

Choosing how to choose:

Institutional Pressures affecting the Adoption of Personnel Selection Procedures

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Abstract

The gap between science and practice in personnel selection is an ongoing concern of human resource management. This paper takes Oliver's (1991) framework of organizations' strategic responses to institutional pressures as a basis for outlining the diverse economic and social demands that facilitate or inhibit the application of scientifically recommended selection procedures. Faced with a complex network of multiple requirements, practitioners make more diverse choices in response to any of these pressures than has previously been acknowledged in the scientific literature. Implications for the science-practitioner gap are discussed.

“The biggest lie told by most organizations is that ‘people are our most important assets’.”

-- *MICHAEL HAMMER AND JAMES CHAMPY (1995)*

The Gap between Science and Practice in Personnel Selection

Imagine that you have applied for a faculty position at a university. Imagine further that when you go to this university for your job-talk, the university does everything possible to follow Thorndike’s (1949) scientific guidelines, ensuring that the selection procedure meets long-term economic (Brodgen & Taylor, 1950; Schmidt, Hunter, Outerbridge, & Trattner, 1986) as well as local legal requirements (Guion, 1998): during your visit, colleagues you have known for years treat you with no more than formal friendliness. During your job-talk, you face an audience that remains friendly but distant and blank, even when you make the joke that always works. Instead of showing the slightest interest in your topic, they make notes on standardized observation sheets such as “leaves question unanswered”, or “does not relate topic to literature on theory Z”. Next, you find yourself answering the situational interview (SI) by Latham and Skarlicki (1995) on organizational citizenship behaviour, followed by a written test of your cognitive abilities and by role-plays miming student-encounters for the assessment of your communication, leadership, and problem-solving skills. Given all that we know (and publish) about the importance of basing selection procedures on a job analysis and of standardizing them across applicants, as well as of ensuring that the process is reliable, valid, of little bias and little adverse impact, why then is it rather unlikely that the procedures outlined above reflect those you would have expected when applying for a university position?

Organizations, including universities, frequently adopt methods of little psychometric merit and legal defensibility (see Scholaris & Lockyer, 1999; Schuler, Frier & Kauffmann, 1993; White & Doyle, 1997). A classic example is the unstructured interview which is widely used (Dipboye, 1994; Schuler et al., 1993), although it has a low predictive validity and lacks legal defensibility in numerous countries (see McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994; Terpstra, Mohamed, &

Kethley, 1999; Williamson, Campion, Malos, Roehling, & Campion, 1997). Similarly, some practitioner articles emphasize the usefulness of graphology (Bianchi, 1996; Leonard, 1999), a technique that has consistently failed all psychometric testing (Driver, Buckley, & Frink, 1996). Surprisingly, this gap between science and practice is not only a question of knowledge-transfer from people who know (e.g., in universities) to people who do not know (e.g., in economic organizations) the scientific standards of personnel selection.

Researchers in human resource management have searched for possible explanations for this gap (see Anderson, Herriot, & Hodgkinson, 2001; Dipboye, 1994; Hodgkinson, Herriot, & Anderson, 2001; Johns, 1993) and for methods that may facilitate the transfer of knowledge from theory and research into practice (see Latham, 2001; Offermann & Spiros, 2001; Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001). Most articles, however, offer simple explanations for a rather complex phenomenon (e.g., Buckley, Ferris, Bernardin, & Harvey, 1998), such as short-term economic pressures (e.g., Harrell-Cook & Ferris, 1997), the failure of utility information to convince decision makers (e.g., Latham & Whyte, 1993; Whyte & Latham, 1997), or dissatisfaction of administrators with structured selection procedures (Dipboye, 1994). However, they usually do not take into account the complexity of the diverse countervailing pressures that organizations face when making a decision regarding a specific selection procedure.

Anderson, Lievens, van Dam, and Ryan (in press) as well as Anderson et al. (2001, p. 400-401) have argued that in order to understand the real issues that account for the science-practitioner gap, researchers need to “recognize the existence of the various stakeholders . . . , and understand the ways in which they are exercising their power.” Consequently, the aim of this paper is to explain the multiplicity and complexity of pressures affecting organizations’ decisions regarding their selection procedures using Oliver’s (1991) model of strategic responses to institutional processes. The model has been tested and applied to questions such as responsiveness to work-family issues (Goodstein, 1994; Ingram & Simons, 1995) and the strategic use of governmental processes (Caeldries, 1996). It may also be useful to explain the divergence between scientific recommendations and practical applications of procedures used in personnel selection.

Predictors of Strategic Responses

On the basis of institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Zucker, 1977) and resource dependence theory (Pfeffer, 1981; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), Oliver (1991) proposed that organizations attempt to obtain stability and legitimacy. Organizations' strategic choices to adopt, compromise, avoid, defy or even manipulate external pressures are influenced by the causes, constituents, control, contents and context of these pressures. In the following section, I will discuss four causes pressuring organizations to choose different selection procedures (see top of Figure 1). A further explanation of each of these causes will show that an organization's decision regarding a specific selection procedure depends on such diverse aspects as perceived short and long-term financial impact of the procedure, shareholder interests, size, legal regulations, varying from nation to nation and proximity to governmental agencies, anticipated applicant and recruiter reactions, the organization's history of legal charges against its personnel selection procedures, the number of applicants per vacancy and the organization's need to fill the posts. Additionally, the decision will be influenced by the organization's plans for the future career of their new employees, the organization's status-quo, the selection procedures used by other organizations within the organization's industry, and finally the perceived uncertainty of the organization's future, as well as the interactions between some if not all of these factors.

Causes, Constituents, and Control

Strategic decisions are often reactions to institutional pressures. The cause of an institutional pressure relates to the rationale or the intended objective that underlies the pressure to conform. Causes generally fall into the categories of economic fitness or social fitness (Oliver, 1991). In the case of personnel selection, (a) long-term economic fitness benefits from the adoption of well-developed and validated selection procedures, while (b) short-term economic fitness is usually greater with the use of less refined procedures. Similarly, (c) legal regulations promote the adoption

of well-developed selection procedures, while (d) applicant reactions may sometimes be more favorable towards less refined procedures (see top of Figure 1).

The impact that each cause has on an organization's decision will also depend on the constituents that call for compliance with the respective cause. Institutional constituents, such as shareholders, the state and the public, impose numerous regulations and expectations on organizations. The more dependent an organization is on any constituent and the more control this constituent has over the organization, the more effort the organization will expend in satisfying this constituent's demands.

Difficulties arise when institutional pressures are incompatible with each other or the organization's own objectives. In striving for conflict resolution and the reducing of uncertainty, the organization becomes more aware of competing pressures and is less likely to comply fully with any one source of pressure if this will force it to defy other relevant pressures (Oliver, 1991). The following section will outline the role of causes, constituents and control in personnel selection (see upper half of Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Economic fitness. Long-term economic fitness is a major objective of most non-charitable organizations. The dollar criterion, which applies a monetary cost-accounting criterion to estimate the usefulness of a personnel selection approach (Brogden & Taylor, 1950), and utility analysis (Cascio & Ramos, 1986; Schmidt et al., 1986; Schuler, Funke, Moser, & Donat, 1995) provide estimates for the long-term financial gains resulting from the adoption of valid selection procedures. They show that the use of reliable and valid selection procedures leads to considerable financial benefits for organizations, especially when hiring many long-tenure employees for positions with

high performance variance (Schmidt et al., 1986). Hence, it is in the interests of organizations to use valid selection procedures in order to obtain long-term economic fitness.

Unfortunately, administrative innovations, including innovations in personnel selection, are less observable and are perceived as less advantageous than technical innovations (Damapour & Gopalakrishnan, 2001), and managers are not as receptive to utility information as researchers have traditionally assumed them to be (e.g. Carson, Becker, & Henderson, 1998; Macan & Highhouse, 1994; Whyte & Latham, 1997). While numerous reasons have been put forward to account for this effect (e.g. different accounts, Johns, 1993; time-discounting, Frederick, Loewenstein, & O'Donoghue, 2002; incomprehensible jargon of utility analysis research, Herriot & Anderson, 1997), it remains to be noted that it is not the actual long-term benefit obtainable but decision makers' perceptions thereof that will determine an organization's interest in using any specific selection procedure. Glode (2002) found that hiring managers' perceptions of selection procedures' predictive validity was related to their positive perceptions of and intentions to use the procedure.

Proposition 1: The smaller the long-term financial gain perceived to be attainable from the adoption of a selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

While it appears logical that organizations strive for long-term financial gains, past research has shown that practitioners often think otherwise (e.g., Schuler et al., 1993), adding fuel to the debate on the science-practitioner gap (e.g., Johns, 1993). Schein (1996, p. 237) noted, "Though lip service is paid to long-range strategy, to human resources, to balancing the needs of different stakeholders, the reality is driven by the capital markets and the need to remain financially viable". Schuler et al. (1993) argued that researchers often neglect the costs associated with development, validation and administration of selection procedures. These costs, however, were frequently a major criterion for organizations in deciding to use specific selection procedures. Similarly, Anderson et al. (2001) noted that organizations were often pressed for costs, speed and ease of implementation when choosing a selection practice. Besides finding a cost-efficient solution, the personnel to be selected is

often urgently needed on the job, and any delay in finding suitable candidates may incur high short-term costs through the loss of production.

Many selection procedures advocated by human resource researchers meet none of the above criteria: Often, they incur high initial costs and take up considerable time for development and validation. For instance, the construction and validation of standardized behavioral selection tools, such as structured interviews (e.g., Janz, 1982; Latham, Saari, Pursell, & Brown, 1980) or assessment centers (Bray & Grant, 1960), requires the assistance of subject matter experts, pre-studies, and further refinement of the techniques.

Once developed, many scientifically recommended procedures give rise to further high ongoing costs and complications during their administration by requiring that two or more trained representatives of the organization interrupt their daily work to observe and evaluate applicants' behaviors. The actual assessment can last for an hour in the case of an interview, or up to five days in the case of an assessment center. Additional ongoing costs stem from planning, lodging, materials, and so on.

These investments become evident in practitioners' opinions about the practicability of assessment tools. Survey results of 191 European organizations indicate that practitioners perceive assessment centers to be the least practical selection tool available (Schuler et al., 1993). Structured interviews, another valid selection approach (e.g. Huffcutt, Conway, Roth, & Klehe, in press; Taylor & Small, 2002), are less cost intensive and, once developed, easier to administer than assessment centers. However most European practitioners still evaluate them as being considerably less practical than unstructured interviews (Schuler et al., 1993), which may be due to the relatively high costs and long duration associated with their development and validation. Glode (2002) found that hiring managers' perceptions of the practicality of selection procedures was related to their positive perceptions of and intentions to use the procedure.

Proposition 2: The greater the short term costs expected from the adoption of a specific selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure:

a. The higher the initial investment for development and validation expected from the adoption of a selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

b. The higher the ongoing investment for administration expected from the adoption of a selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Obviously, long-term gains and short-term investments in selection procedures are frequently incompatible objectives. The organization's adoption of a long- versus short-term strategy will be subject to the organization's dependence on the constituents of these pressures and on the control-mechanisms available to constituents. As Anderson et al. (2001) noted, constituent demands vary widely between scientists and practitioners, and the two groups are not closely linked. Although researchers may recommend organizations to use valid selection procedures, they have little direct control over organizations to reinforce that recommendation.

Constituents who have a strong control-mechanism for enforcing their objectives are the proprietors of an organization. Harrell-Cook and Ferris (1997) argued that public shareholders have a strong impact on human resource investments by buying and selling their stock in the organization. Simultaneously, public shareholders frequently invest in organizations for their short-term financial performance. Therefore, organizations that are under pressure to maximize shareholder wealth in the form of quarterly dividends and increasing stock value are not very likely to invest in the costs of developing and validating selection procedures that will only pay off in the longer term. This should make publicly traded organizations more likely to choose short-term strategies than organizations owned privately or by the public sector.

Proposition 3: The more dependent the organization is on the approval by owners focusing on short-term benefits, and the greater financial expenditures expected from the adoption of a specific selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

a. Publicly traded organizations will be less likely to invest heavily into personnel selection than organizations owned privately or by the public sector.

An overview of the economic causes, constituents, and control affecting an organization's choice of selection procedure can be found in the upper left corner of Figure 1.

Social fitness. Besides economic issues, legal considerations can have a strong influence on the selection procedures used by organizations (Harris, 2000). Federal as well as state and provincial laws in the US and Canada require selection procedures to be reliable, valid, free from bias and based on a systematic job analysis (Cascio, Alexander, & Barrett, 1988). European law, in contrast, generally places greater value on securing individuals' privacy (e.g., European Parliament, 1995). Schuler and Funke (1989) noted that in (then still West-) Germany, courts consider acceptability and the presumed reactions of applicants towards the selection procedure to be most important, with less importance given to test validity and fairness. In the Netherlands, the law for the advancement of work participation of immigrants compels companies with more than 35 employees to strive for an equal representation of immigrants (Nijenhuis, van de Flier, & van Leeuwen, 2003), but European law is usually less stringent in its regulations on discrimination. Thus, many legal challenges vary from nation to nation (Pearn, 1993). Consequently, perceptions of legality are also likely to vary. Legal consequences can differ from the point of view of utility, for example, when adverse impact policies pressure a departure from statistical validity considerations. Valid personnel selection tools, such as tests of cognitive ability, can lead to results in favor of majority applicants (Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). To minimize adverse impact, organizations can either shift to a bias-free selection procedure or hire minority group members who would not otherwise be selected due to low test scores (Zedeck, Cascio, Goldstein, & Outtz, 1996). The interest of organizations in meeting legal regulations regarding their personnel selection procedures is likely to be strong, given the high direct and indirect costs often associated with charges raised against them. Direct costs include costs related to litigation, settlements to plaintiffs, payments of punitive damages, or the financing of

subsequent changes to the selection procedures. Indirect costs may stem from a loss of reputation and subsequent problems in recruiting, hiring, and retaining high-quality personnel (Terpstra & Kethley, 2002). Cascio (2000) even suggested that affected organizations may face decreased demand for their products or services and a drop in the price of their stocks.

Proposition 4: The more a selection procedure is perceived to contradict the legal regulations of the country the organization is located in, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Not all organizations feel equally obliged to meet legal requirements. Legal orders frequently exert specific pressures on governmental contractors regarding discrimination on the basis of race, color or religion (e.g., the Executive Order 11246 by US-President Johnson, 1965). These contractors are then required to impose the same pressures on all subcontractors or vendors. Organizations outside the line of governmental contractors are less affected. After scanning the selection discrimination court-cases raised in the US between 1978 and 2000 that involved ‘substantive’ selection devices, Terpstra and Kethley (2002) found that 37% of the charges were raised against the public administration sector, which only employs about 15% of the workforce. On the other hand, the British Industrial Relations Services (1996, 1997) found that public sector organizations were the first organizations to develop job-related and standardized selection procedures that satisfied British equal opportunities legislation. Hence, whether or not organizations feels obliged to fulfil legal regulations will influence their effort to adopt legally defensible selection procedures.

Proposition 5: The more dependent the organization is on fulfilling legal regulations, and the less legally defensive the adoption of a specific selection procedure is perceived to be, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure:

a. The more dependent the organization is on governmental contracts, and the less legally defensible the adoption of a specific selection procedure is perceived to be, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

However, the impact of legal regulations on the adoption of specific selection procedures may be weaker than expected. A relevant influence on the adoption of valid and legally defensible selection procedures is the degree of perceived control that enforces their use. Oliver (1991, p. 167, 168) argued that when law or government mandate reinforces cultural expectations, organizations become aware of public interests and are less likely to respond defiantly, since the consequences of non-compliance are more tangible and often more severe. If legal coercion behind institutional requirements is weak, however, organizations are likely to resist institutional pressures.

Edelman and Suchman (1997) argued that legal sanctions are usually too small and too slow to affect rational organizational planning. Non-compliance, subversion, and evasion of legal regulations are a problem in vast areas of regulatory law in general (Kagan & Scholz, 1983). This is also true for personnel selection. The US-Executive Order 11246 by US-President Johnson (1965, see above), for example, threatened contractors that they would become ineligible for government contracts if they did not comply with the order. However, despite the fact that “the Executive Order seemed like an executioner’s order – swift and fatal for the employer who relied on federal contracts for business survival”, it was never fully implemented and hardly any contracts were ever lifted (Guion, 1998, p. 165). Still, it should be noted that the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) receives around 80,000 claims annually (EEOC, 2003). The likelihood of legal charges in most European countries, by way of contrast, is much lower, even though the European Court set out a firm doctrine on the “discrimination by results” during the 1980s, which found access into the legal standards of different countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands and Ireland (Higuera, 2001), and even though the rate of female employment, for example, is still significantly higher than that of men in low-paid jobs with a reversed finding for high-paid jobs (European Commission, 2003). This highlights the fact that the official legal situation may be of less

importance than the organization's own perception of legal threats associated with its selection practices.

Proposition 6: The more severe the legal coercion behind the request to use legally defensible selection procedures is perceived to be, and the less legally defensive the adoption of a specific selection procedure is perceived to be, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

The perception of these threats will be highly influenced by the organization's legal experiences with its selection procedures.

Proposition 6a: The more legal charges an organization has faced concerning its selection procedures, and the less legally defensive the adoption of a specific selection procedure is perceived to be, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Furthermore, there are characteristics of the organization that influence the likelihood of legal contacts. Large organizations have a higher profile and are the target of greater attention from regulators, interest groups, the media and the public; they are also bound to higher standards of institutional compliance than smaller organizations (Goodstein, 1994; Powell, 1991; Salancik, 1979). They should be more likely to react to legal pressures even when not faced with concrete charges against their selection practices.

Proposition 6b: The larger the organization and the less legally defensive the adoption of a specific selection procedure is perceived to be, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Legal regulations are not the only social cause underlying institutional pressures. Applicant expectations and acceptance of the procedure may be of equal, if not more importance. For example,

while structured selection procedures may have higher legal defensibility, applicants frequently prefer unstructured procedures (e.g., Conway & Peneno, 1999; Schuler, 1992). A possible reason is applicants' perception that they have more control and ability to influence the desired outcome within unstructured procedures (Latham & Finnegan, 1993). Since this creates a certain inconsistency, researchers advocate the structuring of the selection process. Dipboye (1994), however, pointed out that unstructured procedures encompass other relevant aspects of perceived fairness, such as opportunity to perform, two-way communication, and a higher degree of interaction. This may ease some of the unnaturalness, uneasiness, and stiffness of the selection process, and thus facilitate the process for both parties.

Furthermore, unstructured interviews permit the communication of several qualities that are highly valued by applicants. Applicants infer an organization's values, beliefs and assumptions from the selection process (e.g., French, 1987; Murphy & Davidshofer, 1988; Rynes, Heneman, & Schwab, 1980; Schneider, 1972). They usually prefer interviewers that are attentive, warm, thoughtful, socially perceptive and likeable in the way they conduct the interview (Dipboye, 1992). This is important, since recruiting and interviewing practices influence job application intentions and job choice decisions (Harris & Fink, 1987; Powell, 1991; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991; Schmitt & Coyle, 1976). Selection procedures that decrease an organization's attractiveness result in significant losses in financial viability when qualified applicants either refuse job offers (Murphy, 1986) or even withdraw before receiving an offer (e.g., French, 1987; Murphy & Davidshofer, 1988).

In an extreme case, applicants may perceive selection procedures to be unfair, unethical or immoral. Perceptions of unfairness or immorality give rise to complaints and court challenges (Anastasi, 1988; Bible, 1990; Cascio, 1987; Huffcutt, 1990; Seymour, 1988; Thornton, 1996). Consequently, organizations are pressured to employ selection procedures that make a positive impression on applicants, and their perceptions of what applicants will regard as fair are likely to influence their choice of selection procedure. Thus Glode (2002) found that hiring managers' perceptions of whether a selection procedure would be fair towards applicants both with regard to

the selection procedure and outcome was related to their perceptions of and intentions to use the procedure.

Proposition 7: The more adversely the organization believes applicants to evaluate a certain selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

The importance of applicant attraction is likely to vary with the organization's dependence on applicant impressions. During an economic upturn or in professions where there is relatively full employment, the perspective of personnel selection changes from "organizations selecting applicants" to "candidates selecting organizations". Under these circumstances, it is not so much the applicant who must impress the organization, as the organization that has to market itself to the qualified applicant. The situation looks similar when an organization desperately needs to fill its vacant posts. Dipboye (1994) pointed out that the better acceptance and the flexibility of an unstructured interview allows interviewers to shift from the role of an assessor to that of a recruiter.

Proposition 8: The fewer applicants the organization has to choose from, the more dependent it is on filling its vacant posts, and the more adversely applicants are believed to evaluate a certain selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

An overview of the social causes, constituents and control affecting an organization's choice of selection procedure can be found in the upper right corner of Figure 1. Finally, it should be noted, that none of these pressures exists by itself. Often organizations have good reason to try and satisfy owners' concerns for long- and short-term economic fitness, as well as legal regulations and applicant acceptance. Faced with multiple conflicting pressures, organizations become unable to conform to any one of them without ignoring or defying the demands of others (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). The same will be true in the case of personnel selection.

Proposition 9: The more the adoption of a selection procedure defies multiple conflicting pressures (even though it may have been developed to satisfy one of them), the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Content

Given the above multiple conflicting pressures, the organization will react to some pressures with more resistance than others. Oliver (1991) postulated that an organization is more likely to resist institutional pressures to the extent that the content of these pressures conflict with the organization's own (a) economic or (b) social objectives and abilities, and (c) constrain the organization in its autonomy.

Economic objectives. Organizations vary in the objectives for which they hire new employees. Employees can be hired exclusively for a specific position with few or no opportunities for advancement, or they can be hired for a specific starting position but one with future potential in subsequent positions. In the latter case, the organization will have an internal labor market in which jobs are organized into a line of progression and in which entry-level positions provide the training for upper-level positions. Hiring for non-entry level positions may be primarily restricted to insiders (Pinfield, 1995). Spell and Blum (2001) found that the extent to which an organization has an internal labor market, the more likely it is to engage in pre-employment drug testing. Focusing on professional service firms, Malos and Campion (1995) explained such career-mobility patterns with their financial options theory. They concluded that professional service firms not only hire employees for their productive value in the position allocated, but also for their potential future partnership/co-ownership suitability. High costs are incurred if an employee does not perform well and leaves the organization before the investments in this person have paid off. Consequently, a thorough examination of each potential employee is necessary to reduce the costs associated with extensive training.

Proposition 10: The more an organization has an internal labor market, and the less valid a selection procedure is, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Beside financial objectives, organizations are likely to vary in their financial ability to develop and validate selection procedures. Administrative innovations, including changes in an organization's personnel selection procedures, usually receive relatively little managerial attention and resources (Van de Ven, 1986). Given this restriction of range, however, larger organizations usually have more financial resources to update their procedures than smaller organizations. Kimberly and Evanisko (1981) found larger organizations to be more likely to adopt technical innovations. Regarding personnel selection, Blum, Fields, Milne, and Spell (1992) indicated that drug testing programs are primarily common among large organizations. While more than 50% of the Fortune 1000 companies performed drug testing, smaller employers used it in fewer than 5%.

Proposition 11: The smaller the financial resources the organization has for selecting new employees (e.g. small firms), and the greater financial expenditures expected from the adoption of a specific selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Social objectives. Besides economic considerations, social objectives influence the adoption of selection procedures. Sahal (1981) noted that process technologies (including administrative technologies) constitute integrated systems together with product technologies and that the dependence between the two components grows stronger with the passage of time. This implies that organizations are unlikely to embrace changes in a selection procedure as long this procedure helps maintain and perpetuate a desired status quo. Jones (1998) argued that organizations adopt selection procedures that permit the perpetuation of their organizational culture. An organization's culture, the set of habitual and traditional ways of thinking, feeling and reacting that are characteristic of an organization, is very resistant to change (Schwartz & Davis, 1986) and strongly influences members' behavior (Schwartz & Davis, 1986; Zukin & DiMaggio, 1990).

For example, organizations exhibit distinctive gendered cultures by which ‘gender performances, gender knowledge, and accepted forms of gender interaction represent an inextricable part of workplace practice’ (Jones, 1998, p. 453). While Equal Opportunities legislation in many Western countries calls for the equal treatment of both genders in personnel selection, the position of women in paid work remains widely subordinate to that of men (Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Jacobs & Lim, 1992; Wright & Baxter, 1995). Women are strongly under-represented in many higher-level occupations, such as higher education (McAuley, 1987), medicine (Lawrence, 1987), the civil service (Spencer & Podmore, 1987), accounting (Summers, 1991), retail banking (Crompton & Jones, 1984) and investment banking (McDowell & Court, 1994).

Through interviews with recruits and recruiters at British investment banks, Jones (1998) found that the masculine gender culture of investment banking was partially reproduced through the gender-oriented process used to select new employees. Recruiters claimed to be searching for the same skills and attributes in all applicants. Yet these skills reflected the masculine organizational culture and norms of business practice. Moreover, women’s ability to perform these skills was more closely scrutinized than that of their male counterparts. They appeared to be interviewed more aggressively and be asked more questions about their personal life and their motivation. Some of them were explicitly reminded that it would be more difficult for them to get a job in investment banking than it was for their male counterparts.

Proposition 12a: The less selection procedure is perceived to permit the reproduction of the organization’s status-quo, and the more the organization is interested in maintaining that status-quo, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

In many cases, this proposition will favor the use of selection procedures that are already in use by the organization, as opposed to the adoption of ‘new’ procedures. In contrast to established procedures, new procedures would have to allay concerns that the process and people selected through these procedures might not fit into the organizational culture established with the use of

procedures that are already in use. Glode (2002) found that the best predictor of hiring managers' positive perceptions of and intentions to use a specific selection procedure was the frequency with which the manager had used that procedure before.

This situation alters, of course, if organizations strive for change. Often, the development of new products is necessarily accompanied by the development of new processes (Pisano & Wheelwright, 1995), especially in service industries, since products and processes are more closely linked to each other than they are in manufacturing industries (Buzzacchi, Colombo, & Marioth, 1995). Consequently, Zahra and Covin (1994) found a positive relationship between administrative and technical innovations, and Ettlie (1988) found that especially successful firms adopted administrative and technological innovations simultaneously.

Proposition 12b: The less selection procedure is perceived to allow for a change of the organization's status-quo, and the less the organization is interested in maintaining that status-quo, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Constraints on Autonomy. Given an organizational interest in maintaining the status-quo, proposition 3c will also favor the use of unstructured over structured procedures, since unstructured procedures permit more scrutinizing of applicants belonging to groups that are stereotyped as not fitting into the organizational culture. While this might not comply with legal regulations in some countries, Dipboye (1994) suggested that organizations might prefer unstructured selection procedures, since their inherent ambiguity may prevent scrutiny and monitoring of the selection process by outside parties, such as the human resource department or governmental agencies. This argument reflects Oliver's (1991) argument that organizations will attempt to resist institutional pressures perceived as constraining an organization's autonomy.

Additionally, attitudes of test administrators will influence the adoption of selection procedures. Anderson (2003) noted a paucity of research into recruiter reactions. This is unfortunate, as failures to implement standardized selection procedures may reflect the dissatisfaction of

interviewers with these procedures. Dipboye (1994) argued that recruiters may regard structured interviews as a monotonous and boring exercise that reduces their ability to build a rapport with the interviewee as well as their power in deciding whom to hire and whom not. With unstructured procedures, administrators can influence the decision by controlling information on alternatives and by stressing those criteria that favor their preferences (Pfeffer, 1981). Although these preferences may not reflect the organization's objectives as a whole, they can have a strong impact on the actual adoption of practices, and on the degree to which this adoption reflects the standards originally intended and consequently the standardization across users (Lewis & Seibold, 1993). This effect can even spread across a whole organization. In a case study on the fairness perceptions of recruiters for the City Council of a large British city, Harris (2000) found recruiters to have strong negative attitudes against the highly formalized selection-process they used. They criticised its lack of flexibility. The mechanical, over-structured interviewing approach restricted opportunities for two-way communication and for applicants to determine their individual qualities. Additionally, recruiters felt that the scoring guide of the interview did not reflect the actual qualities needed on the job: "There is a real difference between the technically correct answer and the successful answer. It just depends on what has been decided as the correct answer against the job requirements." (Harris, 2000, p. 152). Dissatisfaction with the structured procedure was such that the main architect of the process, the personnel director, feared that "the system self-determines who we recruit, I honestly feel we have created a monster with a life of its own." (Harris, 2000, p. 152).

Proposition 13: The more constraining administrators perceive a selection procedure to be on the selection processes and decisions, the less likely the organization is to adopt this technique.

An overview of the influence of economic and social objectives as well as perceived constraints on autonomy on an organization's choice of selection procedure can be found in the lower half of Figure 1.

Context

Finally, Oliver (1991) argued that several factors in an organization's context also influence an organization's reaction. These factors are (a) the diffusion of comparable procedures in the field, (b) the interconnectedness of the organization with other organizations in the field, and (c) the uncertainty of the organization's context.

Diffusion in the field. The diffusion of a comparable selection procedures in the field is likely to influence the perceived legitimacy and hence adoption of a specific selection procedure. Referring back to the mimetic view of organizational conformity (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Tolbert & Zucker, 1983), Oliver (1991) hypothesized that the extent to which an institutional expectation or practice has already diffused or spread voluntarily through an organizational field will tend to predict the likelihood of conformity. When institutional rules or norms are broadly diffused and supported, their social validity is largely unquestioned. They reflect taken-for-granted understandings of what constitutes legitimate or rational behavior. Organizations may even conform because it does not occur to them to do otherwise. This is less likely to occur when specific values or practices are not broadly supported. Spell and Blum (2001) found that organizations were more likely to engage in pre-employment drug testing the more other organizations in their industry used drug testing.

Proposition 14: The fewer other organizations in an organization's (i) industry and (ii) local labor market have adopted a kind of selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Interconnectedness. Close interconnectedness between organizations further enhances the voluntary diffusion of practices through relational channels (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), creating more implicit coordination and collectivization in a given environment and more consensus on diffused norms. Meyer and Rowan (1977) argued that relational networks serve to elaborate collective myths and values and that this elaboration leads to conformity with these

institutional elements. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) proposed that close interconnectedness promotes institutional isomorphism and conformity.

Proposition 15: The more the organization maintains relations to other organization in its field, and the less these other organizations use a specific selection procedure, the less likely the organization is to adopt this procedure.

Uncertainty. Finally, the uncertainty of the context in which a selection procedure is chosen will influence the organization's strategic response. Under conditions of uncertainty, or "the degree to which future states of the world cannot be anticipated and accurately predicted" (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 67), organizations are supposed to exert greater effort to re-establish real or at least perceived control and stability by complying, compromising or avoiding institutional pressures. Uncertainty also leads organizations to imitate other organizations in their field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1989). Oliver (1991) proposed that high levels of uncertainty, due to factors such as the introduction of new legal regulations or the unpredictability in the market, lower the likelihood of organizational resistance to institutional pressures.

Proposition 16: The less uncertain the future appears, the less likely the organization is to adopt other organizations' procedures.

An overview of the influence of an organization's context on its choice of selection procedure can be found to the far right of Figure 1.

Organizational Reactions to Institutional Pressures on Personnel Selection Procedures

Given the above causes, constituents, control, content and context of pressures for adopting one personnel selection strategy over another, organizations' lack of compliance with scientific guidelines and techniques (e.g., Dipboye, 1994; Dunnette, 1990) may perhaps no longer come as a

surprise. But how do organizations react to the numerous and oftentimes conflicting pressures opposing them? As will be described in more detail below, the variety of potential reactions is broader than either pure compliance with or dismissal of scientific and legal recommendations. Oliver (1991) developed a continuous taxonomy with five groups of reactions to describe the strategies with which organizations react to institutional pressures: acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance and manipulation. This taxonomy may help to detail and clarify the distinctions between compliance and rejection of scientific standards, enhancing our understanding of the actual choices organizations make (see bottom of figure 1).

Acquiescence

Researchers in I/O psychology would generally welcome it if practitioners adhered to scientific and legal recommendation in using selection practices that are based on a job analysis that is standardized across all applicants, free from bias, reliable, valid and of little adverse impact. According to Oliver's (1991) model, such acquiescence, the acting in accordance with institutional requirements, is most likely to occur when the chosen procedure enhances both (a) social legitimacy in the form of legal defensibility and (b) economic fitness in the form of high long-term benefits, when the organization is (c) dependent and (d) controlled by the constituents of both pressures. Furthermore, acquiescence becomes more likely when the procedure is consistent with the organization's (e) economic and (f) social objectives, when it (g) does not constrain the organization's administrators in their decision making, is (h) widely used by other organizations in the field, with whom (i) the organization is closely interconnected, especially if (j) the organization is faced by contextual uncertainty, and when (k) there is low multiplicity of opposing demands. This means that the selection procedure should either be of high applicant acceptance or the organization should have so many applications to choose from that applicant attraction is of no major importance. Similarly, the selection procedure should be either inexpensive to develop and administer, or short-term costs should not be an issue. Several versions of acquiescence exist:

Compliance. Compliance, the conscious obedience or incorporation of psychometric and legal considerations in personnel selection can be found in numerous reports about assessment centers (Bray & Grant, 1966; Otte, 1995), structured interviews (Latham et al., 1980; Schuler, 1992), pencil and paper tests (Bartussek, Raatz, & Stapf, 1986), or job-knowledge tests (DuBois, Shalin, Levi, & Borman, 1993). These reports show the great lengths to which organizations may be willing to go when conducting a job analysis, developing, pre-testing, and constantly validating and updating selection tools that fulfil legal and psychometric expectations.

Imitation. Imitating successful organizations can be another form of acquiescence. Given that the imitating organization frequently does not have the necessary skills or resources to accomplish the professional development and validation of proper selection tools, benchmarking and consulting firms have become an important transmitter of standards and procedures (e.g., Lester, 2000). A whole industry has emerged that sells standardized personnel selection tools and adjusts them to the conditions of the specific organization (Anderson et al., 2001).

Habits. Habits, the unconscious or blind adherence to preconscious or taken-for-granted rules, are a third source of acquiescence to institutional pressures. Given the efforts it takes to construct, validate and update proper selection devices, habits are probably less likely to account for the adoption of well developed and validated selection tools than for the continued use of less labor-intensive techniques such as traditional unstructured interviews. While this means a clear dismissal of scientific recommendations, it may satisfy pressures for low short-term costs, applicant and administrator acceptance, as well as maintenance of the status quo, and reflect the standards used by most other organizations in the organization's field.

Rituals. Rituals and symbolic functions play another dominant role in the adoption of procedures (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). In the case of personnel selection, Dipboye (1994) argued that unstructured interviews frequently served the symbolic function of conveying the values of the organization. Although unstructured interviews would not allow interviewers to make reliable and valid choices, they offered more possibilities for communicating values than structured interviews did.

Compromise

Acquiescence with scientific and legal regulations may be desirable from a scientific or legal perspective, but the multiplicity of institutional pressures more often than not makes acquiescence impossible. As discussed above, organizations are often confronted with conflicting institutional demands or with inconsistencies between institutional expectations and internal organizational objectives. Under such circumstances organizations may attempt to balance, pacify or bargain with external constituents (Oliver, 1991).

Balancing. Tactically balancing multiple pressures involves the accommodation of multiple constituent demands in response to competing institutional pressures and expectations (Oliver, 1991). The multimodal interview (Schuler, 1992; Schuler & Funke, 1989) balances demands for long-term economic fitness with those for applicant-attraction. While structured interviews exhibit higher predictive validity (Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994), applicants usually prefer unstructured interviews (Dipboye, 1994; Latham & Finnegan, 1993). The multimodal interview attempts to serve both purposes by incorporating structured sections such as a SI (Latham et al., 1980) and a set of structured biographical questions, as well as unstructured sections for 'warming up', self-presentation, and a job preview. Consequently, the multimodal interview shows both satisfactory predictive validity and applicant acceptance (Schuler, 1992).

A strategy balancing demands for long-term economic gains with legal defensibility is the adoption of a highly valid selection procedure without following a strict top-down selection of applicants. For instance, traditional tests of cognitive ability are highly predictive of applicants' future job performance (Hunter & Hunter, 1984), but systematically favor white majority over non-white minority applicants (Valencia & Suzuki, 2001). A compromise between economic and legal considerations is the use of sliding bands (Zedeck et al., 1996). A sliding band is a confidence interval around the top-score among all applicants that allows divergence from strict top-down selection in order to permit selection of a sufficiently large number of otherwise disadvantaged applicants.

Pacifying. Minimal relieving of pressures also constitutes partial conformity with the expectations of one or more constituents. While the organization mounts a minor level of resistance to institutional pressures, it devotes most of its energies to appeasing or placating the institutional source or sources it has resisted. Pacifying strategies can be found when organizations rely on valid selection procedures but set the cut-off scores for these procedures at a level that allows the majority of applicants to pass the test. While relieving the pressure to use valid selection procedures, the actual decision can largely be influenced by other factors the organization chooses to use for the selection of new employees (Cascio, et al., 1988).

Bargaining. Bargaining, a more active form of compromise, involves the effort of the organization to exact some concessions from an external constituent in its demands (Oliver, 1991). Bargaining between pressures for legal defensibility and pressures for short-term economic fitness occurred repeatedly during the evolution of uniform guidelines on employee selection procedures in the US (Day, Erwin, & Koral, 1981). An example is a debate that took place in the early 1970s between the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which advocated the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures to include requirements for criterion-related validation, and the Civil Service Commission (CSC), which feared that employers could not afford such validation studies (Miner & Miner, 1978).

Avoidance

Avoidance is the attempt by the organization to preclude the necessity to conform. Avoidance usually reflects the chosen strategy if an organizations faces multiple contradictory pressures of low overall social or economic merit that are enforced by constituents upon which the organization is moderately dependent and controlled by (Oliver, 1991). Organizations can avoid these pressures through concealing the nonconformity, buffering the organization from institutional pressures, or escaping from institutional rules or expectations altogether.

Concealing nonconformity. Concealing nonconformity involves disguising nonconformity behind a façade of acquiescence. This is a very popular reaction among organizations, as can be seen

in Hammer and Champy's (1995) comment that "the biggest lie told by most organizations is that 'people are our most important assets' ". While this statement is widespread in messages for potential employees, the public and shareholders, actual investment in human resource initiatives such as the development and validation of adequate selection procedures tends to remain low (Harrell-Cook & Ferris, 1997).

Concealing nonconformity with legal and long-term economic considerations in the interest of short-term economic fitness also manifests itself in the great variation of assessment-tools that have been labeled "assessment center". While assessment centers are usually accepted as a valid approach for selecting employees, their actual duration can last between half a day and three weeks (Thornton & Byham, 1982), and the number of observed exercises can vary from one to eleven or more (Gaugler, Rosenthal, Thornton, & Bentson, 1987).

Buffering. Buffering, an organization's attempt to reduce external inspection, scrutinizing or evaluation through detaching or decoupling its technical activities from external contact, may actually lead organizations to adopt poorly documented and unstandardized selection procedures. Dipboye (1994) proposed that the inherent ambiguity of unstructured interviews could prevent scrutiny and monitoring of the selection process. He assumed that although potentially harmful to the organization, unstructured interview procedures might allow departments in organizations to avoid their selection practices being monitored by outside parties, such as the human resource department or governmental agencies.

Escape. Escape from institutional pressures can happen through exiting the domain in which pressure is exerted, for example by moving the production to a location with fewer social and legal pressures, and where the hiring, maintaining and laying off of employees is less legally constrained. The organization can also alter its own activities or domain to avoid the necessity of conformity, such as shifting towards a less people-intensive production technology.

Defiance

Defiance, a more active form of resistance, represents the unequivocal rejection of an institutional pressure. It can take the form of dismissing, challenging or even attacking the pressure. Oliver (1991) assumed that these strategies become more likely when the perceived cost of active departure is low, when external pressures diverge from internal interests, and when organizations believe in the rationality of their own conduct or if they believe that they have little to lose by displaying their antagonism.

Dismissing. Dismissing or ignoring scientific and legal considerations altogether is what is mainly meant when we talk about a gap between science and practice in human resource management. Buckley et al. (1998, p. 32) questioned 113 human resource managers about their familiarity with academic research in management. Although managers claimed to know a large body of research, they described it as “inapplicable, trivial, immaterial, and irrelevant”. Similarly, Becker and Gerhart (1996) argued that human resource decisions are rarely considered a source of value creation, or what Hamel and Prahalad (1994) termed "numerator management." Johns (1993) argued that managers frame personnel practices as being administrative rather than technical decisions, thereby discounting their importance and their inherent expertise. Thus managers may discard information by personnel researchers who justify their innovations from a technical perspective, arguing with the aid of long causal chains that ignore the social context of the organizations (Johns, 1993). Latham and Whyte (1993; Whyte & Latham, 1997) supported this idea empirically: even executive MBA students studying human resource management were reluctant to consider scientific utility information when deciding on the adoption of a personnel selection procedure. Since practitioners are neither dependent on nor controlled by human resource scientists, the pressure to conform to scientific standards is perceived as being low.

The same can be true for legal regulations. As outlined above, legal sanctions are usually too small and too slow to affect rational organizational planning (Edelman & Suchman, 1997). Hence, organizations may think that their selection procedures are fairly independent of and uncontrolled by

legal regulations. This is especially likely to happen if the organization does not know of other organizations conforming to legal pressures. This lack of knowledge may be due to the fact that this conforming is not widespread among organizations or due to a lack of interconnectedness between organizations in the field. As soon as such legal regulations contradict an organization's own predominant economic or social objectives or are perceived as constraining, the organization is likely to simply ignore them. Consequently, many organizations are reluctant to adopt selection procedures demanded by legal regulations, scientific knowledge, or long-term economic considerations (Dipboye, 1994; Scholarios & Lockyer, 1999; Schuler et al., 1993).

Challenging and attacking. Challenging and attacking institutional pressures is a more active departure from rules, norms or expectations than dismissal. The difference between the two is that attack is more intense and aggressive than challenge. The history of North American legislation regarding proper selection procedures offers numerous examples of court cases between individuals, frequently supported by fair employment practice commissions, and organizations that vehemently defended their current selection procedures (Guion, 1998).

Manipulation

Manipulation, the most active response to institutional pressures, is intended to actively change or exert power over the content or the sources of institutional pressures. It is the purposeful and opportunistic attempt to co-opt, influence or control institutional pressures and evaluations (Oliver, 1991). While manipulation has been granted little consideration in the current literature on the scientist-practitioner gap in personnel selection, it is an important option open to organizations when simply dismissing external pressures will not suffice to handle conflicting demands. An organization is most likely to manipulate the content or constituents of institutional pressures when it faces pressures from constituents that it is neither dependent on nor controlled by; this is also the case when these pressures contradict other external or internal objectives, and when they are not known to represent a common standard among other organizations in the field (Oliver, 1991).

Co-opting and controlling. Organizations actively foster and influence legal regulations as a means of controlling their environments or of obtaining advantages over their competitors (Edelman & Suchman, 1997). Affected organizations have been part of a complex network of co-opting and controlling at all stages of the construction and implementation of legal regulations on personnel testing in the US (Guion, 1998). As an example, Guion (1998, p. 170) described the development of the employee selection guidelines from 1966 through 1974, which was “characterized by controversy and acrimony among opponents of specific provisions. Moreover, each agency tended to be interested in developing regulations only when a published rule would have helped its case against a specific target industry or company. When the crisis-at-hand ended, whether by settlement or evaporation, so did progress.” Given these processes, many of the regulations developed in that period leave ambiguities in their wake, as well as being open to interpretation (Guion, 1998). As Edelman and Suchman (1997) pointed out, neither this process nor its outcome is atypical of legislation in general. They conclude “a legal formalist imagery is at best an abstract ideal and that, in reality, the regulatory environment is often ambiguous, contested, and riddled with loopholes” (Edelman & Suchman, 1997, p. 487).

Influencing. Influencing institutional evaluations may be found in the way organizations themselves perceive and promote the validity of selection devices. In a European-wide survey of human resource managers, Schuler et al. (1993) found a consistent tendency of managers to overestimate the validity of the selection procedures they used, compared to the procedures they did not use. Similarly, the information distributed among organizations does not always reflect what is known through research. Although research has proven graphology to be an unacceptable and poor predictor of applicants’ personalities or motivation (Driver, Buckley, & Frink, 1996), the practitioners’ press repeatedly reports on the increasing adoption of handwriting analysis and its benefits (Bianchi, 1996; Leonard, 1999), thus influencing public opinion about what may be an acceptable choice of procedure.

Conclusion

The organizational adoption of unstandardized, unreliable, unvalidated and biased selection procedures, despite the existence of seemingly superior alternatives, has been a matter of concern for researchers in human resource management for quite some time. However, as this paper has attempted to demonstrate, the range of viable choices available for organizations is wide, encompassing not only acquiescence and defiance, but also diverse alternatives of compromise, avoidance and even manipulation. The examples outlined above serve to enhance our understanding of the broad scope of organizations' reactions to pressures to adopt scientifically recommended and legally defensible selection procedures. While some of these reactions, such as dismissal, or tactically balancing multiple pressures, are well known to researchers of the scientist-practitioner gap, others, such as manipulating or escaping from these pressures altogether, have received considerably less attention.

Furthermore, organizational decisions to select employees with the help of less valid and legally defensible selection procedures appear less arbitrary if one considers the numerous aspects of the institutional pressures that surround organizations. This paper focused on just four causes of institutional pressures, namely legal and long-term economic considerations on the one hand, and concerns about applicant reactions and short-term economic considerations on the other. Taking the pressures' constituents, control, content and context into account, the current paper proposed more than a dozen predictors to influence an organization's choice of selection procedure. Numerous further requirements are likely to exist. Facing multiple contradicting pressures that can hardly be satisfied simultaneously, organizations are likely to avoid, defy or even manipulate at least some of these demands.

For researchers studying the gap between science and practice in personnel selection and human resource management in general, this perspective might appear somewhat disheartening at first, since it demonstrates the low likelihood of simple acquiescence with scientific recommendations. The call for organizations to adopt more valid selection procedures is likely to fall on deaf ears if it does not take into consideration the actual external and internal pressures faced

by organizations when deciding on a selection procedure. It is important to recognize and incorporate these conflicting pressures if researchers want their own recommendations to be taken into account as well. Otherwise, it should not come as a surprise if many organizations continue to dismiss scientific recommendations altogether, to conceal their nonconformity with those demands, or, at best, to minimally pacify them in a way that might satisfy the form, but not the purpose of employing valid selection procedures.

Consequently, researchers may consider introducing contingencies to the recommendations they make to practitioners. Practitioners in turn may need to voice more clearly their concerns that research is “inapplicable, trivial, immaterial, and irrelevant” (Buckley et al., 1998, p. 32) and explain the relevant factors they consider to be neglected by researchers. Currently, executives typically do not turn to academics or their research findings in developing managerial strategies and practices, and researchers do not turn to practitioners for developing practice relevant research questions or interpreting their results (Rynes et al., 2001). The call for closer collaboration between scientists and practitioners is not new (Dunnette, 1990; Rynes et al., 2001). However, fruitful collaboration may begin with researchers’ openness to and respect for the complexity of pressures and necessities in which organizations are involved, as well as their appreciation of the broad spectrum of strategic choices available to organizational decision makers.

Still, as goodwill alone does not always suffice to bridge the gap between scientific recommendations and organizational decisions, it may also help to scan the resources developed by researchers that support such collaborations. Of potential help are multi-attribute utility analyses (MAU). MAU present a set of procedures that can guide decision-making by integrating multiple outcomes from a given course of action into a single value that represents the usefulness of that course of action (Roth & Bobko, 1997). Unlike classical utility analysis, MAU does not use dollars as a metric to aid decision making, but ‘effectiveness’ points, which can be equally assigned to a selection procedure for satisfying other favored outcomes such as legal defensibility or applicant acceptance. A famous example of a MAU-system is Pritchard’s (1990) Productivity Measurement and Enhancement System (ProMES), but Roth, Bobko and Mabon (2001) report that other MAU-

systems have been successfully used for decisions such as land use on the California coast, evaluating school desegregation plans and evaluating energy politics. It is likely that such approaches are equally suitable for supporting the choices of personnel selection procedures, allowing decision makers to balance at least the most important of their institutional demands. To expect the use of such models to lead to simple compliance with scientific recommendations is likely to be futile, of course, and it has yet to be tested whether practitioners will react more favorably towards this than towards classical utility approaches. However, a multi-attribute approach may help towards more informed compromises between diverse pressures, instead of fostering the continuation of concealed nonconformities. Giving practitioners the ability to decide for themselves on the importance they attach to meeting each of the pressures they face, a MAU approach, compared to the traditional scientific validity-approach, might support a more open debate between scientists and practitioners regarding the relevant criteria a selection procedure is supposed to meet, and might consequently stimulate new and more practitioner-oriented directions for research.

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Footnote

Oliver (1991) places 'voluntary diffusion' into the category 'control', arguing that voluntary diffusion reduces the necessity of control by constituents. For the purpose of the current model, however, I moved this dimension into the category 'context', since voluntary diffusion in an organization's field takes place not in the organization itself, but in the context of other organizations in which it is embedded.

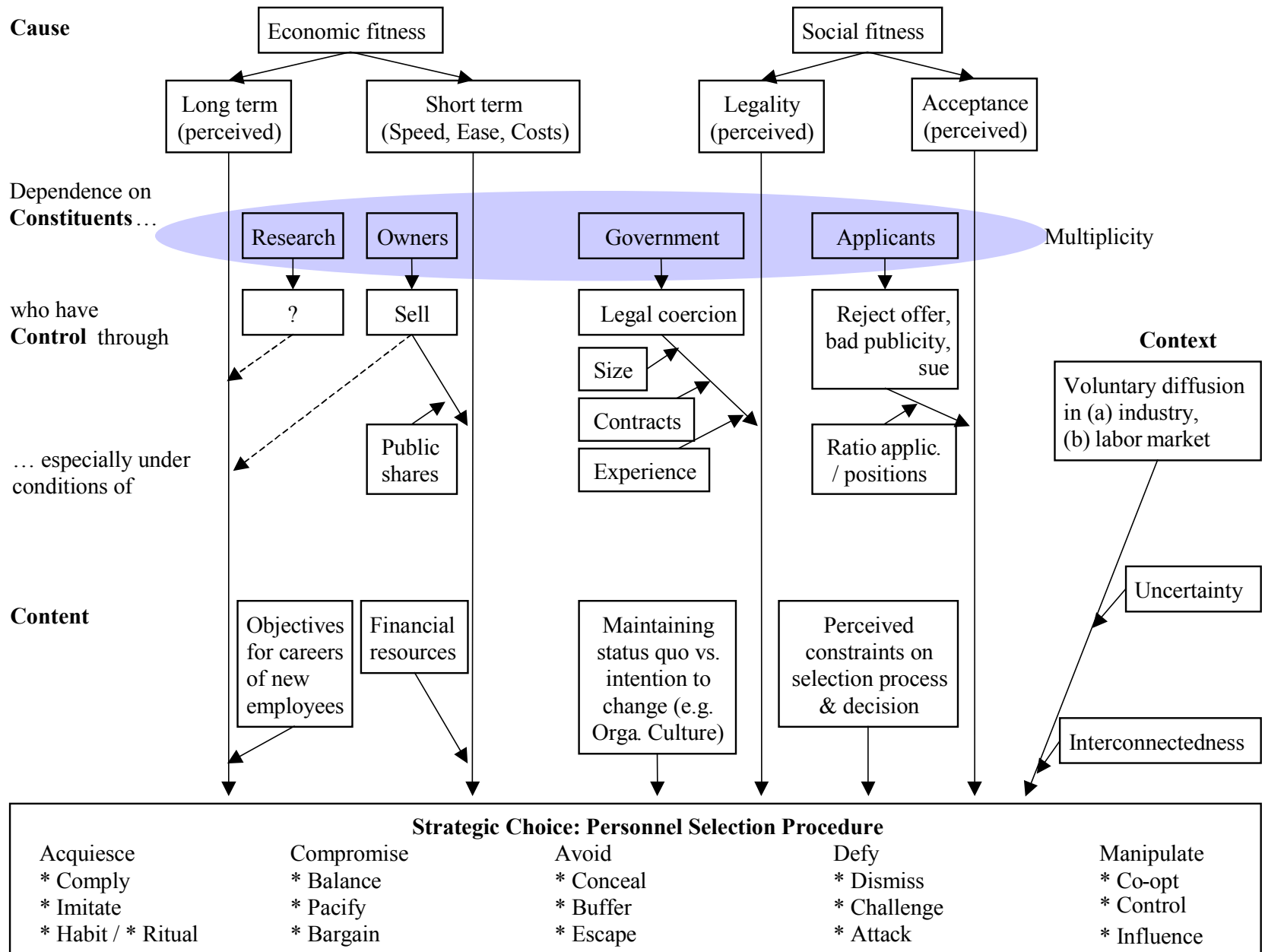


Figure 1: Institutional Pressures Proposed to Affect the Adoption of Personnel Selection Procedures