looking to the type of work he’s been doing.

Betty Jo: Is that related to the level of this position, or is that your general sort of M.O., if you will, in terms of how you look through résumés?

WOO018: General M.O.

Betty Jo: Okay, gotcha. That makes sense.

WOO018: Yeah, because people want to flower up their elevator pitch, because it’s what we teach them. [laughter]

Betty Jo: Right, yes. I’m a career coach as well, and we certainly spend a lot of time in that area. We like to call it the “target position,” so to sort of pair that person’s name with that position and all of that psychology that – You’re right, at the end of the day, is where did you work? What did you do? How long were you there? [laughter]

WOO018: Yes, exactly.

Betty Jo: Yeah. Then looking down to that experience section, so they have similar experiences in terms – exactly the same number of years of experience, with two different companies.

WOO018: Right.
Betty Jo: John – so some of the core differences here. John gave you a brief description of the companies that he had worked at. Was that helpful to you, or was it a non-issue? Where did you think on that?

WOO018: Very helpful on that side.

Betty Jo: Okay. Why is that?

WOO018: I could tell for certain that he was not in a call center environment.

Betty Jo: Right. That just gave you a good context.

WOO018: Right. Then also if you look at Delano, you know, customer service rep, where he was actually doing some sales. That gave me a good descriptor of what his customer interaction looked like.

Betty Jo: Good. Well and speaking of that experience, talk to me a little bit about job duties versus accomplishments, because we did throw an accomplishment here in the Delano experience. John did that. Did that 12% sort of jump off the page to you, or do you not take a lot of stock into those accomplishments?

WOO018: I didn’t on that particular one, because it wasn’t a sales role. You know, if this were going to be a sales role with measurement on sales, then I would have honed in on that. I was looking at his experience there more for the customer interaction.

Betty Jo: What was it about some of the things that John said that really sort of cemented to you that he was the better candidate, in that – from that lens? You know, from that customer service perspective?

WOO018: From both of his roles, I’m trying to look at where I saw that he had to reach back in the organization.

Betty Jo: Is it the “recommended solutions within customer budgets”, that kind of thing?

WOO018: Yeah. You know, memorize the company’s product offerings. There was also something in his present position. Okay, he’s looking up stuff, quick complaint resolution. I guess I really didn’t see anything in the first one, maybe more in the second.

Betty Jo: Okay. I think, if I kind of look at their experiences side-by-side, John probably, you know, just a little bit more verbose, I guess, in describing his experiences. That might be a way to describe it, over Jerry. Did you like that there was just more descriptors in the experiences? Jerry was just a little more succinct, I think, in the way he was describing it. Did that weigh into your decision?
WOO018: Right. It did. His bullet points were well-developed, as we call it in the résumé writing. You know, tell me what you did, but tell me why it mattered.

Betty Jo: Oh, interesting. Okay, I like how you said that. That’s really cool.

WOO018: [laughter]

Betty Jo: Perfect. Yeah, I think you’re – I can see that in John’s résumé where he has sort of legitimized why he was doing that for most of those positions. Okay.

WOO018: Yeah.

Betty Jo: Okay. If we scroll down – I say scroll, because I’m scrolling on my screen, [laughter] but if we look down at education. They both meet the minimum from an associates perspective in May of 11. Let’s see, John went to Southern New Hampshire, which is more of a traditional online school. Jerry went to Kaplan College, which is a for-profit institution. Did that weigh in your decision at all?

WOO018: Not at all for this role.

Betty Jo: When you say for this role, give me some more flavor there.

WOO018: For lower to mid-level positions, we tend not to look at education at all. What school somebody came from means absolutely nothing.

Betty Jo: Right. Then as you’re recruiting for higher positions, tell me what that looks like then, I’m just curious.

WOO018: There, our hiring managers will get pickier in a leadership, you know, director and above. They – if we’re going to require an MBA for this, were they in a top-tier MBA school versus not a top-tier MBA school? That comes more into play. For these level positions, it just doesn’t matter.

Betty Jo: Right. I guess what you’re saying is, once it’s – in the more leadership-oriented roles or more executive roles, you’re – you tend to see people looking more at reputation, is that what you said? I just want to make sure.

WOO018: Yeah, well, reputation and as you call it, profit versus non-profit, particularly in the MBA area. Did you buy your MBA or did you earn your MBA?

Betty Jo: [laughter] Interesting.
WOO018: I know, that sounds really bad, but if you did your MBA at blah-blah-blah, you know, for-profit school online, we don’t count it as an MBA. [laughter] Isn’t that horrible, but it’s true.

Betty Jo: Well I mean, it is what it is, right? I think, you know, again this is part of this research process of what are those things, very transparently, that weigh or don’t weigh. For example – I mean, I think these are probably polarized examples, but if you had an MBA from – Let’s see, are you – so you must be in Texas, right?

WOO018: Yes.

Betty Jo: Does Texas A&M have an MBA program? I assume they do.

WOO018: Yeah, they do.

Betty Jo: You’ve got an MBA from Texas A&M and then you’ve got an MBA from University of Phoenix, so tell me where you – what kind of, you know – where would you land on that? I think I know the answer, but I just want to ask.

WOO018: Yeah. We look at the MBA from A&M as the real MBA.

Betty Jo: Interesting. Where do you think that perception came – like comes from? What do you think that is – what is it about?

WOO018: The experience of an online MBA program versus you know, the sitting in the teams, in the classroom, working the projects, is day and night, from what we understand.

Betty Jo: Do you think it’s more about online versus for-profit, or do you just kind of, when they’re online plus for-profit, you kind of look at them synonymously?

WOO018: Pretty much, and that might be unfortunate. We probably shouldn’t. It’s just – it is a bias out there.

Betty Jo: Right, right. The end – but for you, that’s more on the executive side, sort of like the higher level positions. When we’re looking at sort of the entry-level space, it’s much less important, is that right?

WOO018: Yes, that’s right.

Betty Jo: Now for these guys, with the associates, you’re like, okay, they’ve got the associates, moving on.

WOO018: Right.

Betty Jo: Okay, that makes sense. Do you think – do you see that has changed over time, or is that still sort of a very set mindset?
WOO018: That’s a very interesting question. In fact, I just had this dialogue [laughter] with my old boss at ALU, because there’s this move out there of not wanting to hire anymore from the top-tier schools.

Betty Jo: Oh.

WOO018: Particularly in the engineering world.

Betty Jo: Oh, that’s –

WOO018: Google was probably the first one to really bring that to the forefront. I don’t know if you’ve read the book that the head of HR from Google wrote.

Betty Jo: No.

WOO018: Talk about somebody who has quantified the hiring process. [laughter] This guy has done some amazing research work. Now I can’t remember the name of the book, but if you Google it –

Betty Jo: Google it, yeah. [laughter] No pun intended.

WOO018: It’ll come up. It’s like a top read for anybody in recruiting. We’re finding that those graduates aren’t bringing the right amount of open-mindedness. What are the other words we were using the other day? You know, if I had to hire somebody, an MBA from Harvard or MBA from University of Texas-Dallas, I’d take the MBA from UT-D, over the Harvard MBA.

Betty Jo: Well Harvard has had a couple of missteps over the past few years too, right? Do you think that’s part of it?

WOO018: Yeah.

Betty Jo: Yeah.

WOO018: No. Well, it’s just – you know, you look at how they build those programs and – I wish I could articulate this better. In their process of weeding people out, accepting and then weeding people out, they’re getting more rote learners. People who just know how to memorize well, you know. You could be some great kid out of a class B school in a small town that just gets accepted at Harvard. You bring a lot of talent to the table but you are not going to be able to compete grade point-wise with some of these other students, so you get knocked out.
Betty Jo: Interesting.

WOO018: Now if you had gone to UT-D – bad I use UT-D as an example because they have such a high percentage of foreign students that engineering-wise, you get knocked out automatically. You can’t compete. Let’s say, just their business school, you know, you would make it through with a good GPA and an employer gets you, with all this talent and creativity, and not a rote learner who can memorize well.

Betty Jo: That’s really – sorry, I was just sort of taking that in and reflecting on that, it’s really interesting. Kind of circling back to, you know, what prompted this interesting inquiry, wouldn’t that make a case maybe that some of these for-profits and their more non-traditional student base, you know, would that start to be of interest then? Is that just still off the table?

WOO018: It’s – you know, it’s still not in the radar screen of people I think.

Betty Jo: Interesting.

WOO018: If you really want to read the numbers on that, read the Google guy’s book, because they crunched them.

Betty Jo: Yeah, I’m definitely going to look at that. One of my closest friends was the global talent manager at Google. He had left – he left about two years now. I wonder if he actually worked for him. He’s since went on to GM, but yeah, interesting.

WOO018: Oh, that’s interesting, because I think he mentions that guy in his book. [laughter]

Betty Jo: You know, it seems like he would have told me that, if he were mentioned in a book.

WOO018: [laughter]

Betty Jo: He’s usually pretty good at his self-promotion. He had sent me a link from GM’s CEO. She had written an article about him a couple weeks ago. It seems like he would call me [laughter] and mention – we’ve been friends since we were thirteen, so you know, but – Yeah, that’s really interesting.

I think I see that, you know, I see where that – some of that makes a lot of sense to me in terms just where we are in higher ed and the trends and the changes in the student population and the rise in cost of tuition and all of that as well. That’s interesting. Okay, yeah sorry, to take [27:52 phonetic] you off on that tangent, but that’s really interesting to me. [email chime]

WOO018: Another area that kind of proves that out is DeVry for engineering. There are many high tech companies that would prefer to get their engineers out of DeVry than the regular four-year schools.
Betty Jo: Okay, so tell me more about that.

WOO018: They’re just harder workers, it appears. They’re getting – DeVry’s done a good job on their curriculum as far as a double-E degree or a computer science degree.

Betty Jo: Right.

WOO018: You tend to get folks who go through DeVry who don’t get accepted into, you know, the big universities, but they bring this work ethic to the table that just resonates with companies like Motorola and, you know, other firms like that.

Betty Jo: Right. Do you think that DeVry has also just done a better job, sort of developing those relationships with those companies as well?

WOO018: Not necessarily. Yeah, it’s different. I don’t know what the DeVry effect is. I actually had a VP of services at ALU and we used to do probably in his organization close to 200 new grads a year. He really preferred that we pull as many as we could out of DeVry and University of Louisiana, a lower tier University of Louisiana school in Baton Rouge, I think it was, yeah.

He didn’t want to talk to – don’t – I don’t want to see any Texas, you know, or Texas Tech, or god forbid we send him an SMU candidate. It’s like, no way. They’re not going to work.

Betty Jo: Interesting. You’ve said ALU a couple of times. Can you tell me what it is, off the record? [30:03 phonetic]

WOO018: I’m sorry. Alcatel Lucent.

Betty Jo: Okay, so thank you. You’ve actually said them – you know, you said it at – now that you say it, you did say it once before. I just didn’t know that ALU was part of that.

WOO018: [laughter] I’m sorry. That’s old – I actually used to run recruiting for Alcatel Lucent.

Betty Jo: That must have been fun.

WOO018: Oh, it was great.

Betty Jo: Yeah. It’s a very interesting sort of phenomena here in the engineering – I actually went to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, so certainly familiar with the engineering school side of things. You know, poor Shirley Jackson would throw herself off a bridge if she heard that people were preferring to recruit from DeVry. [laughter]

WOO018: [laughter] I can imagine.
Betty Jo: Interesting. Anything more about education? This is really – gosh, I would love to have coffee with you and chat about this.

WOO018: Yeah, if you’re in town. [laughter]

Betty Jo: Yeah, absolutely. Anything else about education before we kind of switch gears to training?

WOO018: No.

Betty Jo: Okay. Then the very last part of the résumé is that sort of training space. For this position, we’ve got seminars versus trainings. You know, maybe in the more technical positions, you might have some certifications or licensures here. How important is – did these sections weigh for you?

WOO018: Not that important.

Betty Jo: Why was that, do you think?

WOO018: My experience tells me, you know, customer service people will be put into whatever canned training companies offer. It’s really – what I’m really focusing on is what they’ve done in their job.

Betty Jo: Right, which leads –

WOO018: Who knows what people get out of training? You know, you go, you sit, you come out. [laughter]

Betty Jo: [laughter] Then you put it on your résumé. [laughter]

WOO018: Yes.

Betty Jo: Excellent, okay. Well that takes us through the résumés. Sort of in going through that process, WOO018, was there anything else at any time that we were talking that you thought, you know, there was something else about John versus Jerry that I would want Betty Jo to know?

WOO018: No, I don’t believe so. I mean maybe, I may have made an assumption on Jerry in the call center world, but he made it pretty apparent on the top of his résumé.

Betty Jo: Yeah, I was going to say, I don’t think that was an assumption. I think he actually intended that [32:49 phonetic]. Yeah. [laughter]

WOO018: Yeah. That just tends to be a little different environment.
Betty Jo: Right, right. Agreed. What about formatting? Was there anything about sort the appearance of either résumé that stood out at you, or was that sort of a non-issue?

WOO018: Non-issue. Both were easy to read. The bullet points were good. That’s what recruiters look for, is you know, we look at the top third of the résumé and spend 30 seconds – [crosstalk]

Betty Jo: Which is just so scary –

WOO018: It’s horrible.

Betty Jo: So scary for job seekers to hear things like that, right? Periodically I sub in for a résumé development course at our Work Ones, which are kind of like the re-employment offices of unemployment here.

WOO018: Oh, great.

Betty Jo: I say that to people, and I usually say it’s a little bit less. I say, you know, it’s roughly 20 seconds that you’re going to get. If you had to spend 25 cents for every word that you put in the first 20 seconds of your résumé, your budget would be a hundred bucks. [laughter]

WOO018: [laughter]

Betty Jo: They – and their little faces just, you know – I get some fun shock value out of it, but I think it’s true. I mean, that’s – there actually is a significant amount of research out about how – One, how our brain is organized and how we visually scan a piece of paper, and you know, how long we’ll attend to something when we have a hundred other things sort of vying for attention.

WOO018: Right.

Betty Jo: These things are real. Then in going through that process, are you still – would you – are you still more confident with John over Jerry? [email chime]

WOO018: Yes.

Betty Jo: I’m sorry. If I turn my speakers, you won’t be able to hear me. I probably should have turned off my email. My apologies for that.

WOO018: That’s all right. No issue [34:34 phonetic]

Betty Jo: Then one other question about this. When – of course I forced you, you know, to choose here, so there’s sort of an artificial nudge in one direction. If you looked at
them both side-by-side, would you have maybe screened both of them? Would John still have only been the one person you would call out of this small batch?

WOO018: No, I probably would have called Jerry also.

Betty Jo: Okay.

WOO018: You know, he’s got experience. He meets what qualifications we’re looking for, so he’d be worth a screen.

Betty Jo: Okay, good. Yeah, that’s just sort of a check for me in terms of, you know, how similar the résumés were. Just wanted to sort of see if they would have both made it to the next round. Well wonderful. This is exactly what I was hoping to accomplish in this time. Like I said, what I’ll do from now is strip your name off and I’ll give you a code. Well, I’ll assign your documents a code. You don’t necessarily need it. Ship that off to transcription.

I should get that back within seven business days. Then I’ll just email it to you and have you take a quick look and let me know what you think in terms of if there are any other clarifications or new thoughts, you know, that occurred to you. Yeah, so you should hear from me in about a week.

Then my goal, [laughter] my desire, my hope, is to do all of the coding and writing over Thanksgiving break and get that back out to you guys after that holiday. I know we’re going to butt up against the real holidays a bit, the heavy hitters pretty soon. I want to get as much out to you guys before then, you know, so you can focus on time with your family and everything else that you all do at the end of the year. Yeah, so with that, any other questions or thoughts or anything?

WOO018: When are you defending your dissertation?

Betty Jo: Yeah, so this – all the stuff that I just talked about in terms of the writing, that’s chapter four of five chapters.

WOO018: Okay.

Betty Jo: Chapter five is really just implications for further research. That’s by far the easiest chapter, so my expectation is that I would defend the second or third week in January.

WOO018: Excellent.

Betty Jo: Yeah. Originally planned for it to be December, but yeah.

WOO018: Okay. What’s your goal after that? Are you going to teach, or –
Betty Jo: Well, I teach now in a couple of adjunct positions. I’d actually gotten displaced at the beginning of the year, which kind of prompted me to sort of take step back and say, okay, what am I doing with my life with this ABD status that I’ve had –

WOO018: [laughter]

Betty Jo: God knows [37:20 phonetic] just get this over with. You know, I guess the short answer is, I –
Appendix L

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EDUCATION:
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University - Blacksburg, VA
Ph.D., Major 1: Educational Research and Evaluation -1990
   Major 2: Educational Psychology
   Minor: Psychology

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University - Blacksburg, VA
M.Ed., Major: Student personnel Services/Counseling - 1986
   Minors: Sociology and Psychology

Alliance Francais Institute - Ahmedabad, India
Diploma, Introductory French—1983

Sophia College/St. Xaviers College - Bombay, India / Ahmedabad, India
B.A., Psychology—1982
   Minors: English Literature and Economics

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:
09/05 – 06/10 Intermediate Resource Teacher - Singapore American School - Singapore
Provided Reading/Language arts assistance to identified students (Grades 3 & 4) during the classroom's RLA block.
Administered, scored, and interpreted results of appropriate assessment instruments (e.g. WRAT, QRI, G.O.R.T, etc).
Collaborated with inclusion teachers
Wrote Individual Educational Support Plans for assigned students.
Tailored (modified) the resources of the IS RLA program (e.g., Writing Essentials/Reading Essentials Reggie Routman, Guiding Readers and Writers- Fountas and Pinnell) to the meet the needs of the students.

1/04 – 05/04 Instructor - Centre for American Education- Singapore
   Course: Introduction to Psychology

9/01 – 6/02 Parent Volunteer - Bridle Path Elementary School - Lansdale, PA
   Kid Writing Program
Spring 1995  Supervisor/Advisor - Eastern Mennonite University - Harrisonburg, VA
Supervised and advised students with their Senior Thesis

Spring 1990  -  Assistant Professor - Park University - Parkville, MO
Dec 1993  Departments of Psychology and Education
Instructor for the following courses:
Child Psychology
Educational Psychology
Introductory Psychology
Student Teacher Supervision Elementary and Secondary Education
Experimental Psychology
Language Acquisition and Development
Senior Seminar Education—Cognitive Strategy Instruction
Language Arts for elementary Teachers
Cognitive Psychology
Psychology of the Exceptional Child

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

2009
Collaborative Literacy Project, SAS August 2009-June 2010-Developed and implemented several RLA units using lessons from Teaching the Qualities of Writing by Ralph Fletcher.

2008
Word Study – Developed and Implemented word study program for my support students 2008
Writing Instruction by Carrie Ekey, April 2008
Writing Workshop by Laura Benson, February 2008
Collaborative Study/Project August 2008-June 2009 research in area of inclusion models and in the area of assessment.

2007
Orton-Gillingham training at The Dyslexia Association of Singapore, November 2007.
Follow up workshop with Bonnie Campbell Hill, March 2007
Real Spelling Workshop with Melvyn Ramsden, February 2007.

2006
K-5 Reading and Writing Assessment/Continuums by Bonnie Campbell Hill, February 2006

2005
K-8 Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA2) August 2005
Six-Traits Writing by Fred Wolff, August 2005
PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:
2008-present  Council for Exceptional Children

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:
08/02-03/03  Research Associate for Project Win (affiliated with Right Angle Research)
Data collection, analysis, and publication of article.

6/87 - 7/90  Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University - Blacksburg, VA
Graduate Research Assistant
Provided technical assistance to school districts in the evaluation of their special education programs
Participated in special education workshops
Responsible for data collection and analysis
Designed evaluation instrument
Developed and edited evaluation reports
Completed research and thesis for doctoral dissertation

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES:
Reviewer, American Educational Research Association, 1992
Served on Personnel Panel Committee at Park College, 1992
Served on Assessment Committee at Park College, 1991-1993
Session Chair, Eastern Educational Research Association Conference, 1989
Session Chair, International Visual Literacy Association Conference, 1989
Consultant, assisted the Associate Director for special education programs at the Virginia State department of Education in preparing a report for the General Assembly, November, 1989

AWARDS AND GRANTS


PUBLICATIONS


PRESENTATIONS


### Phenomenological Validation Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Reviewed by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the descriptions free of bias and do they truly represent the</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coresearcher’s experience?</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; party reviewer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was each significant statement identified during coding?</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; party reviewer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does each interview have absolute accuracy and does it convey the</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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<tr>
<td>meaning, which the co-researchers described?</td>
<td>Coresearchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can a cross-reference between the structural description and the</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transcription be performable such that the conclusions would be the same?</td>
<td>Dissertation Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the structural description indicate a specific situation and context</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or is it demonstrated in a more general capacity?</td>
<td>Dissertation Committee</td>
</tr>
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