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Community Embeddedness and Core Self-Evaluations as Predictors of Job Search and Stress During Unemployment: Perceived Employability as a Moderator

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COMMUNITY EMBEDDEDNESS AND CORE SELF-EVALUATIONS AS
PREDICTORS OF JOB SEARCH AND STRESS DURING UNEMPLOYMENT:
PERCEIVED EMPLOYABILITY AS A MODERATOR

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Applied Psychology

By
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Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

The loss of a job is a stressful life event that can cause people to lose economic stability, membership in a community, or a piece of their self-identity. Joblessness is an increasingly salient experience for American workers, as the national unemployment rate hovers between 8% and 9% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Existing research suggests that unemployment is related to decreased levels of wellbeing. In addition, there is support that job search behaviors are strongly related to self-esteem and that those behaviors can function as a coping mechanism to combat the stress experienced during unemployment.

In the current study, psychological variables associated with community embeddedness along with core self-evaluations were used as predictors of global stress and of unemployment stress. Additionally, these variables were used as predictors of job search behaviors inside and outside of one's community. Perceived employment opportunities were used as a moderator of this relationship.

Two hundred and twenty-six respondents at a Job Fair in the Southeast provided responses to a survey containing these variables. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine and refine the measures. Hierarchical regression was used to test the hypothesized relationships. Results suggest that there is a significant relationship between self efficacy and stress, as well as, employment opportunities and search behaviors. However, employment opportunities were not found to moderate the proposed relationships in the current study. Implications and limitations are discussed.

DEDICATION

To my parents,
Shari and Larry,
from whom I got my love of learning.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The loss of a job is a stressful life event that can cause people to lose economic stability, membership in a community, or a piece of their self-identity. Unfortunately, job loss, or the involuntary removal of a person from paid employment (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005), has been an increasingly salient factor for workers in the last decade. Unemployment rates increased from 4.0% to 6.0% and the average unemployment duration jumped from under 13 weeks to more than 19 weeks between 2000 and 2003 (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Current trends reveal that the unemployment rate sharply increased between 2008 and 2009, rising from an annual average of 5.8% to 9.3%. In 2010, the unemployment rate had escalated to over twice the average rate for 2001, peaking at 9.6% (versus 4.7% in 2001). During the fourth quarter of 2010 alone, there were over 1,910 mass layoff events in the United States that resulted in the separation of over 295,500 workers from their jobs for at least a month (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011).

In contrast, some positive news is emerging, like the fact the joblessness rate decreased almost a full percentage point between November 2010 and February 2011 and that the number of persons who lost jobs or completed temporary jobs fell by 1.2 million workers between 2010 and 2011 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). However, the overall trends highlight the quantity of workers experiencing job loss and the importance of better understanding the unemployment experience. This understanding will aid

industrial/organizational psychologists to identify ways to help the jobless encounter a less stressful unemployment experience.

Consequently, a number of researchers are interested in the effects of unemployment on stress and persistence in job search behaviors. Thus far, studies have associated unemployment with decreases in general well-being (Jahoda, 1979; McKee-Ryan et al., 2005; Taris, 2002; Warr, 1987) and have investigated predictors of job search behaviors related to securing new employment (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). In terms of the impact of joblessness on stress, Warr (1987) proposed that the negative physical and psychological effects of unemployment are felt by unemployed individuals because they do not experience benefits that are related to work like physical security, monetary availability, interpersonal contact, and opportunity of control. Johoda (1982) similarly proposed that the negative outcomes associated with job loss are due to the absence of time structure, socialization opportunities, sense of purpose and status, and activity usually provided by a job. Central in this line of research is a focus on the multidimensional impact of job loss on both stress and persistence in the job search, which we incorporate in the current study. In terms of stress, McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) offer a model of the relationship between unemployment and well-being that incorporates a number of factors that shape physical and psychological well-being (see Figure 1).

McKee-Ryan et al.'s (2005) model includes five major categories that they believe encompass the multitude of variables that contribute to the unemployed worker's well-being. The categories are Human Capital and Demographics (the contacts and personal characteristics that a person possesses that may help or hinder them from

becoming reemployed), Work-Role Centrality (the amount of fulfillment and meaning a person gets from their job), Coping Resources (the internal and external resources a person has to help them cope), Cognitive Appraisals of the Unemployment Situation (the way a person interprets aspects of the unemployment experience) and Coping Strategies (the cognitive and behavioral efforts a person exhibits to manage demands). The current study examined specific variables drawn from this framework.

Within the variable of role centrality in the McKee-Ryan model, we examined one form of embeddedness, community embeddedness, derived from the overarching construct of job embeddedness (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001), and we explored how this factor impacted the stress experienced from job loss and the extent of the accompanying job search. Thus, this study extended McKee-Ryan et al.'s (2005) prior research by incorporating attachment to the community as a factor in unemployment stress. Our second predictor, core self-evaluations, a variable with widespread implications for coping and well being in many areas, was also examined to determine its influence on stress and search persistence during unemployment. In the McKee-Ryan unemployment stress model, this variable is associated with more control over the environment and is generally associated with well being (Bono & Judge, 2003; Judge & Bono, 2001; Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Scott, 2009). It should also serve to direct and energize behavior and should be associated with higher levels of search behavior persistence.

While McKee-Ryan's model informed our hypotheses regarding the relationship between community embeddedness and stress and core self-evaluations (CSE) and stress,

we anticipated that embeddedness and CSE would be related to job search as well. A model developed by Kanfer and colleagues provided support for the relevance of these variables in predicting job search behavior. In Kanfer et al.'s (2001) model, CSE is defined as a combination of generalized expectancies and self-evaluation variables, both of which impact job search behaviors (see Figure 2). We also anticipated that community embeddedness would impact search, given that those who are most attached to their community would be less likely to engage in search behaviors outside the community, under certain conditions.

While Kanfer et al. and others often conceptualize job search in terms of general activities, we examined job search within and outside of one's identified community in the present study. Current economic conditions may force individuals to consider jobs that are outside their identified community, and this process may be particularly challenging for those who are embedded in their current setting. Thus, we built on Kanfer's model by examining the impact of CSE and community embeddedness to two conceptually related variables, search outside the community (distal search) and search inside the community (local search). We hoped to contribute to the literature by adding this distinction between searching locally and in more distant locations.

In the next segment, we discuss a potential moderator of the relationships between the embeddedness variable and the dependent measures and between CSE and the dependent measures, perceived employability. This moderator is a particularly relevant variable within the cognitive appraisal facet of McKee-Ryan's model of unemployment stress and incorporates a person's expectations regarding reemployment. The current

study, conducted during a worldwide recession, seems particularly relevant in today's job market.

We hypothesized that when perceived employability was low it introduced an additional challenge in terms of stress. We also anticipated that low employability would have detrimental effects on the motivation of individuals to search for a job. Thus, we hypothesized that CSE was more critical and more related to stress when perceived employability was low. We also expected that the effects of community embeddedness on job search behaviors, particularly those outside the community, would be impacted by perceived employability. We expected community embeddedness to have a stronger impact on willingness to search outside the community, or to refrain from doing so, when perceived employability was high than when it was low.

In the following segments, we provide a description of the two major predictors of interest, community embeddedness and core self-evaluations, along with a discussion of their relationship to stress and persistence in job search behaviors. We then discuss perceived employability as a potential moderator of the effects of embeddedness and CSE on the dependent variables of interest (see Figure 3). McKee-Ryan and colleagues' (2005) work guided our discussion of stress while Kanfer et al.'s (2001) work informed our hypotheses involving job search behaviors.

The Predictors: Embeddedness and Core Self-Evaluations

Job Embeddedness: The Construct

Building upon Mobley's (1977) work, Mitchell et al., (2001) introduced the construct of job embeddedness in order to understand the factors that shape attachment to

a particular job setting. Job embeddedness (JE) is defined by Yao, Lee, Mitchell, Burton and Sablinski (2004) as “the combined forces that keep a person from leaving his or her job” (p.159). Job embeddedness can be conceptualized as a spider web, where the strands represent the various connections employees have to and within their organization, as well as, in the broader, non-work community (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Mitchell et al. (2001) differentiate these strands as signifying three distinct ties that they label links, fit, and sacrifice. Links are the connections that people make with institutions, other people, or activities in their community. Fit refers to the extent to which employees believe that they belong at an organization or in a community and how compatible the organizational mission and values are with their own. Finally, sacrifice reflects the ease with which an employee could leave their job or community.

Taken together, links, fit, and sacrifice represent the collective factors that can influence an employee’s intention to leave their employment situation or community. Rather than focusing on why people *leave* their job, the construct of job embeddedness centers on the reasons people *stay* in their jobs (Mitchell et al., 2001). This positive conception of attachment to work, along with the idea that non-work factors influence attachment as well, represented an important contribution to the literature.

At the time of Mitchell’s research, and even in current work, the role of non-work factors in shaping attachment to jobs is often overlooked by researchers. However, this is not the case in the definition of job embeddedness. While the first dimension of job embeddedness taps into identification with and attachment to a given employment situation, the second, which is the focus of the current study, incorporates attachment to

the community. We expected these ties to the community to emerge as an important force in shaping decisions about relocation for jobs and to also contribute to the amount of stress perceived during unemployment.

Community Embeddedness

The dimension of job embeddedness that is the focus of the current study, community embeddedness, was predicted to be a distinct factor in determining unemployment stress and job search behaviors. Community embeddedness captures the emotional ties that an individual has to the location that they view as their primary place of residence. As noted, this is a significant force in overall job embeddedness. Previous research has shown that non-work factors are critical to the attitudes and attachment people feel toward their job (Cohen, 1995; Lee & Maurer, 1999; Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004). Cohen (1995) reported that non-work commitments, such as families, pastimes, and religious activities, could influence job attitudes and employees' levels of attachment. These non-work activities may serve as a strong bond to the community and create an increase in an individual's attachment to a given area and to a job nested in the area.

Lee and Maurer (1999) found that having a spouse or children increased a person's intentions to leave a job. The authors hypothesized that, due to previous research supporting the idea that family structure can increase the social pressures felt about the amount of energy devoted to work, those employees with more social demands to spend time with family would be more likely to have intentions to leave their job and engage in voluntary turnover. Lee et al., (2004) found that off-the-job embeddedness was

predictive of employees' volitional absences and intentions to leave, but their on-the-job embeddedness levels were not predictive of these behaviors.

While family-oriented pressures related to work may significantly impact embeddedness, leaving a community in order to find a new job may involve a number of additional compromises or sacrifices that are related to sources of attachment to the broader community. These may incorporate everything from being removed from a community that is safe and where one is well respected, to having to move away from extended family members and loved ones. Sacrifices can also occur when one considers the combined impact of a losing a number of smaller community ties, such as giving up season tickets to sporting events that took years of seniority to acquire or stepping down from a leadership position on a local board. Community sacrifices can even occur when a person changes jobs, even if relocation from the community isn't necessary. Perquisites, like an easy commute or on-site child care, affect the personal life of the employee, and therefore, the way they interact with their community. These specific community benefits may not be available at a new job (Mitchell et al., 2001).

Additional research (Giosan, 2004) has found that certain dimensions of the overall construct of job embeddedness can be predicted by various antecedents within the community, particularly those related to the social domain of one's life. The researchers hypothesized that a number of factors would contribute to community embeddedness (e.g., age, number of children, perceptions about work, perceived mating opportunities). However, only a few of the factors were significant predictors of embeddedness. Specifically, significant variance in the Links-Community relationship was predicted by

age, and the number of children a person had. Age is a likely link to the community because increased age allows people to have made a mature decision to be a part of that community and to have created a larger number of attachments in the community. Similarly, children create the necessity for a person to become involved in the community through interactions at things like their child's school events and extracurricular activities.

In addition, it was found that time in a community does not have any significant correlation to embeddedness; this lends credibility to the idea that maturity is more important than time in predicting embeddedness. Embeddedness may also be related to other factors such as social opportunities in the area. For example, significant variance in the Fit-Community and Sacrifice-Community relationships was predicted by the perceived mating opportunities within the area. The authors suggest that these results support the idea that people who will become highly embedded in their community can be pre-selected based on individual traits (Giosan, 2005). This line of research also suggests that work is one of many factors that impact an individual's ties to a particular area and job.

In the existing research that provides further support for family ties as a powerful source of community embeddedness, kinship responsibilities have emerged as another critical item for consideration. For many individuals, these responsibilities may impact both search behaviors and stress. For example, additional research on the importance of social ties suggests that a person's kinship responsibilities may limit the perceived ease and desirability in moving away from a community (Price & Mueller, 1981), especially if

a family member does not wish to move (Miller, 1976; Turban, Campion, & Eyring, 1992). Price and Mueller (1981) found that nurses with high levels of kinship responsibilities were much less likely to express interest in leaving their job than nurses with a baccalaureate or graduate degree, who were most likely to intend leave. The ties to family appear to act as a glue to hold a person to the community.

These family ties, in conjunction with perceived social characteristics of the new area, may have a significant effect on willingness to relocate. Turban and colleagues (1992) found that when faced with relocation or job loss (due to facility relocation) those employees with positive perceptions of the new job, work, and the new location were most likely to relocate. In addition, those employees' whose children were in high school and living at home were more likely to relocate than those without school age children. Furthermore, it was found that for female nurses, a high level of kinship responsibilities, measured by marital status, presence of children, and the amount of emphasis placed on being a good wife and mother, was indicative of lowered intentions to leave a job (Price & Mueller, 1981).

Conversely, positive influences have been found on an employee's consideration to move, both domestically and internationally, when the employee's partner was willing to relocate (Brett & Reilly, 1988; Brett, Stroh, & Reilly, 1993; Brett & Stroh, 1995; Eby & Russell; as cited in Mignonac, 2008). Brett & Reilly (1988) found that the employees' number of children at home, the functional area at work, job involvement, and attitudes toward moving were all significantly related to a person's willingness to relocate. This

indicates that there are specific demographic, career, and attitudinal variables that affect how willing a person would be to remove themselves from their community for work.

These ties to the community have implications for the willingness to relocate in order to find a job. Mitchell and colleagues (2001) conjecture that employees that are most embedded in their community may even rule out job options that would require relocation. In this light, the subcategory of community embeddedness can be affected by a multitude of factors in an employee's life. This set of connections has relevance to the well being of the unemployed individual, especially as they consider the possibility of employment outside their community. A large number of embeddedness sacrifices may occur when relocation from a community is necessary. Conversely, for those who feel few ties or attachments to their community, relocation may be less stressful and actually much more positive in nature.

Given that the effects of community embeddedness on stress and on job search behaviors inside and outside the community could depend on perceived employability, we considered and discussed the effects of this moderator in formulating hypotheses. In the next segment, we turn to core self-esteem as a predictor of stress and search. Again, we expected that employability would moderate the impact of this second major predictor.

Core Self-Evaluations (CSE)

The frequency and prevalence of personality variables in industrial-organizational psychology research led Landy and Conte (2010) to conclude that they are “probably the biggest deal since the consideration of the role of intelligence in work behavior about 100

years ago” (p.108). In this light, Judge, Locke, and Durham (1997) introduced a broad personality trait they labeled CSE. CSE is defined as the “fundamental, bottom-line evaluations that people make about themselves” (Judge, 2009, p.59). CSE encapsulates four of the most widely studied self-evaluative traits.

The four traits are self-esteem (the value one places on oneself as a person), generalized self-efficacy (the personal evaluation of one’s ability to perform across a number of situations), neuroticism (the tendency to focus on negative thoughts and to exhibit negative emotions, as well, as negative aspects of the self), and internal locus of control (the belief that you are in charge of your own life events) (Judge, 2009; Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003). In essence, CSE is a person’s fundamental evaluation of their value, effectiveness, and capability as a person.

The results of a meta-analysis conducted by Judge et al. (2003) supported Judge et al.’s (1997) original belief that there was considerable overlap among these four main traits and that there was a broader latent factor underlying them. The average correlation among these four variables was .60, and subsequent factor analyses consistently reflected a single common construct (Judge, 2009). While there is uniqueness in each of these four traits, the evidence is clear that when examined together, the four traits become an entity of their own – and this higher order trait is CSE (Judge et al., 2003). As such, a brief measure has been created to specifically assess CSE, called the Core Self-Evaluations Scale (CSES; Judge et al., 2003), which is a more direct and efficient way to assess this construct than testing each of the four variables separately (Judge, 2009).

Most CSE research has focused on the construct's relation to job satisfaction (Bono & Judge, 2003; Boyar & Mosley, 2007; Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). Furthermore, Bono and Judge (2003), Judge, Bono, Erez, and Locke (2005), and Judge (2009) cite studies that have linked CSE to other work-related factors such as motivation, burnout, stress, income, reduced work-family conflict, adjustment to new assignments, positive reactions to feedback, and leadership. In addition, research has linked CSE to higher levels of happiness and lower levels of stress and strain (Bono & Judge, 2003) and has found CSE to predict overall life satisfaction, as well (Judge et al., 2005). Thus, CSE seems an important individual difference variable in understanding affective reactions to life situations related to work.

As an indicator of how people view their overall worth and capabilities, CSE may also impact job search behaviors. These qualities, related to independence, resiliency, and an overall belief that one can control and adapt to any situation, are expected to lead the unemployed to be more confident in their ability to be successful in obtaining reemployment and subsequently reduce perceived stress. In addition, research has found core-self evaluations to reduce negative emotions toward stressful situations (Bono & Judge, 2003). These findings led to expectations that high levels of CSE would buffer the stress felt during unemployment. Similarly, the self-confidence inherent in high CSE may serve as a critical resource for those who are unemployed, particularly when they think their employability is low. The moderating effects of perceived employability on both CSE and community embeddedness are discussed in the next segment.

The Moderator: Perceived Employability

Perceived employability is a relatively new variable in the unemployment literature. In order to fully understand the construct, it is helpful to examine the current economic environment as it pertains to joblessness. Given that individuals' perceptions of their employability may not be based on this objective data but on personal belief systems and cognitions, we also review the existing research on subjective or perceived employability in this segment.

National Employment Perceptions

The recession has created a unique dynamic for joblessness. Embarking on a job search in a time of economic downturn and when national levels of unemployment are at their highest in decades creates a decidedly different environment for searching than in more robust times. As of September 2011, the national unemployment rate in the United States hovers at 9.1%, up 25,000 workers from August 2011 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). However, one can expect variability in the optimism that individuals have regarding the job opportunities in their field and this, in turn, may influence indices such as job search behaviors and perceptions of stress. In the following segment, we first review objective information on the extent of joblessness and general perceptions of the current economic and employment climate. We then turn to literature pertinent to individual variability in perceptions of personal job opportunity, referred to as perceived employability.

Empirical Indices of Unemployment

Data collected in Gallup polls emphasizes that the failing national economy and unemployment numbers are a source of concern for the American public. In 2004, about 40% of Americans felt that economic issues were the most important problem for the U.S. and 12% specifically mentioned unemployment as the most significant concern at hand (Arora, 2004). In addition, between 2001 and 2004 between 62% and 80% adults polled about whether it was “a good or bad time to find a quality job” indicated they believed it was not a good time to seek employment (Arora, 2004). Furthermore, related questions revealed similar levels of pessimism for job prospects. By September 2011, 39% of Americans named unemployment or jobs as the most serious issue facing the nation, passing ‘the economy’ as the most frequently cited issue (see Figure 4). This number was an increase from the 29% of polled adults who noted unemployment or jobs as the most important issue in August 2011 (Jones, 2011).

While unemployment has moved to the forefront of American minds, underemployment is also an issue at play in the U.S. job market. Underemployment is “a measure that combines the percentage of workers who are unemployed with the percentage working part time but wanting full-time work” (Jones, 2011). Underemployment rates stood at 18.5% in mid-September 2011 (Jones, 2011). Thus, the combined effects of unemployment and underemployment pose a serious challenge for those seeking jobs in a market that is often highly competitive.

Another index of the effects of the recession that raised concern about jobs and unemployment in the American public is job creation. The Job Creation Index suggests that job market conditions may be worse than what was claimed by the government as the

number for weekly jobless. The number of people who are counted among the weekly jobless index had stabilized around 400,000 (as of Jan 2012). Both Gallup and the U.S. Government's establishment survey, which is given to businesses regarding employment, found that zero new jobs had been created in August 2011 (Jacobe, 2011). The downturn in the economy and the lack of job growth has further worsened employment opportunities for jobless individuals.

This worry about job loss may partially stem from the issue addressed in the research of Fujita and Rao (2009). They found that people do not only incur monetary losses when unemployed, but very often experience a decline in earnings in their subsequent jobs. This cost is in addition to the costs incurred during the time it takes to find a new job, learn new skills and make new business connections, and the time spent accomplishing this readjustment process.

Findings suggest that those employees who find new jobs after having a short tenure (0-4 years) at their previous job had a much lower percentage of lost earnings (2.5 percent) when entering a new job than those employees with a longer tenure (5+ years; 19 percent loss) at their prior place of employment (see Figure 5). However, the differences in losses based on tenure disappear when high tenure workers are separated based on those who stayed within the same occupation and those who switched careers. Those workers who had high tenure and switched occupations after being unemployed were found to have a 35% pay decrease at their new job. By securing a job within the same occupation that they had before unemployment, workers saw their new job salary

decrease by less than 3%, suggesting occupationally specific human capital (Fujita and Rao, 2009; see Figure 6).

In summary, it is clear from empirical indices ranging from unemployment statistics, underemployment statistics, and data bearing on earnings in new jobs that many challenges face the unemployed worker seeking a job in the current recession. In such a demanding environment, personal and subjective perceptions of the potential for gaining employment may be an important predictor of both stress and persistence in the job search.

Perceived Employability

In order to better understand the individual variability in perceptions of job opportunity, it is important to first understand the different ways people conceptualize the ability to get a job. While employability can refer to the national workforce level and government policy or employability as a human resource strategy, the current study focuses on employability in the same manner as previous researchers, conceptualized as ‘individuals’ perceptions of their chances of obtaining a new job’ (Kinnunen, Kakikanas, Mauno, Siponen, & Natti, 2011). Thus, the construct of perceived employability addresses this issue at a subjective, individual level.

Not since the economic downturn of the 1980’s has reemployment been such a nationally salient topic in the United States. This is likely the reason for an increase in the inclusion of perceived employability as a variable in research. For example, work on perceived employability antecedents (e.g., Berntson et al., 2006; Wittekind et al., 2010) and outcomes (e.g., Berntson & Marklund, 2007; De Cuyper et al., 2008) have only

recently been examined (Kinnunuen et al., 2011). In addition, perceived employability has recently been studied in conjunction with temporary work, and authors have argued that perceived employability is even more crucial for temporary workers than those in permanent contracts (Berntson, 2008; De Cuyper et al., 2009; De Cuyper et al., 2010). However, even with increased interest in the topic, perceived employability remains an under-researched concept, and its role in perceptions of stress or job search behaviors during unemployment has yet to be addressed.

In order to empirically evaluate a person's level of perceived employability, researchers created a multidimensional measure of perceptions of employment opportunity known as the Employment Opportunity Index, or EOI (Griffeth, Steel, Allen, & Bryan, 2005). In creating the EOI, Griffeth et al. (2005) hoped to create a rich measure of the construct that reflected the complexity of perceptions regarding employability. This was a move away from the one- or two- question scales that had become common in the late 1980s.

Through the use of confirmatory factor analysis, it was determined that the questions in the EOI could be clustered onto five main factors: Ease of Movement, Desirability of Movement, Networking, Crystallization of Alternatives, and Mobility. Ease of movement relates the amount of access a person feels they have to job alternatives and their mobility. Desirability of Movement is simply how desirable the participant perceives the potential work to be. Networking targets perceived access to job availability information and contacts that could result in job availability information, as well as flexibility in job skills. Concrete alternatives, for example a job offer, are

referred to as Crystallized Alternatives. Mobility allows for better understanding of how responsibilities, like dual careers or family obligations, effect perceptions of employability (Griffeth et al., 2005).

These five factors were found to have low to moderate levels of intercorrelation (.19; range -.03 to .44) and this supports each factor's independence from the others (Griffeth et al., 2005). Consequently, using only certain factors should not interfere with their individual integrity. For the purpose of this study only Ease of Movement, Desirability of Movement, and Networking were used, as Crystallized Alternatives were not relevant to those in search of a job and the Mobility aspect was encompassed by the examination of community embeddedness. The correlations between these three particular dimensions range from .19 to .44 (Griffeth et al., 2005). Given that these sub-dimensions have been combined into a total score in the past and in order to better understand a person's overall employability perceptions, we combined the factors into a single score in the current study. It may be argued that these dimensions should be separated for certain research purposes. We will explore this further in the discussion

The Dependent Variables: Job Search Behaviors and Stress

Job Search Behaviors

Job search, or an individual's actions to generate new employment opportunities, has become a common aspect of the American work experience. Millions of people each year engage in job search activities as a result of involuntary job loss, the desire to reenter the job market or pursue new job opportunities, or the completion of necessary training (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). Job search includes participating in activities

such as sending out résumés, going to job interviews, or simply spending time looking for other job options (Swider, Boswell, & Zimmerman, 2010). According to Kanfer and colleagues (2001), job search behaviors are part of a self-regulatory process that is aimed at a goal of obtaining employment. In this light, they conclude that job search is a “pattern of thinking, affect, and behavior that can be evaluated along intensity-effort, content-direction, and temporal-persistence dimensions” (Kanfer et al., 2001, p. 838).

However, the amount of job search behaviors that an individual engages in can be affected by a number of personal differences. Research has found conscientiousness and job-seeking support to be significant, positive predictors of the intention to participate in and frequency of job seeking behaviors (Wanberg, Watt, & Rumsey, 1996; Schmit et al., 1993; Vinokur & Caplan, 1987). It was also found that these job search intentions were significantly predicted by gender, with women being much more likely than men to have intentions of looking for work in the future. While other research (Kanfer et al., 2001; Leana & Feldman, 1992) had seemingly contradictorily found that women engaged in less job-search behaviors, it seems that while they may not specifically engage in job-seeking actions, they were more likely to have *intentions* to search. Given the lack of research on differences as a function of variables such as gender, we included demographic and basic descriptive information as exploratory variables in the current study.

Additional literature supports the importance of psychological variables in predicting job search behaviors. Wanberg et al., (1996) found that unemployment negativity was significantly and positively correlated to job search frequency and job search intentions. The personality factors of extroversion and conscientiousness were

found to have positive estimated true score correlations with job search behavior ($r_c=.46$ and $.38$, respectively; Kanfer et al., 2001). However, these personality traits were found to be most related to job search behaviors for new entrants to the workforce rather than job losers looking for work. In contrast, self-esteem and employment commitment were most strongly related to job search behaviors for job losers. This information provides initial evidence that the situation in which people look for a job can influence the self-regulatory nature of job search through changes in attitudes about work and one's individual worth (Kanfer et al., 2001).

In essence, job search can be thought of as a method of coping used by individuals to combat the distress caused by the unemployment experience. There is a growing body of literature on the effectiveness of the coping techniques employed by individuals (e.g., Bennett et al., 1995; Leana & Feldman, 1992; Wanberg, 1997). The coping that people engage in serves two important functions. The first function is to manage or solve the problem at hand, in this case, unemployment. The second function is to regulate the emotional distress experienced (Lin & Leung, 2010). Past research has also documented that being involved in problem-focused coping strategies (e.g., job search activities) versus emotion-focused coping behaviors (e.g., emotionally distancing from unemployment) enhances chances of becoming reemployed (e.g., Kinicki et al., 2000; Wanberg, 1997). As such, McKee-Ryan and colleagues (2005) added job search effort as a part of one of the five contributing elements for well-being during unemployment.

While there are chances for the job search process to be a rewarding experience (e.g., through the attainment of a new job), there are many opportunities for the search for a new job to be disheartening and stressful. Meta-analytic findings show that active job search is a crucial predictor of future reemployment (Kanfer et al., 2001) and it may seem intuitive that actively engaging in job search behaviors would help increase psychological health during unemployment by helping job-seekers feel as if they are taking proactive steps to become reemployed (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). However, research has suggested that active job search can have a negative psychological health impact on job-seekers, especially those who continue to look but don't find success in job attainment (e.g., Wanberg, 1997; Warr, 1988).

Another facet of search which has not been incorporated in past work is whether the individual is searching locally or also searching outside their area. In the current study, we examined the joint impact of community embeddedness and perceived employability on both types of searches. Similarly, we examined the relationship of CSE and perceived employability to both types of searches. While it would be possible to formulate three-way interactions between the types of job search (distal or local) and the two hypothesized two-way interactions between the major variables of interest, we chose to simply treat each type of search as a separate dependent variable. We hoped to contribute to the literature by incorporating both aspects of search in the current study. Furthermore, exploratory analyses allowed us to compare and contrast the factors that determine local search and distal search.

In sum, intention to engage in job search behaviors and the intensity of the job search are unique to every individual based on their personal traits and unemployment situation. Job search behaviors can be used as a form of problem-focused coping but may become detrimental to overall health if they continue on for an extended time without reemployment success. While job search is critical to finding a new job and securing reemployment, the process of looking for a new job can create stress for job-seekers.

Job Search Hypotheses

We believed that perceived employability would moderate the relationship between core self-evaluations (CSE) and job search behaviors as well as between community embeddedness and job search behaviors. While CSE typically has a facilitative effect on job search, we expected that this effect would be strongest for those who believed that they were employable. Thus, we hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1a and 1b: CSE will interact with perceived employability in the prediction of job search activities both outside (H1a) and inside (H1b) the community. While CSE will be positively related to search behaviors, the effects will be significantly stronger for those with more positive employment beliefs than for those with more negative employment beliefs.

The impact of community embeddedness on both distal and local job searches was examined to see if it was moderated by beliefs about the economic future of one's own job. For those who believe they are employable, the impact of community embeddedness on search outside the community should be stronger. In other words, those who believe they are less employable should show lower overall levels of search

outside the community regardless of their embeddedness. For those who believe they can find a job, community embeddedness may have a more powerful impact, with lower levels of search outside the community shown by those who are embedded than those who are not. Therefore, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2a: The impact of community embeddedness on job search activities outside the community will be moderated by perceived employability. Community embeddedness will have a stronger impact on search when individuals believe they are employable.

Similarly, we expect that the effects of community embeddedness will be enhanced by positive levels of employability when search inside the community is considered. Individuals who believe they can find a job and are attached to their community should be particularly motivated to search for a job within their community, as compared to those who are less attached to the community.

Hypothesis 2b: We anticipate a weaker relationship between embeddedness and search inside the community when employability is low. When employability is high, we expect that those who are embedded will show higher levels of search behaviors inside the community than those who are not embedded.

Stress

The term stress is often vaguely and inconsistently defined in scientific literature. The term *stress* can be used to refer to a stimulus, a reaction to a stimulus, or a physiological outcome to that reaction. In this study, the term *stress* will refer to what some call distress, or a negative psychological response to stressors that manifests itself

in a number of cognitive and affective states, such as anxiety, helplessness, or frustration, and can lead to negative physiological outcomes (Kemeny, 2003).

The perceptions and reactions to a particular stressor will be different for every individual, and even may differ for the same individual across circumstances and time. Some individuals may perceive an event to be stressful while others may perceive the same situation as a non-stressful occurrence. This is dependent on the individual characteristics of a person and the situation at hand (Probst, 2010). One common factor for perceiving a situation to be stressful is lack of control (Kemeny, 2003). When people feel that they do not have adequate resources to cope with the situation at hand, or in other words, when the current demands outweigh the current available resources, those situations are seen as a threat and are therefore stressful.

Physically, stress responses are believed to have evolved as a way to help early humans deal with stressors that posed a direct bodily threat and required the individual to fight or flee. In order to best enable a person to escape stressors safely, physiological systems respond in ways that increase energy sources for physical activity and even slow down unnecessary body processes. While the human body is capable of adapting to these changes in the short-term, chronic or repeated exposure to stressors that illicit these physical responses can result in adverse long-term physiological and health effects (Kemeny, 2003; McEwen, 1998; Sapolsky, 1992).

One way that people can physically suffer from extended stress is through a diminished functioning of the immune system. When physiological systems respond repeatedly or chronically to stressors, or when they fail to stop after the stressor has

ceased to exist, health issues can ensue. This cumulative stress reaction has come to be called “allostatic load” (McEwen, 1998). High allostatic loads have been linked to negative health outcomes such as increased susceptibility to memory loss and reduced ability to fight off viruses (Kemeny, 2003).

While it is thought that stress evolved as a survival tool, many of the direct physical threats posed to early humans no longer exist. Instead, stress is born of experiences common to the modern world. Work, family, and friends can all be sources of stress in a person’s life. Unemployment is a particularly stressful life event with consequences at the physical and psychological levels. Kemeny (2003) cites unemployment as one of the stressful life experiences that can actually impair physical health by reducing the circulation of immunological cells and slowing immune responses, such as wound healing. There is also evidence that the risk of mental health problems for the unemployed rises steadily for the first nine months of joblessness and recedes only slightly afterwards (Paul & Moser, 2009).

While these physical detriments due to stress are an important part of the unemployment puzzle, for the current study we aim to focus our attention on the psychological effects of stress that can be elicited through joblessness. Being laid off is an event that is often unexpected and usually out of a person’s control. When a new job is not readily available, the resulting lack of resources can create a sense of stress in a person’s life. This finding argues for the importance of perceived employment as a moderator of the effects of factors such as embeddedness and core self-evaluations which may be related to stress.

Those job-seekers who have been involved in the job search process for an extended period of time may feel pressured to take any job opportunity presented to them (Kinicki et al.,2000), creating an “under-employment” situation that can be detrimental to well being (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005). Research has also shown that the length of unemployment is related to increases psychological stress. Interestingly, stress was highest for those when unemployment length was in the 2- to 3-month range and was reported to be lower when unemployment lasted for less than 2 months or over 6 months (Kulik, 2001).

It is thought that stress during unemployment comes from an inability to satisfy the need to fulfill approach goals (e.g., to achieve, to be respected, to foster social interactions) and attain avoidance goals (e.g., to not be powerless, to not be unaccepted, to not show weaknesses) (Trachsel, Gurtner, von Kanel, & Holtforth, 2010). In addition, the disruption of a person’s social environment can be stressful due to a loss of social support and connection to others (O’Leary, 1990).

Jahoda (1981, 1982) proposes that distress during unemployment is more than just a lack of social contact but instead a consequence of the loss of five latent functions (social contact, time structure, collective purpose, status, and activity) provided to people by work. In modern societies, work is the only way to sufficiently fulfill these needs (Paul & Moser, 2009). Additional support for unemployment lowering a person’s well-being comes from McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) who, in their meta-analysis, show that people tend to show an decrease in well-being when transitioning from employment to

unemployment but find gains in well-being when reemployed after a period of joblessness.

Stress Hypotheses

As noted earlier, positive core self-evaluations have been shown to buffer stress. In the current study, we believed that the effects of CSE would be moderated by beliefs regarding employability. Specifically, CSE would have the most favorable impact on stress when the individual believed they were less employable than when they thought they were more employable. When the individual believed it would be difficult to find a job, personal belief systems about self-worth would become more critical in reactions to stress.

H3: CSE will interact with perceived employability in the prediction of stress.

While CSE will be inversely related to stress, the relationship will be significantly stronger for those with more positive employment beliefs than for those with more negative employment beliefs.

The potential interaction between community embeddedness and employability in the prediction of stress, and the simple effect of community embeddedness on stress is less clear. Given the lack of research in this area, we treated the relationship between embeddedness, employability, and stress as an exploratory hypothesis.

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

A total of 226 individuals seeking employment at large, diverse job fairs in metropolitan areas in the Southeastern United States were recruited to participate in this study. Participants were asked if they would be willing to complete our survey while they waited for the job fair to begin and were able to complete the survey until the close of the job fair. On average, the survey took participants between 15 and 20 minutes to complete. Participants were informed that they would be entered in a drawing for a chance to win a \$50 gift card upon the return of their survey. Survey responses were anonymous and while some personal information was collected to enable participants to be entered in the drawing, no identifying information was associated with the responses.

The majority of respondents were female (62.4%) and ranged in age from 17 to 76, with an average age of 40 years (S.D. = 11.6). The vast majority (83.9%) of respondents identified themselves as Black/African American; some identified themselves as white (11.6%) and the rest reported being Hispanic/Latino, Asian, or Other (2.2%, 0.4%, and 1.8% respectively). Additionally, 47.5% of respondents were single and 30.9% were married. For those participants that reported the number of people financially dependent on them (n= 147) most had 0-1 people dependent on them (53.8%), while over a third (34.7%) had 2-3 financial dependents. The remaining 11.6% financially supported 4 or more people. The sample was well educated, with 44% having received a bachelor's degree or higher.

The majority (76.4%) of respondents were unemployed and reported having been unemployed for 10.7 months on average (S.D. = 10.9). Some worked part time jobs (13.8%) and averaged of 24 hours of work per week (S.D. = 12.8). Most (85.5%) reported making less than \$50,000, with 74% of participants making less than \$25,000. The majority (71.9%) did not receive unemployment benefits.

Measures

Biodata

A number of control variables were included to allow for testing of the effects on the dependent measures. Included were: sex, age, race, relationship status, number of financial dependents, level of education, current employment situation, recent employment area, military status, length of previous employment, reason for leaving previous employment, residence area, length of residence, community description, unemployment benefits, pre-unemployment and current annual salary range, and financial satisfaction (see Appendix A). These variables were added in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the demographic variables that may predict which people become highly embedded in their community and people's beliefs about themselves and their opportunity for reemployment.

Embeddedness

This study used a modified version of Mitchell et al.'s (2001) measure of community embeddedness from the larger Job Embeddedness scale (see Appendix B). The Job Embeddedness scale utilizes a 7-point Likert response format (1=*strongly disagree*, 5= *strongly agree*) and contains items that assess the way a person fits into and

feels linked to their job or community as well as the things they would be forced to sacrifice if leaving their community or occupation. Fit refers to how much employees believe that they belong at an organization or in a community and can include factors such as business mission and goals or the weather in a community. Links are the connections that individuals make with people or activities in their job or community. Finally, sacrifice reflects the things an employee would have to give up if they were leave their job or community. These sacrifices can include anything from an easy commute and onsite childcare to season tickets to sporting events or leadership positions in the community.

The community embeddeness scale focused solely on community ties and included items such as “*I really love the place where I live*” and “*Leaving this community would be very hard.*” Discriminant and convergent validity were found for the original scale, when organizational commitment and job satisfaction were used as contrasting constructs (Mitchell et al., 2001). The current scale was also modified to include two questions about the relationship status of the respondent.

Confirmatory factor analysis, conducted using EQS 6.1, was used to test the underlying structure of the scale. Based on the previous findings of Ng and Feldman (2009), fit, links, and sacrifice were each treated as separate factors within the scale. However, after examination of item loadings, the two modified relationship status questions were found not to contribute to the scale and were removed from analyses. Once these items were removed the scale showed good reliability ($\alpha = .83$).

Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the measurement model displayed acceptable fit. Specifically, the $\chi^2_{(41)}$ value was 118.98, the CFI was .93, the RMSEA was .08.

Core Self Evaluations (CSE)

The 12-item Core Self Evaluation Scale (CSES) created by Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen (2003) was used to assess CSE (see Appendix C). The CSES is a direct and global measure that assesses the latent factor underlying self-esteem, locus of control, self-efficacy, and neuroticism/emotional stability. The scale utilizes a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The scale originally included 6 positively-scored and six-negatively scored items. However, due to the unreliability often associated with negatively worded items, these items were changed to be positively worded. The modified scale included items such as “*I determine what will happen in my life,*” “*I rarely feel depressed,*” and “*Overall, I am satisfied with myself.*” However, after examining the items used, “*When I fail, I rarely feel worthless*” was found to have a low item loading and was removed from further analyses. After removal of the poorly loading item, the scale showed high reliability ($\alpha = .90$). Additionally, confirmatory factor analysis found marginal acceptance that the 12 items load onto one factor ($\chi^2_{(44)}=180.31$, $p<.001$, CFI=.88, RMSEA= .09), supporting the findings of Judge et al. (2003).

Employment Opportunity Index (EOI)

The EOI (Griffeth, Steel, Allen, & Bryan, 2005) is a 14-item measure of job market perceptions arising from 5 different job-option dimensions: ease of movement, desirability of movement, crystallization of alternatives, networking, and mobility (see

Appendix D). For the purpose of this study, the crystallization and mobility questions were omitted because they were inappropriate for the current sample. Crystallization assesses a person's current employment options, and since the sample was unemployed, questions about available positions were not included. The questions under the mobility factor assess ease of movement and are redundant with the assessment of community embeddedness. Thus, this study consisted of a modified, 9 question version of the EOI that included items such as "*There are a number of jobs for people like me in today's job market*" and "*My social activities tend to bring me in contact with a number of people who might help me line up a new job.*" The scale structure was examined through confirmatory factor analysis. The results indicated support for a three-factor robust model ($\chi^2_{(24)}=50.00$, $p<.01$, CFI=.98, RMSEA= .05), providing additional reinforcement for Griffeth et al.'s (2005) assertion of the multidimensionality of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha for this modified version of the EOI met professional standards, with $\alpha = .84$.

Job Search Behaviors

Job search behaviors were measured using a modified version of Blau's (1994) measure of job search behaviors (see Appendix E). This measure has been found to contain two factors that measure: preparatory and active job search behaviors. Questions were modified in order to bring the questionnaire up to date with modern technological advances. Directions were also modified to indicate that we are interested in their job search behaviors both inside and outside of the area they consider to be their

“community.” The measure was found to have high internal consistency estimates for preparatory, active, and general effort job search behaviors (Blau, 1994).

In the current study, we adapted the original scale to reduce the number of items and we combined conceptually related items to diminish the demands on participants. Participants responded by indicating the number of times in the last three months they engaged in 7 job search activities such as “*Prepared/revised your resume*” or “*Had an interview with a prospective employer*” on a 7-point Likert scale, with anchors ranging from 0 times to 11+ times. We gathered data on these job search behaviors both inside and outside the community.

Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted on both the proximal and distal search behaviors. Support for a two factor scale encompassing both passive and active behaviors was not supported; instead a single factor model of search was found for both Distal and Proximal search. In addition, when the measures were compared they were highly correlated ($r = .76$, $p < .01$) with one another and were therefore collapsed into a single, one-factor search scale ($\chi^2_{(14)}=71.12$, $p<.001$, CFI=.91, RMSEA= .13). When combined, the scale had reliability above the professional standard of .8 ($\alpha = .83$). Scores were obtained by adding the proximal and distal search responses for each participant and dividing by the final number of items.

Stress

Stress was measured using the Stress in General Scale (SGS; Stanton, Balzer, Smith, Parra, & Ironson, 2001), which was modified to allow for respondents to indicate the amount of stress they encounter during the unemployment process (see Appendix F),

and the Perceived Stress Scale, a global measure of a person's stress levels (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983; see Appendix G). The SGS was comprised of 12 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 indicated a 'not at all' response and 7 indicated 'extremely' when answering the question "*To what degree do the following words describe your unemployment experience.*" Some sample words are 'Pressured,' 'Under control,' and 'Overwhelming'. The PSS consisted of 10 items, such as "*In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and 'stressed'?*" and "*In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems*" which were rated by participants on a 7-point Likert scale with anchors ranging from Never to Always.

The SGS and PSS scales showed high levels of reliability, with alpha levels exceeding the professional standard of .8 ($\alpha = 0.97$ and 0.85 , respectively). Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine the factor structure of the two scales. Results indicated support for a 2-factor model of PSS and a single-factor model of SGS. Fit indices for PSS support that the negatively worded items function differently than the positively worded items and that the positivity- and negatively- worded items formed two distinct factors ($(\chi^2_{(34)}=98.69, p<.001, CFI=.93, RMSEA=.08)$). The fit indices provide modest support for the SGS as a unidimensional measure of stress perceptions ($(\chi^2_{(54)}=543.21, p<.001, CFI=.92, RMSEA=.15)$).

These scales were intended to be combined to measure overall stress perceptions of participants. After closer examination to ensure the scales were related, the scales have a statistically significant correlation to each other ($r = .61, p < .01$) and appear to

capture similar aspects of stress felt during the unemployment experience. When measured as a whole, the resulting stress scale exceeded professional standard for reliability ($\alpha = .95$). Given the correlation between the two scales and the high level of internal reliability, the stress scales were examined together as a single stress measure for the duration of the study in order to increase parsimony. In some instances, it may be desirable to keep measures separate to focus on general stress as opposed to unemployment stress. However, the significant overlap in the setting argued for combining the scales.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 16.0. Before beginning analyses, the data on individual measures were screened for outliers. Descriptive statistics were examined to ensure normal distribution of the data. Cases were also examined for their contribution to normalized multivariate kurtosis. Based on these analyses 4 cases were permanently removed from the dataset bringing the final number of participants to 222. As noted earlier, confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine the structure of scales and to provide a rationale for keeping or removing individual items.

As is evident in the table and discussed in the measures section, all scales reached the professionally recommended reliability alpha of 0.80, providing additional support for scale integrity. All scales were measured on a 7-point Likert scale in order to allow greater variability in participants' responses than the more traditional 5-point scale range. The means for all of the scales measured were above the midpoint. These descriptive statistics, the correlations among variables, and internal reliabilities are listed in Table 1.

The first step in data analyses consisted of scale refinement. The results of these refinements were reported in the Measures segment. Briefly, the reliability and unidimensionality of items was assessed to ensure that items were functioning properly. Items that were not reliable or seemed to be measuring multiple concepts (i.e., items with unacceptably high cross-loadings on factors or unacceptably low loadings on the factor of

interest) were removed. Based on the confirmatory factor analysis results, three scale items were permanently removed from the data set, as discussed above.

Regression Based Analysis

The second step in data analysis involved the tests of the hypotheses of interest. This hierarchical multiple regression-based analysis involved the tests of the proposed interactions. Before conducting these regressions, the independent variable scale scores for each respondent were mean-centered, a process that is thought to reduce multicollinearity (Cronbach, 1987) and is an important step to include in regression analyses that involve an interaction term. Main effects were entered into the hierarchical regression in the first step, followed by the proposed interactions. No control variables proved to be significant.

Hypotheses One

Hierarchical multiple regression was conducted in order to investigate whether CSE interacted with perceived employability (measured with EOI) in the prediction of job search behaviors both outside (H1a) and inside (H1b) the community. However, due to the strong relationship between participants' search activities inside and outside the community, these two dimensions have been collapsed into a single variable referred to as simply 'search behaviors.' Therefore, H1a and H1b were consolidated into a single hypothesis that investigated whether CSE interacted with EOI in the prediction of general job search behaviors.

This analysis involved creating an interaction term between CSE and EOI, which is the product of these two variables. The individual CSE and EOI variables were entered

into the first block; the interaction term was entered into the second block. Search behaviors were included as the outcome variable. The results suggested that when CSE and EOI were entered at Step 1, they explained 8.0% of the variance in search behaviors. However, this variance was solely attributed to EOI, CSE was not a significant predictor of the variance in search behaviors. The interaction entered in Step 2 did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = -0.09$, $t(221) = 1.23$, $p = .22$). Since the inclusion of the interaction term did not explain any additional variance of the outcome variable, Hypothesis 1 was not supported (see Table 2).

Hypothesis Two

Similarly to the steps taken to analyze Hypothesis 1, hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the impact of community embeddedness on job search behaviors and the moderating effects of EOI. Community embeddedness was expected to have a stronger impact on search when individuals believed they were employable. We anticipated a weaker relationship between embeddedness and search when employability was low. This hypothesis also had to be slightly modified to reflect the lack of difference between search within and search outside of the community.

The analyses required the creation of an interaction term between CSE and Embeddedness. The individual community embeddedness and EOI variables were added in block one of the regression and the interaction term was entered in the second block. Job search behaviors were again used as the outcome variable. The results suggested that when community embeddedness and EOI were entered at Step 1 they explained 9.1% of the variance in job search behaviors, with EOI as the only significant variable explaining

the variance. The inclusion of the interaction entered at Step 2 did not reach significance ($\beta = 0.07$, $t(221) = 1.00$, $p = .32$), and therefore Hypothesis 2 was not supported (see Table 3).

Hypothesis Three

An additional hierarchical multiple regression analyses was conducted to investigate whether CSE interacted with EOI in the prediction of stress. The author conceptualized PSS and SGS as two measures of stress that could be combined to capture a larger, general picture of stress perceptions during unemployment. After examining the scales, the data support the relationship between the two scales.

The individual CSE and EOI variables were added into block one and the interaction variable (the sum of CSE and EOI) was added into the second block of the regression. A stress variable (the average of a participant's responses to all stress questions) was the outcome variable included in the analysis. The results suggest that when CSE and EOI were entered at step 1, they accounted for 30.0% of the variance in stress; however, the variance was entirely contained within CSE. When the interaction term was included in Step 2 the explained variance increased by 1.0%, bringing the total variance explained by Model 2 up to 31%. This increase was not statistically significant, $\beta = .10$, $t(221) = 1.64$, $p = .10$ (see Table 4). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported (see Table 4).

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

The present study tested the relationships between core-self evaluations, community embeddedness with stress and search behaviors, as moderated by employment perceptions. In total, three sets of hypotheses were offered. Even though the original relationships had sound conceptual backing, each of the hypotheses failed to be supported by data. Each of the individual hypotheses will be discussed in more detail below in order to expand on the possible reasons for the results. Limitations of the current study and directions for future research are also presented.

Implications of the Current Study

Hypothesis 1a and 1b

First, the current study attempted to provide evidence of EOI as a moderator of the CSE - Search Behavior relationship for search behaviors both inside and outside the community. Previous research supported the relationship between personality factors and job search behaviors (Kanfer et al., 2001). EOI is a multidimensional measure of a person's 'job market cognitions', and was found to be highly related to active job search behaviors (Griffeth et al, 2005). Due to the current economic climate and the lack of literature on perceived employment outcomes, the author believed it was important to continue to further the understanding of EOI's relationship with search behaviors.

It was hypothesized that CSE would interact with perceived employability in the prediction of job search activities both outside (H1a) and inside (H1b) the community. However, the data did not support any significant search behavior differences for

activities inside and outside the community so the search location distinction was dropped. While CSE was expected to be positively related to search behaviors, the effect was expected to be significantly stronger for those with more positive employment beliefs than for those with more negative employment beliefs. Although the results of the present study suggested that EOI was a significant predictor of search behaviors, they failed to support a significant interaction of CSE and EOI in the prediction of search behaviors. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Additionally, analyses revealed that CSE and search were significantly correlated and that EOI and search were significantly correlated, supporting the relationship between the variables. Although CSE was related to search behaviors it was not found to predict significant variance in those behaviors. These results suggest that no matter how a person feels about themselves, their current perceptions of the job market and their likelihood of becoming reemployed are crucial in predicting the number of search behaviors they engage in.

In the present study, employability perceptions were measured using the EOI, which was shown to predict job search behaviors. The current study uses a three-factor measure of EOI, reduced from the original 5 factor measure due to redundancy between the EOI factors and other measures utilized in the study. One of these retained factors, Desirability of Movement, uses statements like “By and large, the jobs being offered in my field are superior to the job I had before,” in order to understand participants’ perceptions of the current job market. However, due to the current negative economic climate, unemployed persons may not care if the job they take is better than the one they

had before. With a scarcity of jobs for people at all levels, job seekers may just want to find an employment offer, no matter if it is a step up or down from their previous situation.

Post-hoc analyses that exclude the Desirability of Movement factor from the EOI do support the idea that the items that focus on the quality of the future job may be responsible for the current pattern of results. When Hypothesis 1 was retested after removing the Desirability of Movement factor from the EOI, the CSE – EOI interaction became a significant predictor for 10% of the variance in job search behaviors ($\beta = 0.14$, $t(221) = 2.01$, $p < .05$). Thus, future researchers would be cautioned to carefully consider the economic climate in which they are conducting research and interpret results accordingly.

Hypothesis 2a and 2b

The second objective of the current study was to establish EOI as a moderator of the Embeddedness – Search Behavior relationship. The hypothesized moderator was predicted to enhance the Embeddedness-Search relationship, such that when individuals believed they were employable, community embeddedness would have a stronger negative impact on outside-the-community search (Hypothesis 2a) and stronger positive impact on inside the community search than for those who were not embedded (Hypothesis 2b). As in Hypothesis 1a and 1b, the search location distinctions were dropped due to lack of differences between search behaviors. Contrary to the predicted outcome, Community Embeddedness was not significantly correlated with search

behaviors and thus the results indicated the interaction was not significant. Consequently, the data failed to support Hypothesis 2.

While the data support that the majority of participants were embedded within their community, the large metropolitan areas where data was collected may have impacted participants' concept of what community means and may explain the lack of difference in inside-the-community and outside-the-community job search behaviors. Instead of viewing a community as a single town or small area, participants may instead have viewed the entire metro area as their community. Rather than viewing looking for a job in a different city within the area as an outside search, participants may have been conceptualizing what constituted inside the community in a much broader way.

Additionally, the differences between job searches inside and outside the community may be lessened by advances in and acceptance of technology in the job search process. Online job boards, company career sites and talent boards, and online applications have all streamlined the process for the modern day job seeker. These advances have made it as easy to apply to a job across the country as it is to apply to a job down the street. This convenience and constant access to employment information may be an additional explanation for the lack of difference between the proximal and distal search behaviors.

Hypothesis 3

The final objective was to provide support for EOI as a moderator of the CSE – Stress relationship. The literature has well documented the relationship between CSE and stress. Studies show that higher levels of CSE result in lower levels of perceived

stressors in a variety of populations (e.g., Creed, Lehmann, Hood, 2009; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2009; Luria & Torjman, 2008). Previous findings also provide support for the moderating effects of perceived employability on well-being, such that higher levels of perceived employment resulted in higher levels of well-being (Kinnunen et al., 2011). It was hypothesized that while CSE would be inversely related to stress, the relationship would be significantly stronger for those with more positive employment perceptions than for those with more negative employment perceptions. Counter to this reasoning, the results indicated that the interaction was not significant and failed to support the hypothesis. Additionally, the results suggested that EOI was not even a significant predictor of the variance in stress perceptions during unemployment. However, both CSE and EOI were significantly related to each other and both were significantly correlated to stress, providing support for a connection between the variables in the unemployment domain.

As discussed above, it could be that during this troubling economic period in the United States, using the EOI to measure employability perceptions does not allow for the true relationship between personal employability beliefs and stress to show through. Additionally, the measures used to capture stress perceptions in the current study asked participants to answer questions about general life stress occurrences *and* stress related specifically to the unemployment experience. Perhaps a more specific measure of stress would have been increasingly likely to be effected by the CSE – EOI interaction.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

One limitation of the current study was the use of self-report data for all variables. While questions concerning personality, embeddedness, and engagement in job search behaviors are best and most simply measured through self-report, there is a chance that utilizing objective measures in place of some self-report measures may have resulted in stronger relationships between the variables of interest. Also, relying solely on self-report measures may have allowed for the introduction of response bias.

Due to the fact the items on the CSES and EOI assess traits that are seen as desirable and the PSS and SGS assess traits that are largely considered undesirable, it is plausible that respondents may have minimized or exaggerated their true opinions and feelings in order to conform to, what they believe to be, a socially-accepted response pattern even though they were assured confidentiality. High means on desirable scales (e.g., CSES $M=5.50$, $SD=1.06$; EOI $M=4.79$, $SD=1.11$) and lower means on undesirable scales (e.g., PSS $M = 3.28$, $SD = .96$; SGS $M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.75$) provide some support for this explanation. Alternatively, it may have been the case that the high levels of these variables provided a realistic description of average levels of core self-evaluations and employment perceptions, and the resultant range restriction attenuated relationships between the predictors and criteria. Even given the high levels of the variables, some prediction was gained from simple effects.

In addition, it may be that the CSES scale, which is traditionally thought of to be a reflective scale, was functioning in a formative matter. Rather than participants answering questions based on their ongoing behaviors and beliefs, they may instead be

forming their core self-evaluation attitudes on the spot. Furthermore, some researchers dispute the difference between self-esteem and generalized self-efficacy, two of the subdimensions in the CSES. Future researchers are encouraged to consider these reservations, as well as the possibility of focusing the scale through directions that tell the participant to think of their self-perceptions in a specific (e.g. unemployment) context.

Additionally, combining the factors in the EOI and combining the two stress scales to create a parsimonious measure of stress may have reduced the ability to understand the true interactions between the variables of interest in the current study. However, we felt that understanding the overarching, global nature of EOI and stress was more appropriate in the present research than breaking the scales down and examining them by their individual factors. Future researchers are encouraged to examine the individual facets of EOI separately in order to better dissect the aspects of employability that influence various variables such as job search and perceived stress. As discussed above, removing the Desirability of Movement factor from the EOI score resulted in a significant interaction lending support to each of the EOI factors functioning in unique ways. Future researchers are also encouraged to continue to examine stress in the unemployment context, both generally and in an unemployment specific context.

Another potential limitation of the present study is the lack of diversity, and therefore generalizability, in the sample. The majority of respondents (83.9%) identified themselves as Black/African American. The sample was also predominately female (62.4%). Based on United States Department of Labor statistics, Blacks have “exhibited poorer labor market outcomes than other races even prior to the recession and during the

recovery, demonstrating that they often face different and greater challenges” (p.1, U.S. Department of Labor, 2012). Annual averages from 2011 show that Blacks faced higher overall unemployment rates (15.8%) than their White and Hispanic counterparts (7.9% and 11.5%, respectively), longer unemployment durations (27.0 weeks vs. 19.7 and 18.5 weeks), and had higher percentages of long-term unemployed, defined as 27 weeks or more (49.5% vs. 41.7 and 39.9%). Furthermore, black women faced higher unemployment rates (46.9%) than White (43.0%) or Hispanic women (41.9%). These trends may inhibit the findings of this study from applying to populations of different races or genders because of the unique experience of Blacks/African Americans and women during the current economic downturn.

Additionally, the current economic climate may have also influenced the strength of the relationship between the variables of interest in the study at hand. During the time of data collection, the United States was coming out of one of the worst economic downturns since the Great Depression, called “The Great Recession.” During the official duration of The Great Recession from 2007 to 2009 the United States lost more the 7.5 million jobs and the unemployment rate peaked at over 10% (Grusky, Western, & Wimer, 2011).

This intense downturn in the market and the loss of jobs for millions of Americans may have created a sense of resignation to unemployment for those that found themselves jobless. This resignation may have allowed the unemployed to feel better about themselves and less overall stress because they believed they were not alone in their situation or that it was completely out of their hands. The length of unemployment

may also have a moderating relationship with a number of unemployment variables. The longer a person is unemployed, the less they may care about the quality of their future employment, the more they may search out of financial necessity, and their pride may have worn thin. Future studies should aim to keep the current economic and employment climate, as well as specific unemployment characteristic of participants, in mind when designing studies and selecting measures in joblessness research.

Contributions of the Current Study

The present study's findings offer some support that core self-evaluations and employment perceptions influence the way people search for a job and the amount of stress they feel when unemployed. However, the current study neither supports community embeddedness as an influence on where or how much people engage in job search behaviors nor employment perceptions as a significant source of moderation in stress or search.

Given the findings that CSE is a significant predictor in stress and that EOI is a significant predictor of search behaviors, it appears that there may be an opening for interventions to help jobless Americans have a better experience. By creating positive training programs to increase self-esteem or self-efficacy, to help individuals redefine their locus of control, or to provide more effective ways to channel negative emotions (all of which are components of CSE) researchers could help reduce the amount of stress felt during unemployment. Additionally, the results of the current study suggest that providing information on available jobs or training that would make the unemployed feel

more confident in their employment potential, the amount of searching that the jobless do could be increased.

It is crucial for researchers to persist in the study of the unemployment experience and to not be deterred by non-significant results in this study. Instead, future researchers should address the limitations of this and other previous research and continue to expand the literature and understanding the American unemployment experience. It is only through thorough and continued research that we will be able to implement interventions and help make joblessness a more bearable experience.

APPENDICIES

Appendix A

Demographic Information

Sex: Male _____ Female _____

Age: _____

Your race/ethnicity (please check all that apply):

- _____ White/Caucasian
- _____ Black/African American
- _____ Hispanic/Latino
- _____ American Indian
- _____ Asian
- _____ Other (please specify) _____

Relationship Status (check one):

- _____ Single, never married
- _____ Married
- _____ Domestic partner
- _____ Separated
- _____ Divorced
- _____ Widowed

Number of people who are dependent on you financially: _____

The highest level of education you have completed (check one):

- _____ Some high school
- _____ Graduated high school
- _____ Some college
- _____ Associates degree
- _____ Bachelors degree
- _____ Some graduate school
- _____ Masters degree
- _____ PhD or terminal degree

What is your current employment situation?

- unemployed
- part-time employed
- full-time employed

If part time: about how many hours per week do you work? _____

If unemployed: Approximately how long have you been unemployed?

_____ years _____ months

In what type of occupation were you most recently employed?

- Accommodation and Food Services
- Administrative and Support Services
- Agricultural, Hunting, Fishing, and Forestry
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- Construction
- Education
- Finance and Insurance
- Government
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Information
- Management
- Manufacturing
- Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- Real Estate
- Retail/Sales
- Self-Employed
- Transportation/ Warehousing
- Other: _____

Have you ever been employed in the military? _____ yes _____ no

If yes, please list your dates of employment: From _____ (year) to _____ (year)

Approximately how long did you work in your occupational field prior to becoming unemployed?

_____ years _____ months

Are you looking for a job in the same field as you most recently worked?

- Yes
- No

How important is it to you that your next job be in the field where you have spent most of your career?

- Extremely unimportant
- Very unimportant
- A little unimportant
- Neither important nor unimportant
- A little important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Why did you leave your previous employment?

- I was fired
- I was laid off (e.g., part of a downsizing)
- I completed an employment contract
- I retired
- I needed a change
- Other: _____

What is the ZIP code for your current city of residence: _____

Approximately how long have you lived in your current city of residence?

_____ years _____ months

How would you describe the community you currently live in?

- rural
- suburban
- urban

About how many minutes from your current residence are you willing to move for a new job? _____ minutes

Are you receiving unemployment benefits?

- Yes
- No

Before becoming unemployed, my annual salary was:

- _____ \$0-\$25,000
- _____ \$25,000-\$50,000
- _____ \$50,000-\$75,000
- _____ \$75,000-\$100,000
- _____ \$125,000-\$150,000
- _____ \$150,000-\$175,000
- _____ \$175,000-\$200,000
- _____ \$200,000+
- _____ Prefer not to answer

Currently, my annual salary (including unemployment benefits) is:

- _____ \$0-\$25,000
- _____ \$25,000-\$50,000
- _____ \$50,000-\$75,000
- _____ \$75,000-\$100,000
- _____ \$125,000-\$150,000
- _____ \$150,000-\$175,000
- _____ \$175,000-\$200,000
- _____ \$200,000+
- _____ Prefer not to answer

Please answer the following items by writing your response on the line using the following choices to indicate how you feel: Strongly Disagree, Mostly Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Neutral, Slightly Agree, Mostly Agree, or Strongly Agree

My family finances are adequate to pay for living expenses each month. _____

I am financially comfortable. _____

I have had financial problems since becoming unemployed. _____

My financial status is a source of stress. _____

Compared to most of the people I know, my financial situation is favorable. _____

Appendix B

Adapted Community Embeddedness Scale

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about the community you currently live in using the scale provided.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I really love the place where I live.
2. The weather where I live in suitable for me.
3. My community is a good match for me.
4. I think of the community where I live as home.
5. The area where I live offers the leisure activities that I like.
6. I am in a committed relationship with someone in my community.
7. If in a committed relationship:
It would be hard for my spouse/partner to leave our community.
8. My family roots are in this community.
9. My family members live near me.
10. My close friends live near me.
11. Leaving my community would be very hard.
12. People respect me a lot in my community.
13. My community is a safe place.

Appendix C

Adapted Core Self-Evaluations Scale

Instructions: Below are several statements about you which you may agree or disagree. Using the response scale, please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling one of the alternatives next to each statement.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I am confident I get the success I deserve.
2. I rarely feel depressed.
3. When I try, I generally succeed.
4. When I fail, I rarely feel worthless.
5. I complete tasks successfully.
6. Usually, I feel in control of my work.
7. Overall, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I rarely have doubts about my competence.
9. I determine what will happen in my life.
10. I feel in control of my success in my career.
11. I am capable of coping with most of my problems.
12. I usually have a positive, optimistic attitude about things in my life.

Appendix D

Adapted Employment Opportunity Index

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by using the scale provided to best describe your personal beliefs.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. There are a number of jobs for people like me in today's job market.
2. Given my qualifications and experience, getting a new job in my field should not be very hard at all.
3. I think I am a highly employable member of my occupational field.
4. At the end of my job search, I will probably wind up with a better job than the one I had before.
5. By and large, the jobs being offered in my field are superior to the job I had before.
6. Most of the jobs I could get would be an improvement over my previous circumstances.
7. I have a far-reaching "network" of contacts who can help me find out about other job opportunities.
8. I have contacts in other companies my occupational field who might be able to help me line up a new job.
9. My social activities tend to bring me in contact with a number of people who might help me line up a new job.

Appendix E

Adapted Job Search Behaviors

Distal Search – Instructions: Please answer the following questions by using the scale provided to best describe how often you have engaged in the listed activity when looking for a job outside of your community in the past 3 months.

Proximal Search – Instructions: You were previously asked about job search outside your community. For the following questions, please answer the following questions by using the scale provided to best describe how often you have engaged in the listed activity while looking for a job in your community in the past 3 months.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

-
1. Looked for jobs using newspapers, internet ads, or search engines.
 2. Listed yourself as a job applicant in a newspaper, online, with a professional agency or employment service.
 3. Prepared/revised your resume.
 4. Spoken with family, friends, or previous employers or business acquaintances about potential job leads.
 5. Read a book or article about getting a job or changing jobs.
 6. Filled out a job application.
 7. Had a job interview with a prospective employer.

Appendix F

The Stress in General Scale

Instructions: Please answer the following questions by using the scale provided to best describe your personal experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Rarely	Some of the Time	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always	Always

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt things were going your way?
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things you had to do?
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritation in your life?
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Appendix G

Adapted Perceived Stress Scale

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which the following words describe your unemployment experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not At All	A Little Bit	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly Well	Very Much	Extremely

1. Demanding
2. Pressured
3. Hectic
4. Uncomfortable
5. Irritating
6. Out of control
7. Nerve-wracking
8. Hassled
9. Chaotic
10. More stressful than I'd like
11. Filled with obstacles
12. Overwhelming

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Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations, and Reliability Estimates Among Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 Job Search Behaviors	4.70	1.28	(0.83)				
2 Community Embeddedness	4.63	1.11	0.11	(0.83)			
3 Core-Self Evaluations	5.50	1.06	0.16*	0.23**	(0.90)		
4 Employment Perceptions	4.79	1.11	0.29**	0.13	0.39**	(0.84)	
5 Stress	3.51	1.23	0.02	-0.08	-0.55**	-0.24*	(.95)

Note: Internal consistency reliability estimates are plotted on the diagonal; Scales are on a 1-7 point range

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2. Job Search Behaviors as a Function of CSE and EOI

Predictors	β	Stand. Error	t	p	ΔR^2
Model 1: Main Effects					0.09
<i>CSE</i>	0.06	0.09	0.72	0.47	
<i>EOI</i>	0.32	0.08	3.90	0.00	
Model 2: Main Effects and Interaction					0.01
<i>CSE</i>	0.09	0.09	0.98	0.33	
<i>EOI</i>	0.32	0.08	3.93	0.00	
<i>CSE*EOI</i>	0.09	0.07	1.23	0.22	

Table 3. Job Search Behaviors as a Function of Community Embeddedness (CE) and EOI

Predictors	β	Stand. Error	t	p	ΔR^2
Model 1: Main Effects					0.09
<i>CE</i>	0.08	0.08	1.06	0.29	
<i>EOI</i>	0.33	0.08	4.38	0.00	
Model 2: Main Effects and Interaction					0.00
<i>CE</i>	0.07	0.08	0.91	0.36	
<i>EOI</i>	0.33	0.08	4.39	0.00	
<i>CE*EOI</i>	0.07	0.07	1.00	0.21	

Table 4. Stress as a Function of CSE and EOI

Predictors	β	Stand. Error	t	p	ΔR^2
Model 1: Main Effects					0.30
<i>CSE</i>	-0.62	0.07	-8.73	0.00	
<i>EOI</i>	-0.03	0.07	-0.41	0.68	
Model 2: Main Effects and Interaction					0.01
<i>CSE</i>	-0.59	0.07	-8.18	0.00	
<i>EOI</i>	-0.03	0.07	-0.37	0.71	
<i>CSE*EOI</i>	0.10	0.06	1.64	0.10	

Figure 1. Contributing elements to psychological and physical well-being following job displacement (McKee-Ryan et al., 2005)

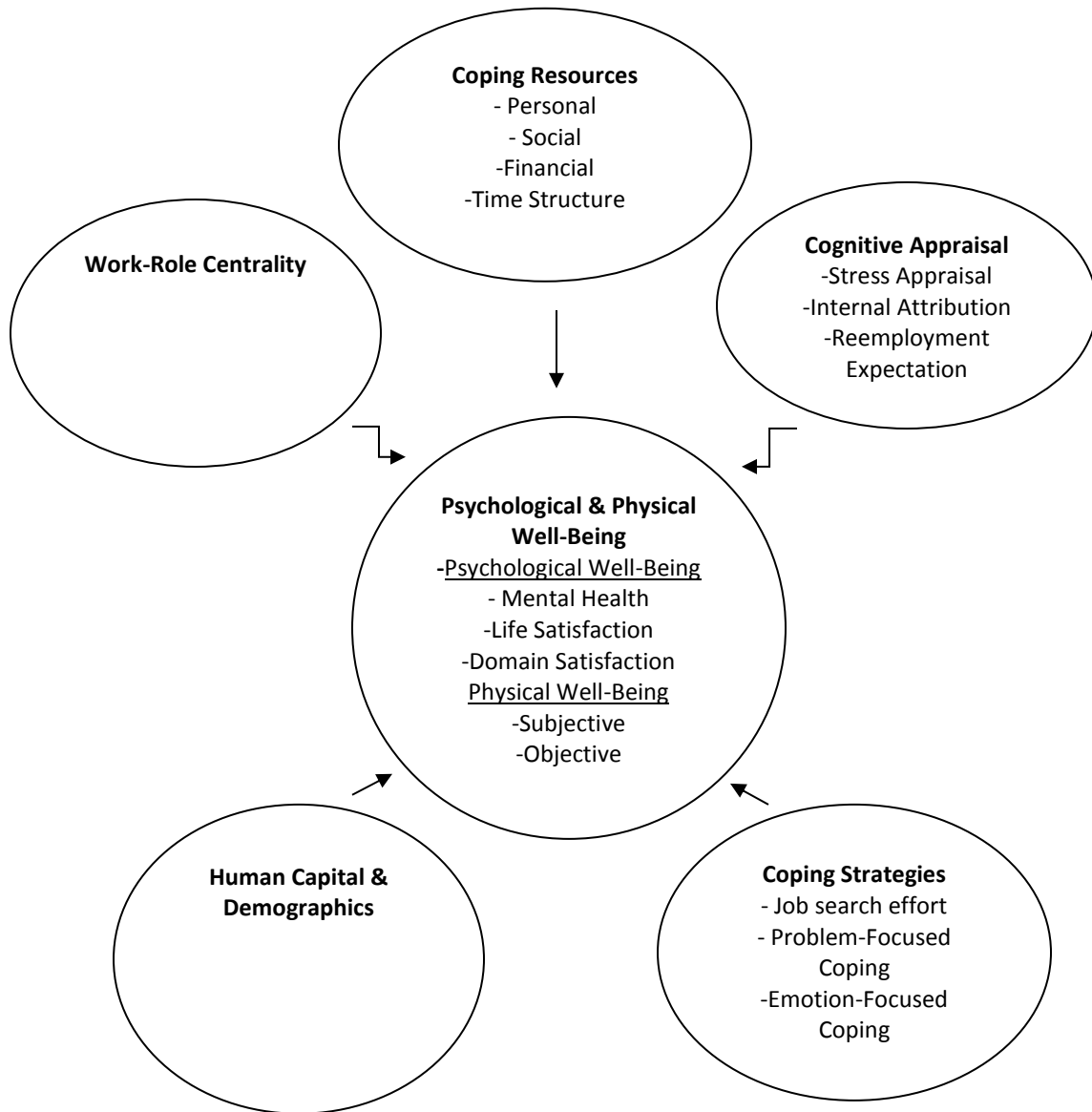


Figure 2. A heuristic model of job search, depicting six antecedent complexes of nonability, non-labor-market individual-difference variables likely to influence job search behavior and three major consequences of job search behavior (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001).

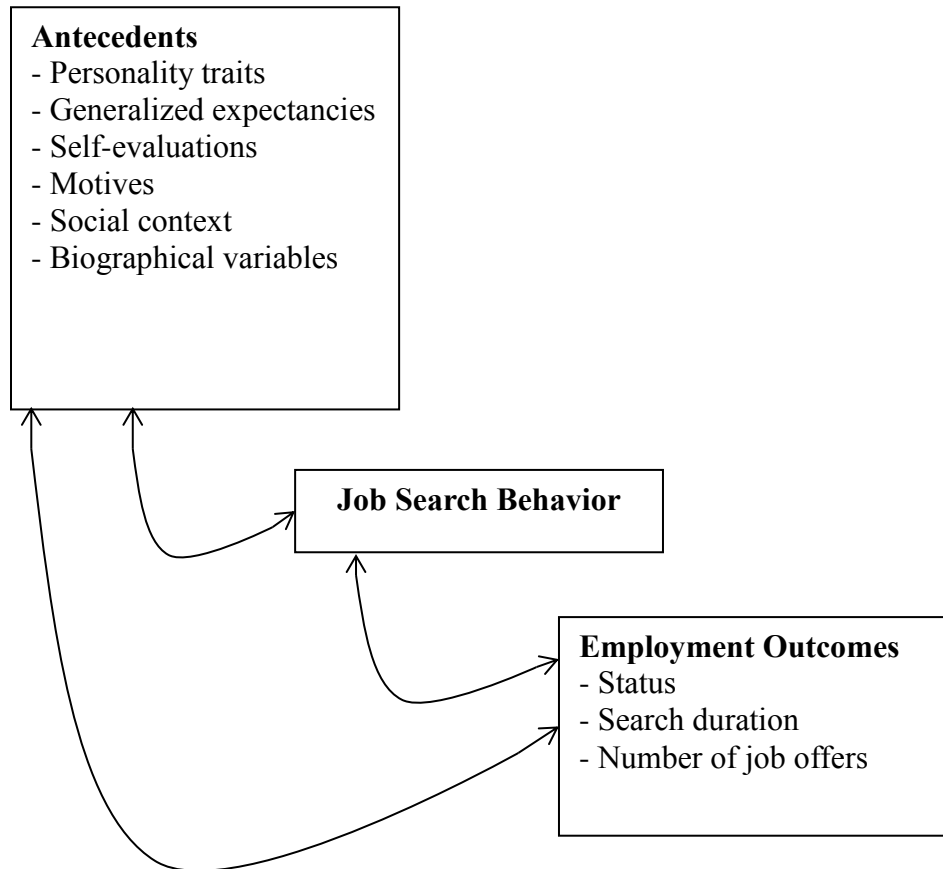


Figure 3. Visual model for hypothesized relationships.

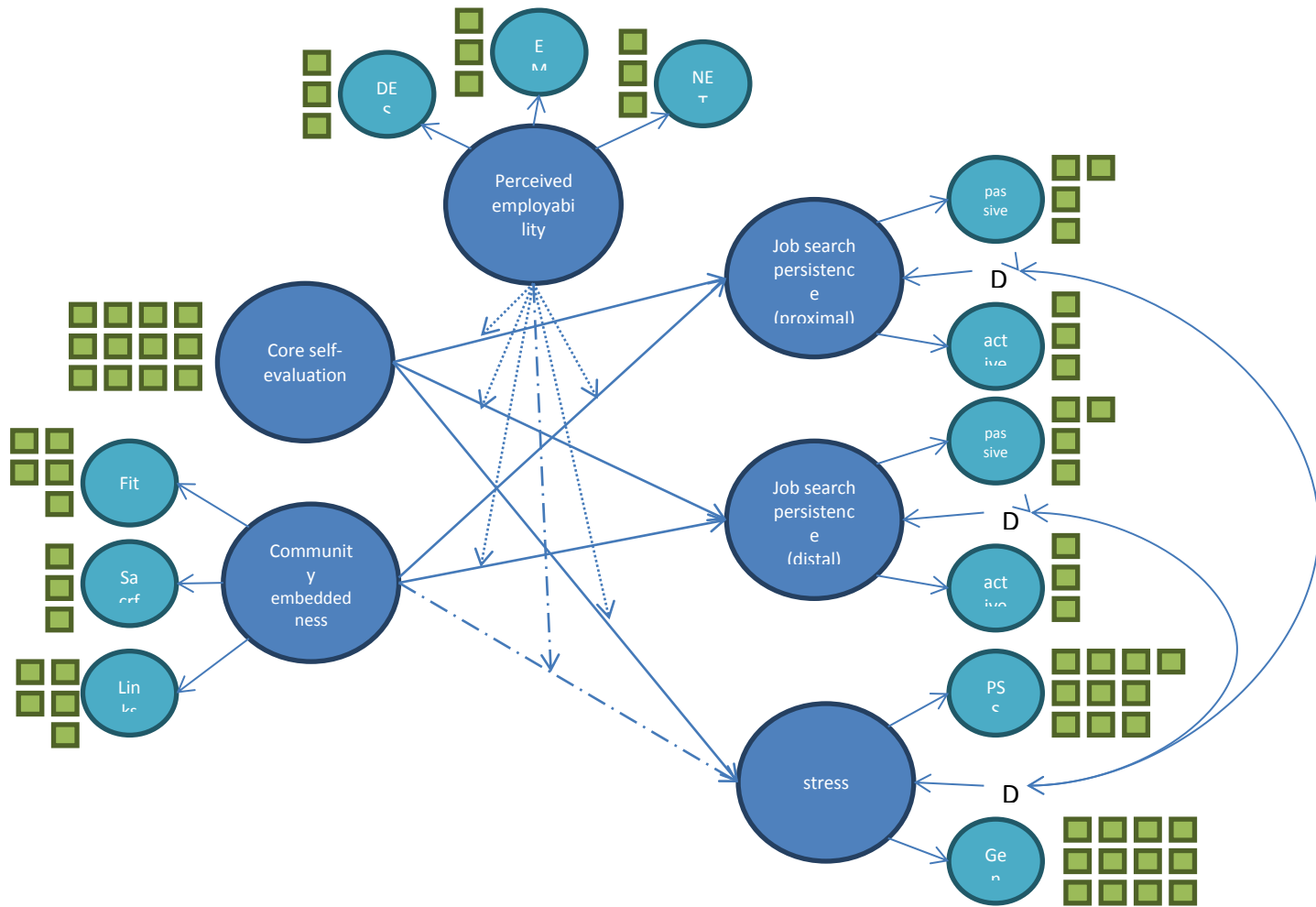
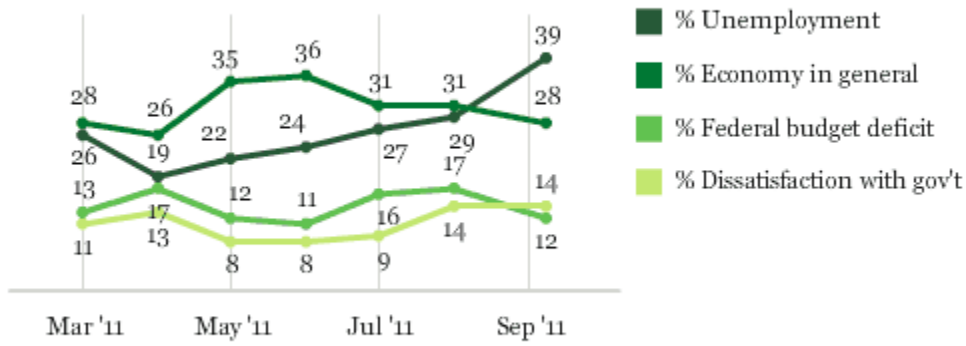


Figure 4. Gallup response trends for “the most important issue facing America today” (from Jones, 2011).

What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?

Recent trend



GALLUP

Figure 5. Losses in earnings based on firm tenure for employees reentering the workforce (Fujita & Rao, 2009).

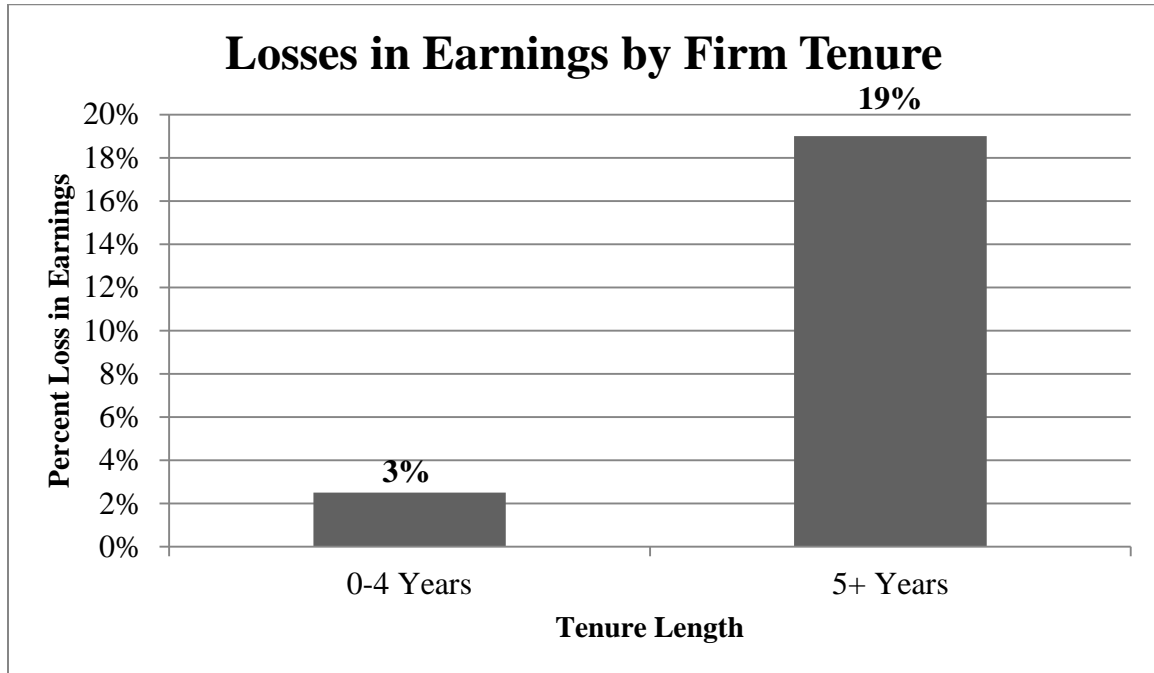


Figure 6. Losses in earnings for high tenured workers that left their occupation and for those that remained in the same occupation (Fujita & Rao, 2009).

