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JOB SEARCH BEHAVIOR OF EMPLOYED MANAGERS

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Job search typically has been thought of as an antecedent to voluntary turnover or job choice. This study extends existing literature by proposing a model of the job search process and examining the search behavior of 1,388 employed managers. Managers were surveyed about their job search and voluntary turnover activities. Survey data were matched with job, organizational, and personal information contained in the data base of a large executive search firm. Results suggest that job satisfaction, compensation, and perceptions of organizational success were negatively related to job search, while desire for more work-family balance and ambition exhibited positive relations with search. Perceptions of greener pastures did not have much effect on job search among this group. Results also indicated that although some job search activity does facilitate turnover, a considerable amount of search does not lead to turnover. Thus, it appears that search serves many purposes.

Job search has played an important role in the theoretical development and empirical examination of job choice and voluntary turnover. Considerable research attention has been dedicated to developing theoretical models of the job choice process and to accumulating empirical data about how people generate alternatives and make job choices (Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987; Soelberg, 1967; Vroom, 1964). Job choice models, however, typically presume that the decision to search already has been made and attempt to delineate an "optimal stopping point," or the point at which search is discontinued and a job choice made (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Schwab et al., 1987). This focus has produced valuable insights regarding the determinants of job choices but has not directly contributed to our understanding of the search behaviors that precede the choices.

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Likewise, research on voluntary turnover traditionally has embedded job search intentions within the construct of withdrawal cognitions, suggesting that job search behavior results from the same factors that lead to turnover (Hom, Caranikas-Walker, Prussia, & Griffeth, 1992). However, some research reveals that job search is not simply a precursor to turnover and that at times the two processes may be inversely related (Hom & Griffeth, 1991). Hom et al. (1992) demonstrated that the temporal relation between intention to search and intention to quit was ambiguous and that turnover intentions explained only about half the variance in search intentions. Moreover, the best-fitting structural equation model they examined contained a nonsignificant link between search intention and actual turnover (Hom et al., 1992; Hom, Griffeth, & Sellaro, 1984).

Thus, job search, job choice, and voluntary turnover appear to be related but distinct concepts, and although choice and turnover have received considerable research attention, job search has not been as thoroughly studied. The current study extends the existing literature by proposing a model of the job search process and examining job search behavior of employed managers. We began this study with the presumption that employed managers engage in job search for a variety of reasons, and that this search behavior affects individuals and organizations even when it does not result in job choice or turnover.

For example, people engage in job search to establish networks of influential contacts in their industry or niche (Lucht, 1991). Job search also is used as a means of leveraging improved employment conditions in one's current organization (Lazear, 1986). In fact, internal promotion policies make this strategy more likely because salaries typically are determined by job evaluation structures which capture internal relations between jobs, rather than by prevailing market rates for the abilities incumbents possess (Segal, 1986). Therefore, signaling that one is sought after at "market rate" might be used to increase one's salary. Thus, those without intentions to leave the organization, or to actively choose among other alternatives, may engage in job search to *convince others* that the market values their contributions at a level that justifies better employment arrangements. Alternatively, consistent with equity theory, job search may *convince oneself* that the current position (and associated rewards) are attractive relative to existing alternatives (e.g., Blau, 1964). This would explain the positive relation between search and retention uncovered by Hom and Griffeth (1991).

Thus, job search is an important research topic for several reasons. First, it remains an empirical question whether the correlates of job search and turnover are similar or distinct. Moreover, although the job choice literature has been informative regarding the search activity of

the unemployed (Devine & Kiefer, 1991; Schwab et al., 1987), we know much less about how employed individuals search for alternatives, or the personal and organizational implications that follow. This study extends the current job choice and voluntary turnover literatures and examines these questions by proposing and testing a model which directly positions job search behavior of employed managers as a dependent variable of interest.

Second, search behavior, whether it results in turnover or not, is costly because it absorbs time and energy that might be put to other uses (March & Simon, 1958) and may engender psychological processes that induce withdrawal behavior and reduce commitment to the current job and organization (Locke, 1976). These costs might be especially relevant at higher organizational levels because the consequences of nonperformance in the upper echelons of organizations are likely to be greater than at lower organizational levels (Hunter, Schmidt, & Judiesch, 1990). Moreover, little currently is known about the search behaviors of managers and executives, and what is known is based on small samples from single organizations (e.g., Gaertner & Nollen, 1992). Thus, better understanding search and turnover behavior among managers and executives across organizations would seem to have practical implications for virtually any organization.

Model Development

Early attempts to understand the job search process drew heavily from neoclassical economics. These models imposed constraints of perfectly competitive environments where the searcher had full knowledge of alternatives and potential outcomes and presumed that job search reflected attempts to maximize utility (Devine & Kiefer, 1991; Lippman & McCall, 1979). This was problematic on both conceptual and empirical grounds. Conceptually, if the environment permitted full knowledge of all alternatives, it would not be necessary to expend effort and time to acquire information about labor market alternatives. Empirically, research has demonstrated that labor markets typically do not approach ideals of perfect competition and that people are largely unaware of employment alternatives (Schwab et al., 1987; Segal, 1986).

More recent theories of job search have relaxed the rationality assumption by recognizing that job search is costly and that people must exert effort to exchange market information with potential employers (Kormendi, 1979; March & Simon, 1958). However, the focus of this literature has been on what outcomes satisfy implicit utility constraints (what people search for), not on the search behavior itself (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). That is, recent models of "job search" are really models

of "choice" because they have focused on the *evaluation* of alternatives, not the *generation* of alternatives (Schwab et al., 1987).

The literature examining the antecedents and consequences of search intensity appears to be the most focused examination of actual job search behaviors. Search intensity has been measured using indices such as number of employers contacted, number of information sources used, or hours per week spent searching (Schwab et al., 1987). This literature has provided considerable insight about job search behavior under specific conditions. For example, it appears that financial need leads to higher levels of search intensity (see Schwab et al., 1987, for a review). Other evidence suggests that self-esteem also is positively related to search intensity (Ellis & Taylor, 1983) and that people are more likely to search if their expectancy of finding an acceptable job is high (Harrell & Stahl, 1986; Rynes & Lawler, 1983). Research also has shown that search intensity is positively related to shorter unemployment durations (Barron & Gilly, 1979; Barron & Mellow, 1981; Dyer, 1973; Kanfer & Hulin, 1985; Sheppard & Belitsky, 1966). Two potential limitations of this literature, however, are that it has presumed that the purpose of search is simply to inform choice, and it has relied on unemployed samples where financial need may be more salient than in employed samples. Thus, non-choice motives for engaging in search may have been obscured (Devine & Kiefer, 1991; Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The question of how and why employed managers search has remained unexamined.

Therefore, job search is defined here as the specific behaviors through which effort and time are expended to acquire information about labor market alternatives, irrespective of the motives for, or consequences of, the information gathering activity (Blau, 1993; Schwab et al., 1987). The research model (Figure 1) proposes that among employed managers, work-related, individual, and environmental factors influence the motivation to engage in job search by affecting the perceived costs and benefits of doing so and that opportunity (as expressed by human capital acquisitions) moderates the relation between search and separation. The search construct reflects actual search activity. Although previous research has examined search and separation intentions (Hom et al., 1992), search activity has been studied much less frequently. Yet, search activity is important because it is conceptually closer to many of the withdrawal behaviors that search presumably relates to, and because, among managers it can be a highly visible activity that may prompt an organizational response.

Motivation to search reflects two general processes endogenous to both the economic and the psychological perspectives of job choice and turnover. First, there is evidence of a "push" process, which reflects

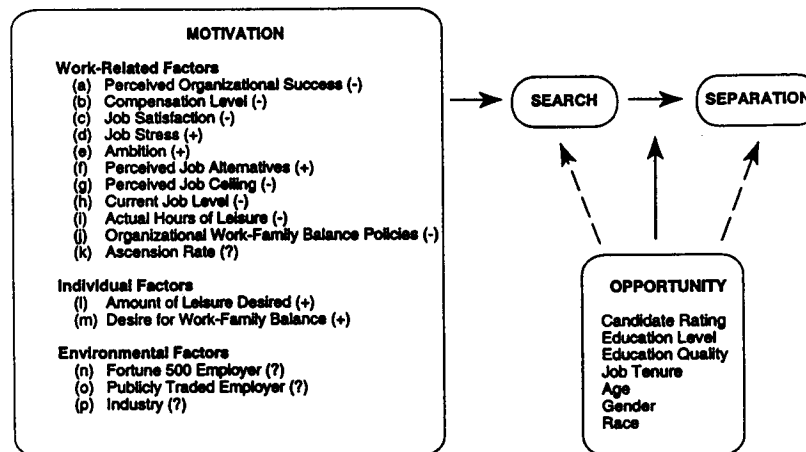


Figure 1: A Model of Job Search Among Employed Managers.

the degree to which current work or life situations cause sufficient discomfort or dissatisfaction to warrant generation and evaluation of alternatives (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Prior theory and research suggest relations between withdrawal behavior and work-related variables such as perceptions of the organization, compensation level, job satisfaction, job stress, and perceived internal promotional opportunities (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). Unacceptable levels of these variables likely “push” individuals to consider alternatives because the benefits of doing so presumably offset the costs of searching.

Therefore, the model hypothesizes that (a) *perceived organizational success*, (b) *compensation level*, and (c) *job satisfaction* will be negatively related to search behavior, whereas (d) *job stress* will be positively related to search. The effect of perceived internal opportunities likely depends on a number of factors, including one’s desire for promotions and perceptions of their availability. Therefore the model hypothesizes that (e) *ambition* and (f) *perceived job alternatives* will be positively related to search but that (g) *perceived job ceiling* will be negatively related to search. Moreover, because the level of the job currently occupied affects the degree of upward mobility possible, the model hypothesizes that (h) *current job level* will be negatively related to search.

In addition, individual preferences for allocating time between work and non-work activities also may affect the degree to which the current

work relationship is desirable, and thus the perceived costs and benefits of searching. Classical labor economic theory suggests an optimal allocation of time between work and leisure such that the marginal utility of leisure divided by the marginal utility of income equals the wage rate (Burdett, 1979). For the unemployed, excess leisure is converted into job search activity to increase the probability of finding a job that offers sufficient income to maximize expected utility of lifetime consumption (Danforth, 1979; Devine & Kiefer, 1991). For the employed, however, *insufficient* leisure may prompt search. That is, people are assumed to work only to the point where the value of leisure becomes greater than the income earned. Therefore, if the desire for leisure exceeds the amount of leisure available, one might be motivated to search for alternatives that permit more desirable allocation of time. Extending this concept to include desire for work-family balance suggests that people also will be more likely to search for alternatives if they desire more work-family balance than is possible under the current arrangement (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Therefore, the model hypothesizes that (i) *actual hours of leisure* and (j) *organizational work-family policies* will be negatively related to search but that (l) *amount of leisure desired* and (m) *desire for work-family balance* will be positively related to search.

However, search also can be motivated by a “pull” process which reflects the costs or difficulties of searching in relation to the probability of finding a new position. From this perspective, the level of search activity will be positively related to the income an individual believes his/her knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) can command in the market (Lippman & McCall, 1979) and inversely related to the perceived costs of the search (Kormendi, 1979). For employed individuals search costs may be low because the loss in utility from not securing an acceptable alternative is offset by the benefits of the current position (Hall, Lippman, & McCall, 1979). The labor economic literature suggests that the costs of searching may vary with personal factors, such as an individual’s network of contacts or the degree to which the individual’s visibility is likely to position one as a target of external recruitment activities (Devine & Kiefer, 1991). Thus, variables such as the industry in which an individual works, public trading of the employing organization’s stock, and the manager’s historical record of success may be relevant.

The rate of upward mobility may suppress “push” effects on search by enhancing perceptions of internal opportunities. Conversely, rapid upward mobility may indicate a record of accomplishments that makes one a target of external recruiting activities and thus generate strong “pull” effects from the market. Similarly, internal opportunities may be greater in larger and more visible organizations, thus decreasing push effects, but at the same time increasing pull effects if other employers find

managers from large and visible organizations more attractive. Therefore, the model hypothesizes that (k) *ascension rate*, (n) *Fortune 500 employer*, (o) *publicly traded employer*, and (p) *industry* will affect search but does not specify the direction of their influence.

We propose (see Figure 1) that motivation to search reflects the accumulated work experiences of the manager in his/her current job and organization, as well as the perceived relative attractiveness of alternatives and the costs and benefits of searching. Much previous research has confirmed that variables such as job satisfaction, job stress, perceived organizational attractiveness, and perceived alternative opportunities are related to separation decisions and suggests that such variables operate at least in part by motivating intentions to search for alternative opportunities (Hom et al., 1992; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Mobley et al., 1979). There is less research on the relation between search intentions and search activity (Kopelman, Rovenpor, & Millsap, 1992), but it seems plausible to propose a positive relation between variables that motivate search intentions and the search behavior itself. On these bases we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: The overall relation between the vector of motivation variables and search will be significant, with the influence of each variable in the direction specified in Figure 1.

Kopelman et al. (1992) provide evidence that search activity and separations are closely related, such that those who search more intensively are more likely to separate. Our model distinguishes between motivational influences and search behavior as they relate to separation. Little previous research has directly compared the effects of these two variables. Instead, previous research has relied on self-reported "search intentions" to reflect the search process that may mediate the relation between motivation and separation. We do not, however, expect search behavior to completely mediate the relation between motivation and separation because some separation does occur without search (Lee & Mitchell, 1994), and search is not always used to inform choice (Lazear, 1986). Rather, following Kopelman et al. (1992), we expect that the relation between search and separation will be stronger than the direct relation between motivation and separation.

Similarly, we expect that the relation between motivation and search will be stronger than the relation between search and separation. Search activity, while certainly not without cost, requires fewer resources and causes less disruption than does separation. Indeed, it seems quite likely that many managers in this sample may have developed "habits" of search behavior, such that they search quite frequently, even when they have little intention of actually leaving their organization (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Such search activity is likely to be driven by both the

“push” factors of dissatisfaction with the present situation, but perhaps even more by the “pull” factors that reflect the ease with which search activity can be undertaken, or the degree to which alternative opportunities are likely to become apparent through search. Thus, search activity is seen as more than a precursor of separation. We propose that search may be an ongoing process that is determined as much by the ease with which information can be obtained as it is by the motivation to actually leave. Managers may find information about their alternative opportunities useful even when they have no intention of leaving. One obvious use for such information is to demonstrate their marketability, as a way to enhance their position in their present organization.

On these bases we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: The relation between search and separation will be positive and significant, even controlling for possible direct effects of the motivation variables.

Hypothesis 3: The relation between search and motivation will be stronger than the relation between search and separation.

In our model, opportunity reflects the individual’s marketability and capacity to actually leave the current organization. Human capital and labor market theories (e.g., Becker, 1965; March & Simon, 1958) suggest that some individuals will be more marketable than others, based on differences in acquired human capital. That is, those with more human capital will have more alternative employment opportunities than others. While separation can occur even in the absence of alternative employment opportunities (e.g., Lee & Mitchell, 1994), separations are undoubtedly influenced by the presence of alternatives.

The role of opportunity remains ambiguous in existing job choice and turnover models. An inverse relation between opportunity and search can be justified on the premise that those with greater marketability will require less search behavior, either to locate suitable alternatives, or to satisfy their information needs. Simply put, more qualified individuals may have to search less to reveal their positioning in the market. Search costs are lower for such individuals because their qualifications allow information acquisition with less exertion (Lippman & McCall, 1979).

A positive relation between opportunity and separation also is possible. Recently, Lee and Mitchell (1994) proposed that separations may occur without the need for an individual to engage in extensive deliberations or search activity. A “shock to the system” may be enough to trigger sufficient motivation to leave, especially when the individual has a readily available script that positions separation as a feasible and appropriate reaction (e.g., a small organization merges with a very large

organization, the individual has established strong values against working for large organizations, and the individual has successfully left other organizations under the same circumstances). Under these conditions, individuals with more human capital are likely to have more attractive alternatives and may separate with little or no search involved.

Labor market search theories (e.g., Becker, 1965; Doeringer & Piore, 1970; Lippman & McCall, 1979) suggest that the more relevant human capital one possesses, the more attractive one is to employers. Therefore, organizations with employment opportunities have a greater incentive to seek out prospective employees who are well qualified than those who are not as well qualified. In the same sense that individual search activity may be modeled by a cost-benefit comparison (Lippman & McCall, 1979), so may employers' communication activity. Therefore, individuals with greater human capital are more likely to receive information about alternatives and thus are more likely to separate even with limited search activity.

Finally, it also is possible that opportunity moderates the relation between search and separation. This effect is consistent with most traditional turnover models (Hom et al., 1992), as well as with theories of human capital acquisition (Lee & Mitchell, 1994). Individuals with greater opportunities are more likely to discover attractive alternatives through their search and thus are more likely to separate at a given level of search activity. Therefore, we examined three hypotheses regarding the effects of opportunity:

Hypothesis 4: Opportunity (as expressed by higher levels of human capital) will be significantly negatively related to job search.

Hypothesis 5: Opportunity (as expressed by higher levels of human capital) will be significantly positively related to separation.

Hypothesis 6: Opportunity (as expressed by higher levels of human capital) will moderate the relation between job search and separation, such that among managers with higher levels of human capital, additional search will be associated with greater increases in the probability of separating.

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 3,581 (a 50% random sample) of the managers contained in the data base of Paul Ray Berndtson, the fifth largest executive search firm in the United States. Ninety-seven percent of the sample were white, 93% were male, and 91% were married. Forty-nine percent

had one or more children. Average age of the managers was 45.5 years. Virtually all members of the sample were U.S. citizens (95%) employed in the U.S. at the time of the study (98%). The average manager worked 56 hours per week, spent 5 hours per week caring for dependents, and devoted 13 hours per week to leisure activities. Total compensation averaged \$134,746 per year. The average manager had spent 3 years in his/her current position and occupied a job two levels below that of the CEO. On average, managers had earned 6.4 promotions in their career, and their last promotion occurred 3.2 years ago. Forty-five percent possessed undergraduate degrees, 46% had earned master's degrees, and 9% had doctorates.

This search firm operates on a retainer basis, its clients being the companies that are searching for employees, not the managers themselves. Thus, the firm does not accept applications or resumes from individuals searching for positions. Rather, it develops lists of potential candidates only in direct response to a client's search assignment for a specific position. The identification process includes identifying top corporate officers through publicly filed information such as 10-K reports, proxy materials, and so forth. This is supplemented by examining industry publications, directories, and professional association mailing lists (e.g., the Young Presidents' Association). In some cases, this is further supplemented through direct calls to companies, requesting information on the names of their top managers. Calls to managers already in the data base are sometimes used to identify other promising prospects. This search firm serves clients of all sizes, in all industries and regions in the U.S. In recent years, the most frequent industry categories for search requests have been financial services (20%) and health care (20%). The data base, however, contains a more general sample than these two areas suggest because it has been developed over many years in response to searches across industries. To ensure that the data base remains current, the firm sends requests for address changes twice per year. When requests are returned as undeliverable, the individual is deleted from the file. When requests are returned with a new address, the data base is updated. Virtually all of the managers in the data base are either currently employed or were employed within the last year.

The sample appears to lie somewhere between the "average" U.S. manager and the "corporate elite." Respondents are somewhat different from U.S. Department of Labor data reported for all executive, administrative, and managerial positions and from *Business Week's* characterization of the corporate elite in the 1,000 most valuable companies. Department of Labor data suggest that the population of managers is 90% white, 59% male, and earns an average annual salary of \$46,400

(U.S. Department of Labor, 1993). In contrast, *Business Week's* corporate elite is, on average, 56.3 years old and 98% male with an average annual salary over \$878,000 (*Business Week*, 1992). It appears, therefore, that our sample consists of more males and earns considerably more than the representative population of managers would suggest. It also appears that the sample is younger and earns considerably less than the corporate elite.

Procedure

In July 1992 subjects received a questionnaire assessing the degree to which they had engaged in job search behaviors over the last year, historical career information, and work perceptions and attitudes. A cover letter from the chief executive officer of the search firm and a stamped return envelope addressed to the authors accompanied each survey. Each survey contained a control number so that returned surveys could be matched with information contained in the search firm's data base. Participants were informed that their responses would be matched with the data in the company's data base but that all responses were strictly confidential. Of the surveys that were mailed, 39% (1,388) were completed and returned. This response rate compares favorably with other mail survey research (Dillman, 1978). We specified a MANOVA model which simultaneously considered the interrelated effects of all variables in order to determine if respondents were representative of the larger sample. In no case did any variable in the search firm's data base (marital status, number of children, evaluation of quality, citizenship, age, employer size defined in terms of sales volume or number of employees, total compensation, international work experience, job tenure, or education) differ significantly at the .05 level between respondents and non-respondents. Thus, it appears that our sample was representative of the larger population.

In October of 1993, a follow-up survey was sent to all individuals who had responded to the original questionnaire. Each survey contained a control number so that it could be matched to previous responses and data base information. Of the 1,388 follow-up surveys sent, 660 (48%) were completed and returned. The second survey assessed whether the respondent had changed jobs since the last survey, the circumstances surrounding the job change, relative status of current and past positions, and level of job satisfaction.

Measures

Job search activity. Job search was measured using the Job Search Behavioral Index (JSBI; Kopelman et al., 1992). The JSBI asks respondents to indicate (yes or no) whether they had engaged in 10 different job search activities over the past year, specifically whether the individual had read a book about getting a new job; revised his/her resume; read position listings in professional journals or newspapers; talked to colleagues, friends, or relatives about getting a new job; sent copies of resumes to prospective employers; initiated contact with an executive search firm; gone to a job interview; or made telephone inquiries to prospective employers. We modified some of the language to be consistent with the higher level jobs sought by our sample. For example, we changed, "read the classified/help wanted advertisements in the newspaper," to, "read the position listings in professional journals or newspapers." One item from the original JSBI (actively sought a transfer to another job within the organization) was eliminated from our scale because seeking an internal transfer seemed conceptually different from external search. Additionally, in the reliability analysis this variable demonstrated a negative item-total correlation. Thus, for conceptual and empirical reasons, it was deleted from the scale. The internal consistency estimate (K-R 20) for the remaining 9 dichotomous items was .86.

Motivation variables. *Perceived organizational success* was assessed by a question that asked, "How successful would you say your organization has been in reaching its strategic goals during the last two years?" Respondents were asked to give a percentage, with 0% indicating that the organization had had no success and 100% indicating complete success in meeting its goals. Because perceptions motivate behavior, regardless of their accuracy, perceptions of organizational success are conceptually better indicators of motivation to search than are actual measures of organizational success. Moreover, the desire to preserve confidentiality prevented the search firm from releasing company names, which might have facilitated the use of more objective measures.

Compensation level was obtained from the search firm's data base. Other variables were derived from questions on the first survey. *Job satisfaction* was measured with a composite of 3 single-item measures that were placed in different parts of the first survey. These included the Gallup Poll measure of job satisfaction (where respondents indicate whether they are satisfied with their job by responding "Yes" or "No"), the nongraphic version of the G. M. Faces Scale, and an adapted version of the Fordyce Percent Time Happy Item, where the individual reported the percentage of time they are satisfied with their job on average. These items all have demonstrated favorable psychometric properties relative

to faceted measures of job satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Judge & Hulin, 1993; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983). Because the 3 items were measured on different scales, they were standardized (using *Z*-scores) prior to computation of the composite measure. The coefficient alpha internal consistency estimate for this 3-item composite measure was .85.

Job stress was measured using selected items from existing stress scales. Although several existing scales display acceptable psychometric properties (see Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987), they were not suitable for the present application for two reasons. First, most existing measures are extremely long (60 to 117 items), and representatives of the search firm who had had substantial survey experience with this sample indicated that such length would severely restrict the response rate. Second, existing scales tend to include many items that are not appropriate for a high-level managerial sample (e.g., questions about quality of supervision). In response, from existing stress scales (Job Stress Index, Sandman, 1992; Michigan Diagnostic Survey, French & Kahn, 1962; Stress Diagnostic Survey, Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987) we chose 16 items that seemed most relevant to our sample and included them on the first survey. To be consistent with the existing form of the questions, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which the items produced stress at work for them (1 = "produces no stress"; 5 = "produces a great deal of stress"). Although space limitations prohibit listing each item, the complete scale is available upon request. Coefficient alpha for this new 16-item job stress scale was .84.

Ambition was conceptualized as the degree to which the manager desired additional upward mobility. It was assessed with a question on the first survey that asked, "How many levels do you want to move up from your present position in your current organization?" (5-point scale where 1 = "I am happy where I am"; 5 = "I would like to move up four or more levels"). A second item assessed the *perceived job ceiling* by asking, "How many levels do you think you could move up in your current organization?" (5-point scale where 1 = "I could not move up at all"; 5 = "I could move up four or more levels"). Finally, because the *current job level* likely affects both desire and opportunity to move up, this variable was assessed by asking, "How many levels below CEO is your current position?"

Perceived job alternatives was measured by a survey question that asked, "Give your best estimate of your present alternative employment opportunities" (5-point scale where 1 = "no alternatives"; 5 = "many alternatives"). Perceptions of employment opportunities seemed appropriate because perceptions drive the decision processes that are observable as specific job search behaviors (Blau, 1993; Soelberg, 1967).

Attitudes toward leisure and work–family balance were considered to be individual factors that might influence motivation to search. *Actual hours of leisure* and *amount of leisure desired* were assessed by 2 questions on the first survey. Respondents were asked to indicate the number of hours per week actually spent on leisure and the number of hours desired to spend on leisure.

To assess perceptions of *organizational work–family balance policies*, 5 questions on the first survey asked the manager to rate (using a 5-point scale where 1 = “none”; 5 = “a very large amount”) the degree to which (a) my organization provides programs to assist in balancing demands of dual-career couples; (b) my organization provides programs to assist in balancing demands of families with children and/or elderly family members; (c) my organization stresses the importance of family, leisure, and health; (d) my organization provides opportunities for managers to take part-time or temporary assignments; and (e) my organization supports employee involvement in community service. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .75. To measure *desire for work–family balance*, managers again responded to the 5 work–family items (using a 5-point scale where 1 = “I don’t want any”; 5 = “I want a very large amount”). Coefficient alpha for this scale was .73.

Ascension rate measured the average number of promotions per year. This was determined by dividing career length (in years) into the total number of promotions received. Data about career length and number of promotions were obtained from the search firm’s data base.

Finally, data about the *industry* in which the manager was currently employed, whether the employing organization’s stock was *publicly traded*, and whether the employing organization was a *Fortune 500* firm were obtained from the search firm’s data base.

Opportunity variables. Candidate ratings were taken from the search firm’s data base. When candidates are added to the data base, they are interviewed by a minimum of three Paul Ray Berndtson associates who rate them (3-point scale where 3 = “low,” 4 = “average,” and 5 = “high”) on the following dimensions: (a) flexibility and adaptability; (b) proficiency in current job; and (c) appearance, stature, and personal impact. The rating recorded in the data base represents the average rating provided by the company associates. Interrater reliabilities were not available. For this study, we combined the three ratings into an overall index of candidate quality. Coefficient alpha for the 3-item scale was .62. Note, however, that because this rating represents a multi-rater consensus, coefficient alpha may be less informative.

Data about *education level* were taken from the search firm’s data base, and were coded 1 = “bachelor’s degree,” 2 = “master’s degree,” and 3 = “doctoral degree.” *Education quality* was assessed using the

Gourman (1993) rankings of educational institution quality applied to the institution granting the respondent's highest degree. *The Gourman Report* rates all U.S. degree-granting institutions on 18 quality dimensions and is frequently used as a measure of quality because it is the only guide to higher education that assigns numerical indicators of overall quality (Solmon, 1973).

Data about race (coded 1 = "white"; 0 = "otherwise"), gender (coded 1 = "male"; 0 = "female"), and age were acquired from the search firm's data base. Finally, *job tenure* was assessed by a question on the first survey.

Separation. Separation was assessed by a question on the second survey that asked whether respondents had left the position they had occupied at the time of the first survey. We also asked respondents to indicate the circumstances surrounding their job changes. Of the 660 second surveys returned, 85 (13%) indicated that they had *voluntarily* resigned to accept a position in a different organization.

Results

Correlations between the variables used in the analyses and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. The pattern of correlations indicated generally low levels of association between the variables, thus facilitating multivariate analysis. The notable exceptions were the significant positive relation between search and separation (consistent with Hypothesis 2) and the significant negative relations between search and perceived organizational success, total compensation, and job satisfaction (consistent with Hypothesis 1). Separation, on the other hand, also was negatively related to these variables, but at a much lower level. The correlations also suggested a strong positive relation between hours of leisure desired and actual hours of leisure ($r = .80$), and a strong positive relation between ambition and perceived job ceiling ($r = .58$).

Hypothesis 1

Table 2 shows the regression results when job search activity is regressed on the vector of motivation variables. As hypothesized, the overall relation was significant ($R = .52$, $F = 16.64$, $p < .001$). Among the motivation variables, the direction of influence was generally as predicted, although several variables failed to achieve significance. Consistent with the "push" theory, the significant negative relations observed for job satisfaction, compensation level, perceived organizational success, and organizational work-family balance policies were most notable, as were the significant positive relations observed for ambition,

TABLE 1
Correlations Between Variables and Descriptive Statistics

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
1. Search	1,354	4.92	2.96	—	.21	-.28	-.20	.01	.17	.03	.05	-.04	-.42	.17	.02	.02	.12	-.14	-.01	.04	.01	-.02	-.17	-.09	-.04	-.07
2. Separation	660	0.13	0.34		—	-.07	-.02	.02	.06	-.03	.10	.07	-.14	.08	-.04	-.01	.01	-.07	-.02	-.05	-.01	.02	-.10	-.09	-.10	-.01
3. Perceived org. success	1,387	65.67	26.10			—	.09	-.00	-.07	-.02	-.05	.05	.32	-.16	-.03	.00	-.06	.11	.00	.02	-.02	-.07	.12	.03	.03	.03
4. Log of total compensation	1,383	11.66	0.52				—	-.11	-.18	-.12	.02	.15	.08	-.07	.01	.03	-.16	-.00	-.01	.12	.16	.06	.06	.19	.05	.18
5. Perceived job ceiling	1,325	1.00	0.52					—	.58	.18	.07	.14	.08	-.03	-.04	-.05	.06	.08	-.00	.01	-.00	-.06	-.12	-.24	-.00	.03
6. Ambition	1,316	1.30	0.98						—	.28	.10	.03	-.13	.06	-.03	-.03	.12	-.03	.00	.02	-.02	-.04	-.10	-.25	-.04	.05
7. Current job level	1,388	2.14	3.05							—	-.04	-.02	-.09	.05	-.01	-.02	.07	-.00	.01	-.00	-.04	-.07	.00	-.09	-.01	-.05
8. Ascension rate	1,233	0.46	0.65								—	.08	-.01	-.05	.04	.04	.02	.08	-.02	.07	.11	-.08	-.11	-.07	-.05	.01
9. Perceived job alternatives	1,381	3.76	0.85									—	.16	-.09	-.02	.01	.01	.14	-.07	-.03	.10	.01	-.09	-.19	-.01	-.01
10. Job satisfaction	1,279	0.00	2.63										—	-.29	-.07	-.05	-.04	.27	.04	-.03	.05	.02	.04	-.01	-.04	-.01
11. Job stress	1,373	40.69	9.07											—	.02	-.09	.22	-.16	-.04	.00	-.02	.01	-.06	-.14	-.03	-.14
12. Hours of leisure desired	1,388	19.10	11.11												—	.80	.05	.01	.06	-.01	-.00	.00	.03	.06	-.05	-.03
13. Actual hours of leisure	1,388	12.76	9.59													—	-.00	.06	.08	.01	-.01	.00	.05	.11	-.03	.04
14. Desire for W-F balance	1,274	13.92	3.82														—	.36	-.00	-.01	-.01	.02	-.02	-.13	-.10	-.18
15. Organization's W-F policies	1,269	9.48	3.79															—	.00	-.04	.00	-.01	.03	.01	-.02	-.01
16. Fortune 500 employer	1,383	0.00	0.06																—	.14	.02	.05	.08	.07	.01	.01
17. Publicly traded employer	1,383	0.12	0.33																	—	.01	.04	.02	.04	-.01	.05
18. Candidate rating	1,388	13.30	1.07																		—	-.04	.01	-.04	.01	-.04
19. Education level	1,388	1.72	0.61																			—	.02	.11	-.02	-.03
20. Years of job tenure	1,383	3.09	2.53																				—	.23	.06	.02
21. Age	1,383	45.47	7.32																					—	.13	.19
22. Race (white)	1,366	0.97	0.16																						—	.06
23. Gender (male)	1,362	0.93	0.26																							—

Note: Decimals omitted. Correlations greater than .07 are significant at $p < .01$; those greater than .09 are significant at $p < .001$. Listwise deletion yielded $N = 1,025$ for correlational analysis except for those with Separation ($N = 513$; correlation with search significant $p < .001$, correlation with job satisfaction significant $p < .01$). Correlations with education quality were omitted because listwise deletion yielded $N = 104$. Industry variable correlations are omitted due to space constraints and are available upon request.

TABLE 2
*Ordinary Least Squares Results of Job Search Regressed
 on Motivation Variables*

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>F</i>
Perceived organizational success	-.015	.003	-.133	21.38***
Total compensation (ln)	-.718	.165	-.126	18.91***
Perceived job ceiling	-.147	.107	-.047	1.90
Ambition	.373	.108	.121	11.98***
Current job level	-.039	.027	-.041	2.11
Ascension rate	.114	.139	.023	0.67
Perceived job alternatives	.181	.099	.052	3.31
Job satisfaction	-.364	.035	-.323	108.01***
Job stress	.008	.010	.025	0.70
Hours of leisure desired	-.022	.011	-.082	3.30
Actual hours of leisure	.027	.014	.085	3.43
Desire for work-family balance	.078	.024	.100	10.35***
Org. work-family balance policies	-.059	.025	-.074	5.51*
Fortune 500 employer	.094	1.51	.002	0.00
Publicly traded employer	.572	.243	.065	5.52*
Consumer products industry	-.572	.371	-.058	2.38
Food service industry	-.327	.199	-.050	2.71
High technology industry	.074	.170	.013	0.19
Manufacturing industry	-.780	.335	-.083	5.42*
Entertainment industry	-.237	.285	-.028	0.69
Not-for-profit industry	-.175	.214	-.025	0.67
Oil and gas industry	-.102	.283	-.012	0.13
Medical services industry	.617	.208	.093	8.79**
Constant	12.41	2.02		37.88***
Multiple <i>R</i>	.52			
<i>R</i> ²	.28			
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	.26			

Note: *N* = 1,021.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

and the desire for greater work-family balance. The significant positive coefficient on publicly traded employer appears consistent with the "pull" theory. For the industry variables, effect coding (Darlington, 1990) was used, so the regression coefficients on the industry variables indicate the job search propensity of members in each industry, relative to the average across industries. That is, managers in the medical and health-related products industry engaged in more search than the average manager in this sample, whereas those in the manufacturing industry engaged in significantly less search.

Hypotheses 2 and 3

The relation between search and separation was positive and significant ($r = .21, p < .001$; see Table 1). The distributional properties of the dichotomous separation variable, however, violate the assumptions of

the Pearson product moment correlation and thus suppress the magnitude of the true relationship. The polyserial correlation corrects the distributional properties of the dichotomous variable in much the same way as log-linear transformations of dichotomous dependent variables do in logistic regressions (Judge, 1993; Olsson, Drasgow, & Dorans, 1982). Therefore, we computed the polyserial correlation between job search and separation ($r = .312, p < .001$).

To examine the relation between motivation and separation, we specified a logistic regression model with separation as the dichotomous dependent variable. Motivation significantly predicted separation (χ^2 with 23 $df = 39.99, p < .05$). Consistent with "pull" theories, perceived employment opportunities ($\beta = .38, p < .05$) and ascension rate ($\beta = .51, p < .05$) were positively related to separation and consistent with the "push" perspective, job satisfaction ($\beta = -.13, p < .05$) was inversely related to separation. No other variables achieved significance. When the model was re-specified to include the job search index on the second step, there was a significant improvement in model fit (χ^2 with 10 $df = 10.56, p < .001$), and search ($\beta = .20, p < .01$) became the most significant predictor in the equation. Thus, Hypothesis 2 received support.

Hypothesis 3 stated an expected stronger relation between motivation and search than between search and separation. Results suggest significant positive relations on both accounts [Multiple R (motivation, search) = .52, $p < .001$; polyserial r (search, separation) = .31, $p < .001$]. The significance of the difference between these relationships was examined using Fisher's r to Z transformation. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, the relation between motivation and search was significantly stronger than the relation between search and separation ($p < .001$).

Hypothesis 4

To test the relation between opportunity and search activity, job search was regressed on the vector of opportunity variables. A significant relation was noted, and the direction of influence for all the variables except age was negative. Thus, Hypothesis 4 received support. Job tenure was significantly inversely related to search, and women engaged in more search than did men. Full regression results are shown in Table 3.

Hypothesis 5

To test the relation between opportunity and separation, we specified a logistic regression model that regressed separation on the vector of opportunity variables. The model significantly predicted separation

TABLE 3
*Ordinary Least Squares Results of Job Search
 Regressed on Opportunity Variables*

	β	SE	Beta	F
Candidate rating	-.016	.074	-.006	0.05
Education level	-.063	.130	-.013	0.23
Years of job tenure	-.297	.067	-.253	19.72***
Job tenure squared	.006	.005	.074	1.71
Age	.156	.101	.384	2.38
Ages squared	-.002	.001	-.407	2.69
Race (white)	-.019	.496	-.001	0.00
Gender (male)	-.702	.317	-.061	4.89*
Constant	3.41	2.55		1.79
Multiple R	.22			
R ²	.05			
Adjusted R ²	.04			

Note: $N = 1,336$. Education quality was omitted because with it included listwise deletion yielded $N = 270$, and when it was added, no variables reached significance.

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

TABLE 4
Logistic Regression Results of Separation Regressed on Opportunity Variables

	Maximum likelihood estimate	SE
Candidate rating	.0844	.1101
Education level	.0880	.1940
Education quality	-.1213	.3854
Years of job tenure	.0216	.1977
Job tenure squared	-.0226	.0266
Age	.3400	.2062
Age squared	-.0040	.0023
Race (white)	-1.1620*	.5736
Gender (male)	.1663	.5074
Constant	-8.9863	4.8446
Chi-square (9 df, $n = 649$)	17.783*	
-2 log likelihood	478.531	
Goodness of fit	633.421	

Note: $N = 649$.

* $p < .05$

(χ^2 with 9 df = 17.78, $p < .05$) and, with the exception of education quality and gender, the direction of influence was positive. Thus Hypothesis 5 received support. Complete model results are shown in Table 4.

Hypothesis 6

To examine the degree to which opportunity moderated the relation between search and separation, we conceptualized a logistic regression model with separation regressed on search, the opportunity variables,

and the interactions between search and each of the opportunity variables. While conceptually possible, this model is problematic due to the collinearity caused by the interaction of search with seven other variables (candidate rating, education level, education quality, job tenure, age, gender, and race). Therefore, consistent with the approach used by Barrick and Mount (1993), in order to observe the effects of each search by opportunity interaction, we specified separate models with search and one of the opportunity variables entered on the first step, and the interaction term entered on the second step. Specifically, the following models were specified with separation as the dependent variable: (a) search, education level, and search by education level; (b) search, candidate rating, and search by candidate rating; (c) search, education quality, and search by education quality; (d) search, job tenure, job tenure squared, and search by job tenure; (e) search, age, age squared, and search by age; (f) search, race, and search by race; and (g) search, gender, and search by gender.

In all of the models, search was significantly positively related to separation, but the opportunity variable was not. Therefore, it appeared that controlling for search activity, the opportunity variables were having little effect. When the interaction terms were entered on the second step, in only two equations did the interactions achieve significance. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 received only partial support. The interaction with education level and the interaction with candidate rating were significantly related to separation but the others were not. The equations for education level and candidate rating are presented in Table 5.

Plotting the interactions revealed that increased search is related to an increased probability of leaving for all education levels, but that the effect of search on separation was inversely related to education level. The lower the education level, the greater the effect a unit change in search had on separation. The same pattern held for candidate rating—the lower the rating the greater the effect a unit change in search had on separation.

Discussion

This study tried to fill the void between models of job choice that begin with the assumption that a decision to search already has been made (e.g., Schwab et al., 1987) and models of voluntary turnover that assume that job search activity is an intermediate step between job dissatisfaction and organizational exit, primarily engaged in to facilitate choice. We examined job search activity as a dependent variable and attempted to explain how different motivational forces and opportunities affect job

TABLE 5
*Logistic Regression Results of Separation
 Regressed on Search, Opportunity, and Interactions*

	Maximum likelihood estimate	SE
Education level		
Education level	.8625	.4798
Job search	.4607***	.1398
Job search × Education	-.1395*	.0725
Constant	-4.6223***	.9506
Chi-square (1 <i>df</i> , <i>n</i> = 649)	3.684*	
-2 log likelihood	473.956	
Goodness of fit	649.281	
Candidate rating		
Candidate rating	.6256*	.2823
Job search	1.3970**	.5660
Job search × Rating	-.0881*	.0416
Constant	-11.5047***	3.8832
Chi-square (1 <i>df</i> , <i>n</i> = 649)	4.532*	
-2 log likelihood	472.593	
Goodness of fit	634.722	

Note: *N* = 649.

p* < .05; *p* < .01; ****p* < .001

search and separation. This approach is useful because not all job search leads to turnover, but virtually all job search is costly (March & Simon, 1958) and exerts its toll in the form of withdrawal behavior and lost productivity (Locke, 1976). At managerial job levels, the dysfunctional effects of these behaviors may be relatively large given the nature of the work involved and the time span of discretion allowed (Jaques, 1961). Therefore, understanding managerial job search activity has very practical implications for organizations operating in increasingly competitive environments.

The results provide general support for the hypothesized relations between motivation, job search, opportunity, and separation. We found that a vector of variables suggested by the voluntary turnover and labor market literatures was significantly related to job search activity, and that “push” factors were much more strongly linked to search than were “pull” factors. That is, dissatisfaction with different aspects of the organization and job was related to search, although perceptions of greener pastures were not. These results are consistent with many models of employee turnover that postulate dissatisfaction as a primary cause of turnover intentions that ultimately lead to organizational exit (Bannister & Griffeth, 1986; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Dalessio, Silverman, & Schuck, 1986; Mobley, Horner, & Hollingsworth, 1978).

We also observed a significant relation between search and separation after controlling for the effects of motivation. That is, consistent

with the voluntary turnover models, some search clearly does relate to separation. However, the relation between search and motivation was stronger than the relation between search and separation, supporting our contention that search serves many purposes in addition to facilitating choice and separation. Thus, it would appear that through attention to the "push" factors, organizational policy setters may have considerable influence over the search behavior of their managers.

Our model did not formally specify that search would mediate the relation between motivation and separation, however previous research suggested the possibility so we examined this relationship. A few of the motivation variables (ascension rate, job satisfaction, perceived job alternatives, and amount of leisure desired) were significantly related to separation ($p < .05$), although most were not. Among the variables that were related, search did tend to mediate their relations with separation, such that job satisfaction and amount of leisure desired were no longer significant, and the effect of ascension rate decreased by 54%. The effect of perceived job alternatives remained virtually unchanged. Thus, although most motivation variables were unrelated to separation, search did mediate the effect of most of those that were significant.

Finally, we found that the opportunity variables were mostly inversely related to search, but many were positively related to separation. Thus, it appears that less search activity is engaged in by the more marketable managers, but higher levels of separation can be expected among this elite group. This also was apparent in the significant interactions between education, candidate rating, and search in predicting separation. Specifically, the results indicate that higher levels of search increase the probability of turnover for all managers, but the effect is more pronounced for those with less human capital. That is, for those with lower qualifications, search makes a bigger difference in their probability of separation. This might be due to the fact that those with more human capital find alternative opportunities rather easily, or because those with less human capital must search harder to identify opportunities that are otherwise open only to more qualified managers.

The results suggest that future research is needed to further delineate why currently employed, "successful," people engage in costly (from both personal and organizational perspectives) job search activity. Because a large portion of variance in job search activity remains unexplained, it would be useful to examine the effects of variables not included in the current study. One avenue to explore is the role of person-organization fit. Previous research has shown that perceptions of fit often strongly affect applicant decision processes (Bretz, Ash, & Dreher, 1989; Bretz & Judge, in press; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991; Turban & Keon, 1993). However, this research has focused

on lower level managerial jobs (generally recent college graduates) and as such is not very informative about either the dimensionality of fit at managerial levels or how managers might go about assessing fit. Because fit does seem to be important in many job search strategies, future examinations of managerial job search should consider how it affects decision making at this level.

Future research may reveal significant value from programmatic investments in retaining management talent. Our results suggest that the most marketable and highest performing managers find alternative positions most easily when they search, but that their decision to search may be largely a function of job and organization variables, rather than market opportunities. Thus, it appears that organizations willing to invest in retention strategies providing greater rewards and recognition to their most valuable managers can retain those managers, even in the face of open market competition. Boudreau and Berger (1985) have shown that the value of human resource interventions often may depend more on the interventions' effects on retention patterns, than on simply reducing turnover rates. The key is systematically to retain those whose value is greater than the average value of those in the applicant pool. The present results suggest that programs aimed at increasing managerial satisfaction, compensation, and desired work-family balance may have significant positive long-run effects on the quality of managers retained. Future research should measure not only the investment costs of such programs, but also their effects on managerial retention patterns, within a comprehensive cost-benefit framework. Such research may prove more informative than simply measuring program costs or retention patterns separately and thus may have greater relevance for managerial decisions (Boudreau, 1991).

There are limitations with this study that should be noted. The most prominent of these concerns common method bias. Although data were collected from an existing data base and two mail surveys, the majority of the data was generated from self-reports of work attitudes and working conditions. The longitudinal nature of the data collection process, the verifiable nature of some of the variables, and the fact that not every variable was self-reported should help mitigate the problem. This is, however, clearly an area where future research could improve our understanding of managerial job search by using other data collection strategies that limit this potential threat to statistical conclusion validity.

Another area in which future research could make a substantial impact would be through less reliance on perceptual measures. For example, although we found that perceived organizational success was inversely related to search behavior, we cannot comment on the degree to which actual organizational performance affects managerial job search.

It also would be interesting to collect information about actual upward-mobility opportunities the managers face, and specific organizational work-family policies. Collecting such data would allow examination of how organizational contingencies affect search behavior, and whether accurate perception of these contingencies is related to job search.

We also experienced some limitations due to measurement issues. Specifically, we did not measure some variables that might be related to search. For example, we cannot comment on whether line or staff status, prior job search propensities, or the degree to which functional expertise (finance, marketing, human resources, etc.) affect search. Future research, therefore, should consider a broader set of organizational variables. Additionally, because existing measures of job satisfaction and job stress were not appropriate for our sample, we constructed abbreviated measures of these constructs. This makes comparisons with other samples difficult and limits our ability to comment on the generalizability of these results. Finally, future research designs that collect motivation information prior to job search information will build on this study through the ability to make causal inferences that we are unable to make.

On the positive side, the current study provides a broader perspective than typically has been offered. Little research exists about search behavior in general, and prior research about managerial turnover has been limited to small samples and single organizations (e.g., Gaertner & Nollen, 1992). In this regard, the current study adds significantly to our understanding of managerial job search because it assessed the job search activity of a large sample of high-level managers employed across a broad spectrum of organizations and industries. The results, therefore, are likely to be very generalizable within the managerial population.

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