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# Personality and Cognitive Ability as Predictors of Job Search and Separation Among Employed Managers

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## **Keywords**

research, employee, job, search, employ, personality, cognitive ability

## **Comments**

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Working Paper 99 - 13



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This paper has not undergone formal review or approval of the faculty of the ILR School. It is intended to make results of Center research available to others interested in preliminary form to encourage discussion and suggestions.

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### **Abstract**

Traditional models and research on employee job search and separation focus on situationally-specific variables, those that change with time or between particular employment situations. More enduring individual characteristics, such as personality and cognitive ability, may create predispositions that affect search and separation in consistent ways across different situations. The research reported here extends traditional turnover models by incorporating two enduring individual characteristics – personality and cognitive ability – into the search and separation process. This extended model is then tested on a sample of executives. Cognitive ability as well as the personality dimensions of agreeableness, neuroticism and openness to experience related positively to job search. The effects of cognitive ability and the personality dimensions of agreeableness and openness to experience on job search were partially mediated by the array of situational factors, while the effect of neuroticism on job search was fully mediated. The relationship between extraversion and job search became significant in the presence of situational factors, suggesting a suppressor effect. With regard to separation, a similar suppressor effect was found for extraversion. Implications for future research and practice are discussed.

## **Personality and Cognitive Ability as Predictors of Job Search and Separation Among Employed Managers**

Job search and separation have enjoyed considerable research attention, owing to their important role in the staffing process, as well as their central role in theories of job choice and employee turnover. Existing models focus mainly on the effects of the current situation (individual, organizational, and labor market) on individual motivation to search and/or separate (e.g., Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Maertz & Campion, 1998; Price, 1977). A recent meta-analysis and review by Hom and Griffeth (1995) did not mention personality, and noted only two studies that included cognitive ability. They noted that most turnover models do not explicitly include personality. Some frameworks (e.g., March & Simon, 1958; Steers & Mowday, 1981) mention "personal traits" or "individual attributes," such as skills, education, demographic characteristics or tenure), but most (e.g., Mobley, 1977; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Price & Mueller, 1981; Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya, 1985) focus on characteristics of the present job, job satisfaction, perceived alternatives, and expected utility and cost of quitting.

Existing turnover models have proven quite useful in understanding and predicting these important phenomena, but there is still a good deal of additional variance to be explained (Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994). Extending the focus beyond situationally-specific factors may illuminate important enduring individual traits that may explain additional variability in search and separation, and may also provide important theoretical insights and practical implications. For example, organizations striving to reduce separations devote considerable resources to enhancing the work situation so that it better fits individual or group traits (e.g., Chatman, 1991). If some variability in search/separation is actually due to enduring individual traits, such as personality or cognitive ability, then selecting those with traits that are more compatible with retention may enhance situationally-focused turnover reduction. Moreover, certain enduring traits may help explain situational factors that affect search and separation. For example, job satisfaction affects turnover, and job satisfaction may be considered a response influenced by the particular situationally-specific individual characteristics interacting with the particular work and labor market situation (Brief, Butcher, & Roberson, 1995; Cropanzano, James, & Konovsky, 1993; George, 1992). If individual predispositions (e.g., personality traits) also create a tendency to experience greater or less satisfaction in a given situation, then the effect of the enduring traits may be mediated by the situationally-specific variable, such as job satisfaction. Enduring traits may also be mediated by human capital variables. For example, cognitive ability is regarded as a relatively enduring individual difference, independent of the particular work situation (e.g., Dunn, Mount, Barrick, & Ones, 1995; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994; Rees & Earles,

1991). However, cognitive ability is a predictor of success in education and training, which may build situationally-specific human capital.

Staw (1995, p. 89) has argued for more research on how distal factors affect human behavior, “my own prejudice is that we need, in general, to stretch the distance between variables, becoming more risk-taking in our empirical investigations.” The present research incorporates enduring individual differences as key elements of search and separation, and tests the model on a sample of high-level U.S. executives. We focus on two particular enduring traits, personality and cognitive ability. We also examine both job search and separation. Job search is distinct from separation. Employed individuals may engage in job search to serve a variety of purposes—to establish networks, demonstrate marketability to current employer, develop alternatives to compare with the current position (Bretz et al., 1994; Lazear, 1986). The Bretz et al. results suggested that a considerable amount of search activity does not lead to separation, although search activity is significantly related to separation. Bretz et al. used situational variables, drawn primarily from theories in labor economics and industrial/organizational psychology, noting the need for further research addressing the job search process explicitly, particularly the role of other individual differences. Incorporating search as a distinct process may reveal effects of enduring personal traits that are not apparent by focusing simply on separation. Search activity may be far less constrained than separation decisions, thus providing greater observed variance. Moreover, some enduring individual characteristics may affect search differently. For example, the personality trait of extraversion might lead individuals generally to build and maintain outside contacts and relationships that lead to identifying employment alternatives.

### Model Development

We will develop a model incorporating personality and cognitive ability as predictors of both job search and separation. Prior research has tended to focus primarily on turnover or separation (Bretz et al., 1994). Moreover, existing search research often focuses on samples of individuals who are entering the job market following a period of full-time education, or who are unemployed. Little research focuses on the search processes of employed individuals, despite the fact that employed individuals comprise a much larger domain, that the costs, benefits, and motivations for search may be very different for employed individuals, and that understanding and managing the search processes of employed individuals is potentially of significant practical importance, especially if the search process provides clues to later behaviors such as separation. Empirical evidence from nurses (Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996) has verified



the complexity of the turnover process, suggesting that turnover occurs through processes that deviate from the traditional sequential model, in which dissatisfaction leads to a decision to leave, which is followed by a search for alternatives, which in turn is followed by a decision to separate. Rather, it appears that search and separation are part of complex processes involving “a larger set of ongoing decisions about life” (Lee et al., 1996, p. 33). Yet, research focusing on job search as a distinct process is rare. This is especially true with regard to personality and cognitive ability. Although some prior research has linked these variables to employee turnover, there is little research attention to the effects of these enduring traits on search. Thus, our literature review will focus mainly on prior turnover research, noting where that research may generalize to the search process.

Existing turnover models have acknowledged the effects of demographic characteristics such as race and gender, which also endure across all work situations faced by a particular individual. The rationale for including race and gender in turnover models is generally that they serve as proxies for processes that affect individual mobility more generally (Bretz et al., 1994). For example, gender reflects life situations (e.g., likelihood of having primary responsibility for household management) as well as potential discrimination vulnerability. Race also reflects discrimination vulnerability. However, other enduring individual traits also have promise to enhance our understanding and ability to effectively manage the search/separation process. The most intriguing traits would be those shown likely to relate generally to important search and separation variables, such as attitudes, human capital, and performance, and those that might reveal direct effects over and above their impact on situational variables.

There is some evidence that there may indeed exist general predispositions toward search and separation. It has been proposed that some individuals may exhibit a “hobo syndrome” by which they are more prone to move between jobs, merely because they are disposed toward such movement (Ghiselli, 1974). Ghiselli defined this tendency as “...the periodic itch to move from a job in one place to some other job in some other place” (p.18). Judge and Watanabe (1995) used event history analysis to test the validity of Ghiselli’s hobo syndrome. Results supported the hypothesis, showing that past turnover behavior was indeed a significant predictor of present turnover behavior. Other research indicates general support for the notion that certain individuals have a tendency to engage in job-hopping behavior. Specifically, Veiga (1981) found that some managers appear to move “instinctively”, as if “mobility is in their blood”, rather than as a result of situational factors such as job dissatisfaction or the desire for higher compensation. Labor economics literature provides additional support, showing that the greater the number of times of unemployment, the greater the likelihood the

individual will be unemployed in the future (e.g., Heckman & Borjas, 1980). Judge (1993) studied registered nurses in a Midwest medical clinic and found that affective disposition was a significant positive predictor of voluntary turnover, after controlling for alternative employment opportunities, education, age, job tenure, wage rate, and overall job satisfaction.

We propose that two general categories of individual traits are particularly fruitful potential additions to existing models—personality and cognitive ability. These traits are not only consistent with prior research and theory (e.g., Hobo syndrome), but there is also ample evidence to support their direct effects on key situational work and/or individual variables.

### Cognitive Ability

As discussed in more detail below, our research design and sample require that we focus on how cognitive ability relates to job search but not separation. Unfortunately, we could locate no prior research specifically examining this relationship. However, research on cognitive ability and turnover is informative. Cognitive ability has a rich heritage of research in psychology, but its most noteworthy application to industrial/organizational psychology has been as a predictor of job performance (Murphy, 1996). Research clearly demonstrates that general cognitive ability test scores are one of the most consistently positive predictors of job performance (Schmidt, Ones, & Hunter, 1992), and that they are most predictive for complex jobs, such as those of executives (Hunter, 1986). There is evidence that these findings are not lost on employers, as the business press has recently featured examples of companies such as Microsoft that heavily weigh intelligence in their selection practices (e.g., Seligman, 1997). Thus, it seems reasonable to consider cognitive ability to be an element of human capital, contributing to an individual's "opportunity" to leave (Bretz et al., 1994). Further, those higher in cognitive ability are likely to perceive more opportunities, perhaps leading to increased motivation to search and even leave.

Direct evidence linking cognitive ability with job search and separation is significantly more limited, however. O'Reilly and Chatman (1994) found no main effect for GMAT scores on the number of offers received by MBA graduates, though they did find a significant interaction effect with conscientiousness. Colarelli, Dean, and Konstans (1987) found a non-significant effect of cognitive ability on both performance and turnover among newly-hired accountants in the "big-eight" firms. Villanova, Bernardin, Johnson, and Dahmus (1994) found that numerical and verbal ability predicted performance among movie theater workers, and that numerical ability was negatively associated with turnover, though this included those terminated "for cause," while the present study focuses on voluntary turnover. Dickter, Roznowski, and Harrison

(1996) examined turnover in the U.S. National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, finding that cognitive ability was negatively associated with turnover.

Beyond providing a direct enhanced opportunity to leave, cognitive ability may also affect search and separation because of its association with education and training performance. Individuals with higher cognitive ability may achieve higher educational qualifications, which are directly observable by employers. Similarly, such individuals may learn faster, thus enhancing their training “capital” over time (Schmidt & Hunter, 1992). This higher human capital associated with educational attainment may provide individuals with a greater opportunity for separation, thus suggesting a positive effect, mediated through education and/or training attainments. Thus, the existing evidence on cognitive ability and turnover is mixed, perhaps reflecting the variety of samples and the inclusion of both voluntary and involuntary separations. Further, the absence of an accepted and consistently applied measure of general mental ability, and the difficulty of obtaining mental ability data in field surveys, may add to the equivocal results for turnover.

Due to the paucity of research on cognitive ability and job search, we rely primarily on the turnover research and theory noted above, which suggests a positive effect of cognitive ability directly and indirectly through situationally-specific factors (e.g., education and perceived alternatives). We hypothesize the following:

H-1: Cognitive ability will be positively related to search.

H-2: Situational variables will partly mediate the relationship between cognitive ability and job search.

### Personality

Given the recent revival of the dispositional perspective in organizations (House, Shane, & Herold, 1996), the absence of dispositional variables in most empirical research on job search and separation is conspicuous. The last decade of personality research has suggested that five cardinal traits – described as the five-factor model of personality of, more simply, the “Big Five” (Goldberg, 1990) – can be used to describe many salient aspects of an individual’s personality. The Big Five can be found in virtually any measure of personality (e.g., McCrae & John, 1992), including the analysis of the trait adjectives in many languages, factor reanalyses of existing multidimensional measures, and decisions made by expert judges based on existing measures (see Mount & Barrick, 1995). The cross-cultural generalizability of the five-factor structure has been established through research in many countries, including Germany, Portugal, Korea, China, Israel, and the Netherlands. Evidence indicates that the Big Five are heritable and stable

over time (Costa & McCrae, 1988; Digman, 1989). The primary application of the five-factor model has been in the area of personnel selection, where it has proven useful in predicting job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991).

The dimensions comprising the five-factor model are neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Neuroticism represents the tendency to exhibit poor emotional adjustment and experience negative affects such as anxiety, insecurity, and hostility. Extraversion represents the tendency to be sociable, assertive, active, and experience positive affects such as energy, zeal, and excitement. Openness to experience is the disposition to be imaginative, nonconforming, unconventional, and autonomous. Agreeableness is the tendency to be trusting, compliant, caring, and gentle. Conscientiousness is comprised of two related facets, achievement and dependability. Conscientiousness has been found to be the major component of integrity (Hogan & Ones, 1997).

The Big Five have not been studied with regard to job search, and their effect on turnover have never been examined in a sample of employed managers. Still, the potential role of personality in the turnover process has been suggested. Mobley (1982) noted that personality and cognitive ability might affect turnover, but that the results to date had been very mixed. Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, and Meglino (1979) do explicitly mention personality and interests, but they focus on the importance of the present job's characteristics "fitting" with personal values, rather than the idea that enduring individual traits may make turnover more or less likely in general. Hom and Griffeth's (1995) integrative model notes that negative affectivity may relate to withdrawal through its effect on job satisfaction.

A few empirical studies have linked dimensions of the five-factor model and turnover. Meta-analysis showed that conscientiousness negatively predicts a variety of withdrawal behaviors (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Another review concluded that emotional stability was significantly negatively correlated with turnover (Hough, Eaton, Dunnette, Kamp, & McCloy, 1990). Barrick and Mount (1996) studied long-haul truck drivers, and found that conscientiousness and emotional stability measured at the time of hire were both negatively related to turnover after six months, even after adjusting for response distortion.

Turnover research using personality measures different from the Big Five has also focused on emotional stability or anxiety, and on non-manager samples. Bernardin (1977) studied phone sales workers in the Midwest, noting Porter and Steers' (1973) hypothesis that individuals with extreme personality characteristics were more apt to withdraw from organizations through absence or separation. Several early studies seemed to support this

position (Cleland and Peck, 1959; Farris, 1971; Hakkinen & Toivainen, 1960; MacKinney and Wolins, 1960; Meyer & Cuomo, 1962; Sinha, 1963). Using the 16 Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) (Cattell, Eber & Tatsuoka, 1970), Bernardin (1977) found that organizational leavers and those with shorter tenure exhibited higher scores on anxiety and lower scores on conscientiousness scales, even after matching the samples on pay, or partialling out the effects of pay and age. Bernardin (1977) speculated that workers may manifest anxiety by frequent job-hopping, a hypothesis suggested as early as Hanna (1935). Anxiety and neuroticism are related, suggesting that more anxious workers may leave more frequently.

Mowday, Porter, and Stone (1978) studied clerical workers in two insurance offices with the Jackson Personality Research Form (PRF, Jackson, 1967), and found that after controlling for age, company tenure, and education level, leavers exhibited a higher need for autonomy, and a lower need for harm avoidance than stayers. Mowday and Spencer (1981) studied employees of a government agency, and found that need for achievement and need for autonomy positively related to turnover, especially for jobs high in Motivating Potential Score, which may be similar to the jobs of high-level managers studied here. Need for achievement is related to conscientiousness in the Big Five, suggesting a possible positive relationship between conscientiousness and separation.

Jenkins (1993) studied the role of “self monitoring,” or “the extent to which individuals monitor their expressive behavior and self-presentation” (p. 84), noting evidence that high self-monitors tend to tailor their actions and expressions to situational cues and to choose friends based on their contribution to current activities, while low self-monitors tend to express their “true dispositions” across all situations and choose friends based on shared values. In a study of fluid power plant workers, Jenkins found that self-monitoring significantly and positively predicted turnover intentions even after controlling for job satisfaction and commitment, and that the impact of job satisfaction on turnover intentions was higher for high self-monitors. It seems possible that agreeableness may reflect, in part, a tendency to self-monitor, which would suggest a positive relationship between agreeableness and separation.

On the other hand, compliance is a facet of agreeableness, which might suggest a negative relationship between agreeableness and separation or job search, if such behaviors are seen as failing to comply with an organizational norm to stay. This traditional view reflects an assumption that there is an expectation of long-term employment, and that there would be no offsetting norms urging search and/or separation. This study, however, focuses on high-level executives in 1995, a time of unprecedented U.S. economic growth and tight labor markets,

especially for skilled professionals such as managers. It seems likely in this group that it is typical and acceptable to explore alternative opportunities, and is not seen as a breach of the psychological contract (e.g., Kissler, 1994; Roehling, Cavanaugh, Moynihan, & Boswell, in press). In fact, it might well be that these managers frequently encounter colleagues in other organizations or search firms who urge them to actively explore other employment alternatives. Agreeable individuals might well express their predisposition by complying with such requests, rather than having to confront these colleagues by refusing their suggestions.

In summary, the existing evidence is somewhat mixed, and does not always use compatible measures of personality. Still, we can draw some tentative hypotheses from the existing literature. Neuroticism should relate positively to turnover, based on findings about anxiety and emotional stability. One can argue that conscientiousness will relate positively to turnover, to the extent that it reflects need for achievement, or negatively to the extent that it reflects dependability. However, given the existing meta-analytic evidence, it appears the more supportable hypothesis is a negative relationship with separation. The dimensions of agreeableness, extraversion, and openness to experience have not been studied specifically, so only speculative hypotheses can be offered. If extraversion leads to a tendency to interact with others, to be more visible both within and outside of one's employer, then it may be positively related to search and separation activity. If openness to experience leads to a tendency to seek out new situations, then it may also be related to both search and separation. If agreeableness reflects self-monitoring or a tendency to comply with outside invitations to search, then agreeable individuals may be more willing to form and terminate relationships to achieve other goals, to search, and perhaps to separate. These propositions reflect research on personality and turnover. The paucity of research on personality and job search offers little basis for specific hypotheses regarding personality dimensions. However, considering that search is, at least in part, related to intentions to separate, we propose as a working hypothesis that personality will affect search in the same manner as turnover.

H-3: Agreeableness will be positively related to search and separation.

H-4: Neuroticism will be positively related to search and separation.

H-5: Conscientiousness will be negatively related to search and separation.

H-6: Extraversion will be positively related to search and separation.

H-7: Openness to experience will be positively related to search and separation.

There is also research and theory to suggest that the enduring effects of personality on search and separation may be mediated by situational factors. For example, research on career success and performance (e.g., Harrell, 1969; Harrell & Alpert, 1989) suggests that extraversion

is a desirable trait, that may increase alternative employment opportunities. However, extraversion generally shows a positive relationship with job satisfaction (e.g., Furnam & Zacherl, 1986; Headey & Wearing, 1989; McCrae & Costa, 1991), suggesting an indirect negative effect on search and turnover.

Individuals high on negative affectivity (a common measure of neuroticism) tend to report higher levels of stress (Brief, Burke, George, Robinson, & Webster, 1988) and higher appraisal of stress as threatening (Hemenover and Dienstbier, 1996). Neurotic individuals also reflect a tendency to have low self-confidence and optimism which have been shown to relate to low earnings and advancement within an organization (Harrell, 1969; Harrell & Alpert, 1989; Howard & Bray, 1988). Moreover, previous research generally shows a negative relation between neuroticism and job satisfaction (Furnam & Zacherl, 1986; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983), and consistent with the trait and related research findings, neurotic individuals may have a tendency to perceive an organization as unsuccessful. All of these effects would suggest that neuroticism would have an indirectly negative effect on turnover, through situational factors.

There appears to be a positive relationship between conscientiousness and performance, as indicated by various meta-analyses (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997), perhaps suggesting that conscientious individuals are more likely to receive higher rewards (e.g., compensation). This is further supported by Barrick and Mount's finding of a nonzero "true" correlation between conscientiousness and salary of .17. Thus, conscientiousness may act to increase organizational rewards and achievements, which may be negatively correlated with a desire to search or leave.

Agreeableness represents a tendency to be compliant, and thus perhaps less likely to seek higher wages or ask for more responsibility. Managers that are "caring" or "gentle" may be seen as less decisive, and thus less eligible for more responsibility. Finally, more agreeable managers may seek employment elsewhere rather than engage in the confrontations necessary to try to improve an unsatisfactory situation. Each of these effects would suggest that more agreeable managers would be more likely to search and separate due to the indirect effect of agreeableness on mediating situational factors.

Thus it seems likely that the relationships between personality and search/separation may be both direct and at least partially mediated by situational factors. A similar notion was advanced by Murphy (1996), who noted that personality affects individual behavior both through "behavioral consistencies" (similar to the enduring effects proposed here) and "affective responses" (similar to the situational reactions noted here). Thus, current research is not yet sufficient to develop specific hypotheses about every personality dimension and each situational

factor, but it does support a general hypothesis about direct and mediating effects of personality on job search and separation, as follows:

H-8: Situational variables will partly mediate the relationship between each personality dimension and search and separation.

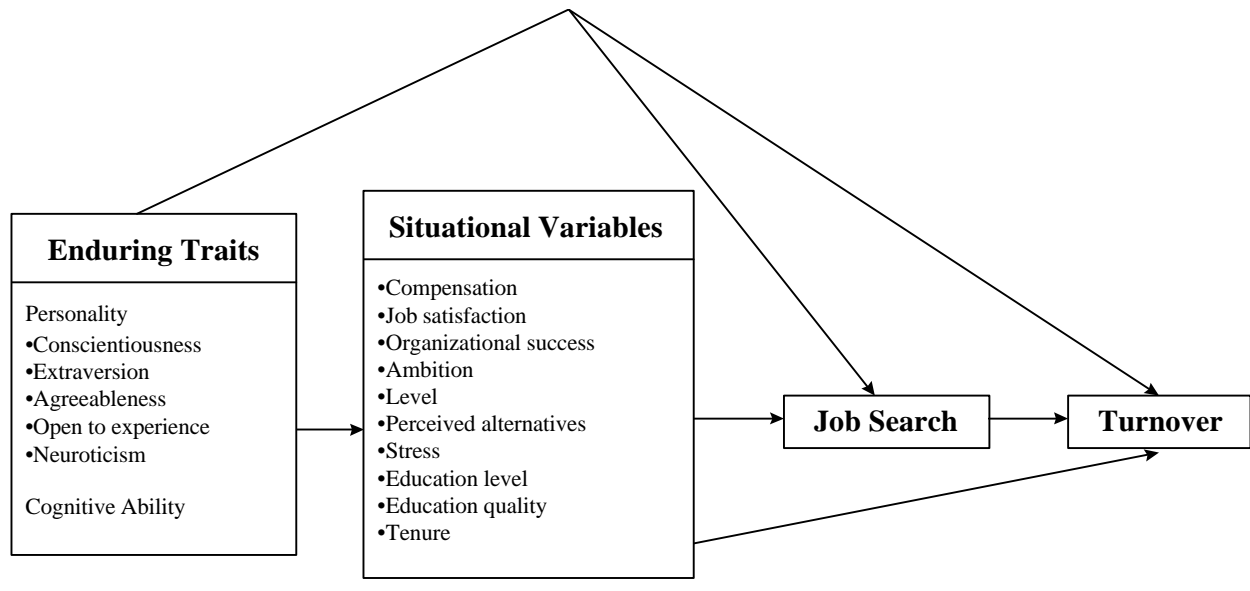
The complete model investigated here is shown in Figure 1. It includes the enduring personality and cognitive ability traits, along with an array of situational factors as mediators. These situational factors were chosen to meet several criteria. First, these factors can be theoretically supported as mediators of the effects of cognitive ability and personality as discussed above. They have been widely used to predict turnover and exist in virtually all models (e.g., Mobley et al., 1979). Further, they have emerged as significant predictors of search and/or separation in past literature (e.g., Bretz et al., 1994; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Weil, 1995). Thus the proposed model provides a conservative test of the direct effects of the enduring factors over and above situational elements, as well as a theoretically justified test of the mediation the effects of enduring factors through situational factors.

Finally, the model includes both job search and separation, with job search partially mediating the effects of both situational and enduring factors on separation. This construction reflects prior findings (e.g., Bretz et al., 1994) and theory (Hom & Griffeth, 1995) showing that job search is a distinct process from separation, but that it is also partly a precursor to separation. By including job search in this way, we provide an even more stringent test of the direct effects of the situational factors on turnover, by examining their effects when search is included in the model. It is possible that enduring tendencies to separate may exhibit their effects even when individual differences in search activity are controlled. This would lend even greater support to the need to incorporate enduring individual traits into the search and separation process.



**Figure 1.**

Model of the relationship of enduring traits and situational variables with job search and separation.



Method

Subjects

Surveys were sent to 10,000 high-level managers contained in the database of Ray & Berndtson executive search firm. A complete description of the executive search firm can be found in Bretz et al. (1994). A total of 1,886 subjects responded to the survey (19% response rate). To determine whether respondents were representative of nonrespondents, the two groups were compared based on information contained in the search firm’s database (e.g., salary, demographics, tenure). Results suggested respondents were significantly more likely to be married ( $M_R=86\%$ ,  $M_{NR}=77\%$ ), were older ( $M_R=47.2$ ,  $M_{NR}=45.4$ ), and had more children ( $M_R=1.8$ ,  $M_{NR}=1.5$ ) than nonrespondents. Although we were not able to compare the groups’ personality and cognitive ability, it appears that respondents are generally representative of the full target sample.

Of those responding, most were male (91%), white (96%), and U.S. citizens (95%). The majority of the respondents were married (91%) and just over half had one or more dependents. Eighteen percent of the managers had a spouse that was also a manager. The average age was 47, 37% had earned an undergraduate degree, and 63% had earned an advanced degree (defined as a master’s degree or above). The managers worked an average of 56 hours per

week and 82% were away from home three or more nights per month. An average of 8 hours per week was devoted to caring for dependents, 11 hours on household duties, and 12 ½ hours on leisure activities. On average, the managers had spent 3.4 years in their current position and had received 7.9 promotions in their career. The average respondent was 2.1 levels below the CEO and their total compensation (including bonuses) was \$164,618 per year. The respondents came from companies averaging \$1.5 billion in sales per year and 10,140 total employees. There was a slight overlap between the present sample and those in the Bretz, et al. (1994) study. Specifically, 224 of the 1,886 respondents (12%) had also responded to the 1992 survey.

### Procedure

Questionnaires were sent to the subjects in June 1995 by Ray & Berndtson. Subjects were instructed to return the survey (business reply envelope included) directly to the researchers. In July 1996, a follow-up survey was then sent to each manager who had responded to the original questionnaire. Forty-five percent of the original survey respondents returned the follow-up survey (841 of 1,885).

In addition to the two surveys, information was obtained directly from the search firm's database. This included information regarding compensation, education level and university attended. Any information missing from this database on these variables was supplemented by self-reported data from the survey. A control number on the bottom of the surveys allowed matching of the follow-up survey to the original survey as well as to the archival information obtained directly from Ray & Berndtson's database.

### Measures

Personality. Managers' personality traits were assessed with the NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The five personality traits that make up this measure are agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness. Each trait in the NEO is measured by asking respondents to indicate their agreement with 12 statements (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly disagree). The items for each trait were added to make one index for each trait: Agreeableness (coefficient alpha,  $[\alpha]=.71$ ), Conscientiousness ( $\alpha=.80$ ), Extraversion ( $\alpha=.77$ ), Neuroticism ( $\alpha=.82$ ), Openness ( $\alpha=.72$ ).

General cognitive ability. Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores were used as the measure of cognitive ability. A standardized test score, such as the SAT or GMAT, is a valid and simple way to assess an individual's intelligence, shown to be predictive of a number of different types of intellectual performance (Jensen, 1980), and has been used in previous research (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994; Wright, McMahan, & Smart, 1995). Gottfredson and Crouse (1986) concluded in their review of the use of SAT scores that it is a reasonable measure of general

cognitive ability. The SAT, as opposed to other standardized tests, was used in the present study because it is a commonly taken college entrance exam, and information is centrally collected by the Education Testing Service (ETS). Survey respondents were asked to complete an "Approval to release test scores form" which required them to provide their name, social security number, month and year they took the SAT, and their signature. There were 873 approval forms returned. These forms were sent to ETS which researched and returned the scores. Of the 873 release forms sent to ETS, scores for 459 individuals were located by the testing service. Many scores were not retrievable due to insufficient information on the release form (e.g., social security number not correctly listed) or because microfilm archives of ETS did not extend to the test year. The overall SAT score (verbal + math) was used as the measure ( $\alpha=.73$ ), as suggested by Schmidt, Ones and Hunter (1992). If the subject had taken the test more than one time, the average of all scores was used.

Job search. Job search activity was measured with 10 items from the Job Search Behavioral Index (JSBI; Kopelman, Rovenpor, & Millsap, 1992). This measure asks respondents if they had engaged in different search activities over the past year (1=yes, 0=no). Examples of items include: revised resume, gone on a job interview, made telephone inquiries to prospective employers, and initiated contact with an executive search firm. Consistent with previous research using this measure (e.g., Bretz et al., 1994; Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, in press), items were summed to create one job search index ( $\alpha= .84$ ). Blau (1994) distinguished two dimensions of job search—"preparatory" search examines whether desirable alternatives exist, and "active" search attempts to determine the actual availability of those alternatives to the individual. Blau (1994) measured job search similarly to Bretz et al., though his instrument used Likert frequency scales rather than a dichotomous scale, and he included 12 activities rather than 10. The key finding was that two dimensions did indeed emerge, and that they had different antecedents and effects on separation in samples of hospital workers, pharmaceutical managers and graduating students. However, in the present study, the 10-item measure yielded a single search dimension. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of these items demonstrated strong support for a one-factor structure of search ( $\chi^2 [27, N=1,769]=179.57$ ,  $p<.00$  [CFI=.98, GFI=.99]). A high number on this index indicates more search activity. In the interest of simplicity and consistent with previous use of this measure (Bretz et al., 1994; Cavanaugh et al., in press), we treat job search as a unidimensional construct, noting the value of considering the two dimensions of search in future studies.

Perceived organizational success. Perceived organizational success was measured with one item that asked: "How successful would you say your organization has been in reaching its

strategic goals during the last two years?" Subjects were asked to give their responses as a percentage (100% being completely successful).

Compensation. Where possible, managers' compensation levels were obtained directly from the search firm's database. When the archival measures of salary were missing, they were supplemented with self-report data. Due to skewness in the distribution of compensation, the log of total compensation was used, as is customary for this variable (e.g., Kerr & Kren, 1992).

Job satisfaction. A three-item measure from the first survey was used to measure job satisfaction. These three items were: A Gallup Poll measure ("Are you satisfied with your present job?" 1=yes, 0=no), the non-graphic version of the G. M. Faces scale ("How satisfied are you with your job in general?" 1=very dissatisfied, 5=very satisfied), and an item similar to the Fordyce Percent Time Happy Item ("The percent of time I feel satisfied with my present job"). Due to the different response formats of these three satisfaction items, they were standardized and then summed to create one job satisfaction index ( $\alpha=.83$ ).

Job stress. A 16-item scale developed by Judge, Boudreau, and Bretz (1994) was used to measure job stress. Subjects were asked to respond as to the amount of stress caused by several work-related factors, using a 1-5 Likert scale (1=produces no stress, 5=produces a great deal of stress). Examples of items include: the amount of time I spend in meetings, the degree to which politics rather than performance affects organizational decisions, and the lack of job security I have. It has recently been argued that stress actually comprises two dimensions—challenge and hindrance work-related stress—which may help explain Bretz and colleagues' failure to find an effect for stress in their study (see Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, in press). Challenge-related work stress is defined as job demands that "produce a state of challenge ...", while hindrance stress is defined as job demands that "produce excessive or undesirable constraints ... on the individual" (Bhagat, McQuaid, Lindholm, Segovis, 1985, p.203). Researchers have suggested and found that the two types of stress should be examined separately, and that they may have opposite effects on search and separation, with hindrance-related stress leading to withdrawal, and vice versa (e.g., Cavanaugh et al., in press). Therefore, consistent with this literature and recent use of this measure, we constructed a two-factor model of stress. Internal consistency of the challenge and hindrance stress scales was demonstrated ( $\alpha=.87$  &  $.75$ , respectively). Moreover, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) confirmed the two-factor model ( $\chi^2$  [43, N=1,769]=540.71,  $p<.00$  [CFI=.90, NNFI=.87]). A one factor model was also tested, and the fit of this alternative model was poor ( $\chi^2$  [44, N=1,769]=991.59,  $p<.00$  [CFI=.81, NNFI=.77]).

Ambition. Ambition was assessed on the first survey with the question: "How many levels do you want to move up from your present position in your current organization?" (1=happy where I am at, 2=I would like to move up 1 level, 3=I would like to move up 3 levels).

Perceived job alternatives was likewise measured by asking respondents to estimate their present employment alternatives (1=no alternatives, 5=many alternatives).

Job level. In order to assess current job level respondents were asked how many levels below the CEO is their current position.

Education variables. Education level was taken from the database and coded as follows: 1=bachelor's degree, 2=master's degree, 3=doctoral degree. Consistent with Bretz and colleagues (1994), quality of the education was determined by using The Gourman Report (1996) ratings of educational institutions' quality. The search firm's database listed the university of the manager's highest degree. The quality of the institution for the manager's major was used as the measure. A higher rating indicates a higher quality institution for that major.

Job tenure. Managers' job tenure was assessed by a single question on the survey that asked how many years they had been in their current position.

Voluntary separation. Voluntary separation was measured on the follow-up survey with a question that asked whether the respondent was in the same position that they occupied at the time of the original survey. Circumstances surrounding the separation were also assessed. A voluntary separation was coded if the respondent was no longer in the same position nor with the same company and left on their own accord. If the respondent was no longer in the same position but had accepted a position within the same company they were treated as not separating. This variable was coded 1=separated, 0=not separated. One hundred and forty-five (20%) of the respondents had voluntarily separated.

## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations between the variables are shown in Table 1. Although search and separation were positively correlated ( $r=.29$ ,  $p<.01$ ), the moderate relationship suggests that the two constructs should be viewed as distinct processes. This finding is consistent with previous research on search and voluntary turnover (e.g., Bretz et al., 1994).

As shown in the table, three personality dimensions -- agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to experience -- had significant positive bivariate relationships with job search. The other enduring characteristic -- cognitive ability -- also was positively and significantly correlated with search, indicating support for H-1, 3, 4, and 7 in regards to search. Although conscientiousness and extraversion were in the hypothesized direction, their relationship with

search was nonsignificant. None of the enduring personality characteristics nor cognitive ability showed a statistically significant bivariate relation with separation. The lack of a bivariate effect of personality and cognitive ability on separations means there was no relationship to be mediated by the situational factors. Nonetheless, we chose to undertake an exploratory examination of the full mediation model, including situational variables, due to the lack of existing empirical data, and the possibility of suppressor effects.

Table 1

**Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations among Variables**

	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
1 Search	1879	5.36	2.97	----																	
2 Separation	713	.20	.40	.25	----																
3 Perceived org success	1875	62.67	27.36	-.17	-.02	----															
4 Log of total comp.	1751	11.83	.57	-.17	.00	.08	----														
5 Ambition	1884	1.08	.89	.13	.01	.01	-.16	----													
6 Current job level	1886	2.14	2.04	.14	.08	.02	-.25	.43	----												
7 Perceived job altern.	1885	3.91	.83	-.01	.03	.05	.10	.11	.03	----											
8 Job satisfaction	1884	0.00	2.60	-.39	-.26	.25	.10	-.07	-.11	.11	----										
9 Hindrance stress	1884	14.00	4.05	.36	.21	-.17	-.13	.14	.17	-.15	-.52	----									
10 Challenge stress	1884	16.27	4.57	.04	.02	-.04	-.06	.01	.07	.03	-.05	.28	----								
11 Education level	1668	.72	.62	.01	-.01	-.05	.07	-.06	-.04	.00	.01	-.02	.08	----							
12 Quality of education	1613	.244	.223	-.05	.01	-.10	.17	-.04	-.06	.00	-.01	.00	-.02	.23	----						
13 Years of job tenure	1886	3.39	4.36	-.07	-.06	-.01	-.01	-.07	-.04	-.09	-.01	.02	-.02	-.06	.01	----					
14 Agreeableness	1886	43.84	4.93	.04	.04	.02	-.09	.04	.04	.08	.06	-.08	-.05	.01	-.01	-.03	----				
15 Conscientiousness	1886	49.48	4.98	-.04	.02	.03	.05	-.02	-.07	.03	.02	-.03	-.11	-.03	-.04	-.02	.17	----			
16 Extraversion	1886	45.90	5.21	-.01	.06	.10	.05	.10	-.06	.18	.17	-.12	-.10	-.13	-.07	-.01	.30	.28	----		
17 Neuroticism	1886	25.27	6.16	.14	.01	-.09	-.11	.00	.09	-.13	-.26	.32	.28	.07	.02	-.03	-.31	-.35	-.44	----	
18 Openness	1886	41.25	5.54	.06	-.01	.02	.05	.06	-.04	.12	.03	-.02	.00	.13	.06	-.01	.10	-.01	.25	-.09	----
19 Cognitive Ability	1560	22.94	10.29	.11	.12	-.10	.17	-.04	-.03	-.03	-.04	.04	.05	.29	.28	-.15	.10	-.13	-.10	-.02	.21

**Note:** Decimals omitted. Correlations  $\geq |.07|$  are significant at  $p < .01$ ; those  $\geq |.05|$  are significant at  $p < .05$ . Listwise deletion yielded  $N=1,250$  for correlational analysis except for those with Separation ( $N=710$ ; correlation with search, job satisfaction, and hindrance-related stress, at  $p < .01$ ; job level at  $p < .05$ ) and Cognitive Ability (pairwise correlations with conscientiousness, openness, salary, job tenure, and education quality and level at  $p < .01$ ; search, agreeableness, extraversion, and organization success at  $p < .05$ )

### Enduring Traits and Situational Factors

The model shown in Figure 1 hypothesizes that the relationship between personality and cognitive ability and job search may be partly mediated by situational factors. Having established a relationship between three personality dimensions as well as cognitive ability and job search, we next investigated the relationships between these enduring traits and the situational factors, through a multivariate regression analysis. The vector of situational factors was treated as dependent variables and the vector of enduring traits as covariates. Results showed that the personality dimensions and cognitive ability had a significant relationship with the vector of situational factors as a block ( $p < .01$ ). At the individual variable level, agreeableness associated with salary (negatively) and job level (positively); conscientiousness with job satisfaction (negatively) and hindrance-related stress (positively); extraversion with perceived organizational success, job satisfaction, ambition, and perceived job alternatives (all positively), and education (negatively); neuroticism with salary, perceived organizational success, job satisfaction, and perceived job alternatives (all negatively) and with stress (positively); and openness with salary, perceived job alternatives, and education (all positively). Cognitive ability was negatively related to perceived organizational success, and job tenure and positively related to salary and education.

Having identified a significant bivariate relationship between three personality dimensions, as well as cognitive ability, and search, the finding that personality dimensions and cognitive ability also related to situational factors suggests that the relationship may be partially or fully mediated by situational factors. We next investigated this mediation possibility.

### Cognitive Ability

As shown in the correlation matrix, there was a significant positive relationship between cognitive ability and search ( $r = .11$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine the incremental variance explained by cognitive ability over and above that of situational factors (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The situational factors were entered first, as a block, followed by cognitive ability. The results are shown in Table 2. Cognitive ability significantly improved the model ( $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $p < .01$ ), remaining a significant positive predictor ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .05$ ) of search after controlling for the vector of situational variables suggesting a direct effect. It was not possible to investigate the relation between cognitive ability and separation because of limited sample. There were only 85 executives whose follow-up survey and SAT scores were both available. Of these, only 17 had voluntarily separated from their organization.



**Table 2**  
**Ordinary Least Squares Results of Job Search Regressed on Cognitive Ability and Situational Variables**

	B	SE	Beta	t
Cognitive Ability	.002	.00	.11	2.24*
Perceived org success	-.01	.01	-.08	-1.66
Total compensation (ln)	-.42	.25	-.08	-1.70
Ambition	.27	.16	.09	1.70
Current job level	-.04	.11	-.02	-.43
Perceived job alternatives	.11	.16	.03	.69
Job satisfaction	-.42	.06	-.36	-6.52**
Hindrance stress	.12	.04	.16	2.83**
Challenge stress	-.02	.03	-.04	-.76
Years of job tenure	-.07	.05	-.06	-1.38
Education quality	.00	.00	-.05	-1.07
Education level	.01	.23	.00	.05
Constant	7.19	3.11		2.32*
Multiple R	.52			
R <sup>2</sup>	.27			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.24			

Note: N=391 \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01

### Personality

From Table 1, recall that there were significant and positive bivariate relationships between agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to experience with job search, while bivariate correlations for conscientiousness and extraversion were nonsignificant. To test the effect of the block of personality dimensions, we regressed search on the five dimensions. The results are shown in the left portion of Table 3, and revealed the same pattern as seen in the bivariate analysis.

**Table 3**  
Ordinary Least Squares Results of Job Search Regressed on  
Personality and Situational Variables

	Personality Variables Only				Personality and Situational			
	B	SE	Beta	t	B	SE	Beta	t
Agreeableness	.06	.02	.10	4.06**	.03	.02	.05	2.11*
Conscientiousness	.00	.02	.00	-.06	-.03	.02	-.04	-1.74
Extraversion	.01	.02	.01	.53	.03	.02	.06	2.00*
Neuroticism	.08	.01	.16	6.07**	.01	.01	.03	.98
Openness	.04	.01	.07	3.01**	.03	.01	.06	2.38*
Perceived org success					-.01	.00	-.07	-2.91**
Total compensation (ln)					-.52	.13	-.10	-4.06**
Ambition					.11	.09	.03	1.27
Current job level					.06	.04	.04	1.48
Perceived job alternatives					.15	.08	.04	1.82
Job satisfaction					-.30	.03	-.27	-9.71**
Hindrance stress					.15	.02	.21	7.25**
Challenge stress					-.04	.02	-.05	2.21*
Years of job tenure					-.04	.02	-.07	-2.84**
Education quality					.00	.00	-.05	-1.98*
Education level					.12	.11	.03	1.07
Constant	-1.12	1.28		-.88	6.60	2.06		3.20**
Multiple R	.17				.48			
R <sup>2</sup>	.03				.23			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.03				.22			

Note: N=1,879 & 1,538; \*p<.05; \*\*p<.01

As with cognitive ability, hierarchical regression analysis, was used to determine the incremental variance in search explained by personality. The vector of situational factors was entered first, followed by the vector of all five personality dimensions. Strictly defined, the lack of a significant effect of conscientiousness and extraversion on job search means there is no effect to be mediated. However, we chose to retain all five personality dimensions, rather than only the three significant dimensions, due to significant relationships between all five personality dimensions and the vector of situational variables, as well as the general lack of prior empirical evidence regarding personality and job search. The mediation findings for the three personality dimensions with significant effects on job search were the same whether all five personality dimensions, or only the three significant dimensions, were included in the hierarchical regression. The results are shown in the right-hand portion of Table 3. The situational variables were again entered on the first step, and the five personality factors were entered on the second step. The block of personality dimensions significantly contributed to explaining the variance in search ( $\Delta R^2=.01$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Specifically, agreeableness and openness to experience were positive predictors of search ( $\beta=.05$ ,  $p<.05$ ;  $\beta=.06$ ,  $p<.05$ , respectively). With the inclusion of the

situational variables, neuroticism became nonsignificant, lending partial support to Hypothesis 8 regarding mediation. Thus, it appears that the significant effects of agreeableness and openness to experience were only partially mediated by situational variables, while the significant effect of neuroticism is fully mediated by its effect on situational factors. Moreover, extraversion became a significant predictor of search ( $\beta=.06, p<.05$ ) when the situational variables were included in the model, indicating a suppressor effect (discussed below).

As previously noted, none of the bivariate relationships between personality dimensions and separation were significant. We also tested the relationship between the block of personality items and separation, with a logistic regression of separation on the vector of five personality dimensions. The results are shown in the left portion of Table 4. The personality variables as a block were not significantly related to separation, and only extraversion approached significance ( $\beta=.04, p<.10$ ). Thus, no effect of personality on separation was revealed.

**Table 4**  
**Logistic Regression Results of Separation Regressed on Personality and Situational Variables**

	Personality Variables Only		Personality and Situational	
	Maximum likelihood estimate	SE	Maximum likelihood estimate	SE
Agreeableness	.01	.02	.01	.03
Conscientiousness	.01	.02	.00	.02
Extraversion	.04	.02	.06*	.03
Neuroticism	.02	.02	-.01	.02
Openness	-.01	.02	-.01	.02
Perceived org success			.01	.00
Total compensation (ln)			.41	.27
Ambition			-.16	.14
Current job level			.07	.05
Perceived job alternatives			.19	.14
Job satisfaction			-.29**	.05
Hindrance stress			.06	.04
Challenge stress			-.02	.03
Years of job tenure			-.07	.04
Education quality			.00	.00
Education level			-.02	.19
Constant	-4.11*	1.81	-10.20*	4.01
Model Chi-square	4.72 (5 df)		72.75** (16 df)	
-2 log likelihood	715.46		541.63	
Goodness of fit	715.28		569.33	

Note: N=713 & 595; \* $p<.05$ ; \*\* $p<.01$

Strictly defined, this means there can be no mediation, as there is no overall relationship to mediate. However, as mentioned above, empirical data on the relationship between personality and separation is rare. Moreover, the suppressor effects for extraversion with respect to search discussed above suggested it might be fruitful to explore whether such effects also existed for extraversion with respect to separation. Thus, we chose to investigate the relationship between the personality traits and separation using logistic regression analysis with the inclusion of the situational variables.

The results with the inclusion of the situational variables are shown in the right-hand side of Table 4. The overall model was significant ( $\chi^2$  with 11 df = 83.50,  $p < .01$ ), and the block of personality factors approached significance (block  $\chi^2$  with 5 df = 9.25,  $p < .10$ ). Extraversion was the only significant personality factor ( $\beta = .06$ ,  $p < .05$ ), supporting H-6 with regard to separation. To complete the exploration of search as a mediator, we investigated a model containing personality, situational variables, and search as predictors of separation. When search was included in the analysis, the model improved (block  $\chi^2$  with 1 df = 19.02,  $p < .01$ ) and search positively predicted separation ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Extraversion remained a significant positive predictor with search in the model, indicating that extraversion has a direct positive effect on separation, over and above the effects of both situational variables and search. Thus, a similar suppression effect for extraversion seems to operate with regard to separation and search.

## Discussion

This study proposed to increase our understanding of the job search and separation process by investigating the effects of enduring traits using a sample of employed managers. We found that the addition of personality and cognitive ability significantly enhanced the explained variance in search and separation over commonly investigated situational-specific variables.

### Cognitive Ability

We provided what appears to be one of the first examinations of the role of cognitive ability on the search process. Results suggest that cognitive ability had a significant direct effect on search, and explained a significant increment in search, over and above situational variables. Those higher in cognitive ability searched more intensively, which is consistent with the notion that this qualification enhances the perceived benefits of search, and not supportive of the idea that those high in cognitive ability search less due to their marketability. It was also interesting to find that cognitive ability remained a significant predictor even in the presence of education level and education quality. One might have suspected that education would mediate the effects of

cognitive ability, especially in view of the fact that we used SAT scores as our proxy for cognitive ability, and such scores traditionally are key determinants of the caliber of university accepting the candidate. Education and education quality proved non-significant in predicting search and separation both here and in the Bretz et al. (1994) study. It may be that among candidates with equal levels of more visible human capital (e.g., education, job tenure, age), those with higher cognitive ability search more in an effort to communicate their higher qualifications to the market. Intelligence testing of executives is rare, so it seems likely that such individuals may well find that to reap returns on their cognitive ability they must “display” it through search activities (e.g., interviews).

The finding that cognitive ability positively predicts search even after accounting for educational differences suggests that organizations that emphasize cognitive ability in their staffing and promotion decisions may also be creating a work force that will more actively search. Although we have no data on the relationship between cognitive ability and turnover, if the effect on enhancing search also enhances the probability of leaving, then there is a tradeoff between cognitive ability qualifications and employee retention. Though speculative, our findings also suggest that managers high in cognitive ability may perceive a need to search more actively so that their relatively “hidden” abilities are recognized. Thus, organizations might do well to clearly communicate to such managers that they are highly valued, and that they have good opportunities within the organization.

### Personality

The results for personality provide some of the most intriguing and perplexing findings of the study. On the one hand, the addition of personality variables to the array of situational variables significantly enhanced the predictive ability for both search and separation. On the other hand, the individual personality elements exhibited a somewhat unexpected pattern. Specifically, conscientiousness was not a significant predictor of either search or separation, despite prior evidence suggesting that it is related to turnover. Most prior studies have focused on non-managerial samples, so it may be possible that once people progress to managerial levels these effects have already been reflected in the sample, leaving little variance to predict. Further, the effect of neuroticism on search appears to be totally mediated by situational-specific variables. Perhaps neurotic individuals are not predisposed to search more, but may place themselves in situations of anxiety, failure, and disappointment, from which motivation to search is a likely outcome. Extraversion had a non-significant effect on search and separation, but became significant in the presence of the situational variables, suggesting a suppressor effect. As shown in the correlation matrix, extraversion shows a positive relation with perceived

organizational success and job satisfaction and a negative relationship with hindrance stress. All three of these situational variables, however, were significantly related to search in the opposite direction. There is a similar effect on separation. Thus by controlling for these variables, the “unwanted” variance is removed (suppressed), enhancing the relation between extraversion and search (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). More extraverted individuals appear to be predisposed to search and separate more, but also tend to experience more positive work outcomes which offset the general predisposition.

It was intriguing to note that three personality dimensions – agreeableness, extraversion, and openness – had significant direct effects on job search even after accounting for their indirect effects through situational factors. To the extent that agreeableness reflects the tendency to self-monitor (Jenkins, 1993), this lends support to the theory that such individuals form relationships more pragmatically. Or, perhaps agreeable managers, when dissatisfied, would rather quietly leave an organization rather than complain in order to improve their job. It also seems logical that openness to experience would positively influence the tendency to search, and this suggests that further research into this element of personality may be warranted. The findings for extraversion and separation may reflect human capital. Among equally motivated and qualified individuals, it may be that extraversion is a valued human capital attribute for the managerial positions studied here. Elements of extraversion are similar to elements often touted as valuable for leaders and communicators. Further research into this possibility is warranted.

Though conscientiousness and neuroticism have received the bulk of attention in prior research, our results suggest that several relatively unaddressed facets of the “Big Five” may associate with search among managers. Although it is not uncommon for organizations to incorporate personality dimensions into staffing decisions, our results suggest that understanding the personality profiles of executives on agreeableness, openness, and extraversion may provide new insights into the propensity to search and separate, beyond the more commonly-examined situational factors and personality dimensions.

#### Situational Variables

Although this study’s primary purpose was investigating the indirect (through situational factors) and direct influence of enduring characteristics on employee search and separation, the findings for the situational variables are notable. The results provided strong support for the importance of salary, job satisfaction, and perceived organizational success as negative predictors of job search. Stress and education quality related to job search in the present study, though they have not been generally upheld in previous research (e.g., Bretz et al., 1994). This

may reflect differences in our operationalization of these variables. Consistent with recent research and theory on work-related stress (e.g., Bhagat et al., 1985; Cavanaugh et al., in press), we treated stress as two-dimensional. Results of CFA not only provided support for this approach, the two dimensions each showed a significant relationship with search but in opposite directions. Further, we operationalized education quality as the quality of the university (where he/she received the highest degree) for the manager's specific major. Both approaches may have captured elements of these constructs that were not present in prior research.

#### Limitations and Conclusion

As is common with survey research, a prominent concern is common method bias. These data were collected from an existing database and two mail surveys, and the survey data was verified archivally where possible. Still, the majority of these variables were generated from self-reports. Future research employing other data-gathering methods may well improve on this aspect of the study. This survey, like others, also used perceptions of variables such as job alternatives and organizational success. Future research using actual measures of organizational performance, career progression, and career potential might enhance the findings reported here.

We used an abbreviated measure of job satisfaction. Our findings were consistent with prior research, suggesting that this measure behaved appropriately, but future research using more extensive satisfaction measures, including different work facets, might be illuminating. We also chose to retain the unidimensional aspects of some constructs such as conscientiousness and job search, to maximize fidelity with prior research. However, future research might fruitfully split conscientiousness into its "achievement" and "dependability" components, and "preparatory" and "active" job search might be examined separately. Blau (1993, 1994) found a two-dimensional structure for search, while our data yielded a single factor. This may be a function of differences between samples—high-level managers studied here versus lower-level professionals in Blau's study. These questions were beyond the scope of this study, but await future research.

In conclusion, his study provided a successful investigation of elements of enduring characteristics and the effects over situational factors, offering fruitful future research possibilities. It provides new empirical information about job search among managers, a construct and a sample that has received relatively little attention to date.

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