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Abstract
This exploratory study investigates the nature of contacts between executives and search firm professionals, which together encompass the executive search relationship. An initial scale was developed, reviewed by experts and tested. Factor analysis led to a revised scale for further testing, which based on multiple samples identified three types of executive search contacts: (1) search firm-initiated contacts; (2) executive-initiated contacts; and (3) contacts for mutual benefit. Correlational studies among these types as well as related concepts in networking behavior are presented, showing executive search relationships to be a unique and distinct measure. A discussion of the executive search construct's potential to enhance our understanding of the predictors of career success is provided, along with opportunities for further research.
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Introduction
The refinement and evaluation of models of career success continue to be active topics of academic and professional interest. For example, an entire issue of the *Journal of Organizational Behavior* (Gunz and Heslin, 2005) was devoted to this topic, and Ng *et al.* (2005) recently provided the first comprehensive meta-analytic review of this literature. In addition, there is clear evidence that a large number of managerial, professional, and executive positions are filled by utilizing the services of executive search firms (Finlay and Coverdill, 2002).

Yet the current and extensive academic literature devoted to understanding the antecedents of managerial career success is surprisingly silent when it comes to considering the antecedents and career consequences associated with an executive's development of relationships with executive search firms (Judge *et al.*, 1995; Brett and Stroh, 1997; Dreher and Cox, 2000). Even the *Journal of Organizational Behavior* special issue and the Ng *et al.* (2005) review, while focused on career attainment, do not explicitly address the role of executive search firms in the process.

Likewise, we found no empirical studies and few academic articles with a focus on the role of search firms in executive career success in our review of 20 years' worth of leading management, applied psychology, and sociology journals. Finlay and Coverdill (2002) reported that the majority of articles about the industry are trade journal publications focused on marketing or other practical aspects. While their work and Khurana's (2002) are exceptions to the general lack of academic interest, they are descriptive works only, without a focus on the industry's role in executive career success.

The academic literature devoted to the careers area has principally focused on several categories of variables and has empirically tested those variable sets in models designed to predict career success and attainment. These sets have typically addressed a wide range of human capital variables (e.g., education level and type, years of work experience, etc.), motivational and interest attributes (e.g., needs, personality profiles, interest in hierarchical advancement, etc.), attributes of employing organizations and business contexts (e.g., functional specialty, industry, etc.), and socio-demographic factors (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, etc.). This work has accounted for useful levels of variation when considering outcome variables of the compensation, hierarchical level, and career satisfaction variety (e.g., see Bretz *et al.*, 1994; Judge *et al.*, 1995; Judge *et al.*, 1999; Ng *et al.*, 2005).

In addition to these commonly studied variable sets, researchers have begun to consider factors that address access to information, career sponsorship, and mobility patterns (e.g., Dreher and Cox, 1996, 2000; Brett and Stroh, 1997; Adler and Kwon, 2002). Perhaps the most complete treatment of this class of variables (drawing from the sponsored-mobility perspective) is that provided by Seibert, Kraimer, and Linden (2001). These authors have developed and tested a comprehensive social capital theory of career success. Social capital literature generally suggests that relationships between executives and search firm professionals may yield differential career outcomes for executives (Burt, 1992) and that both executives and search firm professionals are interested in building a strong relationship between the two parties.

Similarly, career success literature suggests that certain forms of networking behaviors have positive career implications. Forret and Dougherty (2001, 2004) offer an important tool for extending our understanding of network theory's impact on career attainment. They found that certain forms of networking behaviors do have positive career implications. These five behaviors, along with selected variables from the career success literature, examined in the context of executive search may point to a fuller understanding of career attainment.

While the career success literature provides thoughtful theory and rather comprehensive model testing, its silence on the role played by executive search firms seems to us a serious shortcoming. Thus, it is the goal of the current study to identify and investigate this role and to develop a new scale that may be used in future research on the subject of these relationships – a class of relationships we have labeled *Executive Search Relationships* (ESR). To do so, we first visit theoretical perspectives that could be helpful to understand the interactions between executives and search firm professionals.

Theoretical backgrounds and ESR

Despite the lack of direct previous research in conceptualizing the interactions between executives and search firm professionals, theories exist to suggest multiple facets of the interactions between these two parties. Particularly, we pay special attention to Turner's (1960) contest- *vs* sponsored-mobility perspective as the theoretical guide to approach the interactions between executives and search firm professionals. As was shown by Ng *et al.* (2005), Turner's (1960) sponsored- and contest-mobility perspectives can be used to explain major constructs in career success literature.

Sponsored-mobility perspective

In the case of sponsored-mobility, Turner (1960) outlined a success model in which the elite, or agents of the elite, choose and sponsor new members of the elite class. We suggest here that the headhunter may play the role of the agent, choosing which executives will be offered to the client as potential candidates. This perspective emphasizes the active role played by headhunters in selecting elites among managers and providing differential social support for their career success; thus, the contacts between search firm professionals and executives are largely initiated by search firm professionals.

Finlay and Coverdill (2002) provided the first comprehensive review of the executive search industry, in which they emphasize the proactive

and aggressive role played by search firm professionals in identifying and initiating contacts with potential job candidates. Given the sponsorship role played by executive search professionals, their work fits sponsored-mobility perspective by Turner (1960). Finlay and Coverdill (2002) describe the search industry's many firm structures, which range from individual recruiters to international agencies, in which third-party recruiters, or "headhunters," are enlisted to find candidates for a variety of high level positions. Pay received by the search firm is often in the form of a contingency fee, which is received only when one of its candidates is hired. However, for the upper echelon of positions, search firms are often paid a retained fee regardless of the ultimate decision by the client company to hire one of the proffered candidates. In such cases, only one search firm is hired and fees often exceed one-third of the open position's base salary plus bonus. It is important to note that because their clients are almost exclusively organizations, search firms find people for positions, as opposed to finding positions for individuals (Bretz *et al.*, 1994; Finlay and Coverdill, 2002). As such, search firm professionals must continually and actively seek contact with executives who are potential candidates. In fact, a large part of the headhunter's job is comprised of initiating these contacts in order to identify, qualify, and recruit candidates for open searches.

Finlay and Coverdill (2000, 2002) report that the most attractive candidates are often those who are most satisfied in their current situation, which makes them more difficult to recruit, and subsequently thought to be the most desirable. Concurrent with this process of identifying potential talent for placement, recruiters continually seek job orders from employers. Acquiring job orders consumes a significant part of a headhunter's energy. Although there are numerous variations of the following three methods, cold calls, marketing calls, and calls from former clients are the predominant methods utilized in securing search assignments. Ultimately, if those whom search firm professionals identify are successful, then it follows that these firms may play a role in determining executive career success.

Along with the descriptions made by Finlay and Coverdill (2000, 2002), further support for understanding the role of executive search relationship acting as a sponsor role executive career success can be drawn from Judge *et al.* (1995), who, in reporting on predictors of career success, proposed that most

executives have relationships with search firms. The search firm that provided their sample data "does not accept applications from executives, but rather identifies candidates for inclusion from a variety of sources" (p. 514). We see this as a form of sponsorship. If those whom search firm professionals identify for sponsorship are ultimately successful, then it follows that these firms play a major role in determining executive career success.

Contest-mobility perspective

In contrast, contest-mobility emphasizes the role of executives in initiating the contacts between themselves and executive search firm professionals. Often, executive-initiated contacts occur when executives are proactively seeking attention from executive search professionals. This type of contact can be explained by expectancy-valance theory (Vroom, 1964), and networking behavior (Forret and Dougherty, 2001, 2004). The expectancy-valance theory of motivation suggests that executives seeking greater levels of career success will be motivated to contact search firms if they believe these relationships to be beneficial. Wayne *et al.* (1999) suggested that this was in fact a form of contest-mobility.

The proactive role of executives in initiating the relationship with search firm professionals as a form of contest-mobility is perhaps most well-described by networking behaviors (Forret and Dougherty, 2001, 2004) in career success literature. In a study of 418 business graduates from a large Midwestern state university, Forret and Dougherty offer an important tool for extending our understanding of manager-initiated networking behavior's impact on career attainment. As in contest-mobility, their definition of networking behavior as "an individual's attempts to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career" (p. 284, 2001) places the emphasis on the executives' role in promoting themselves. Their findings support that certain forms of networking behaviors do have positive career implications.

Forret and Dougherty (2001, 2004) found that gender, socioeconomic background, self-esteem, extraversion, favorable attitudes toward workplace politics, organizational level, and type of position are significant predictors of certain network-building behaviors. These five behaviors, along with selected variables from the career success literature, examined in the context of executive search, may

point to a fuller understanding of career attainment. When applied to the executive search firm industry, these might also be behaviors that increase the likelihood that an executive will make regular contacts to headhunters. We expect that those who are prone to engage in networking behaviors are the ones who will likely to initiate contacts with executive search professionals.

Although Turner's (1960) notion of sponsored- *vs* contest-mobility perspective describe the nature of the executive search relationship based on who plays an active role in initiating the relationship, there might be a third element of relationship where executives and search firm professional are seeking mutual benefit and benefits from their contacts, and this can eventually lead to a professional relationship where there is an open sharing of information. Perhaps the literature in social capital is most relevant here in helping to explain this dynamic of ESR. According to Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), social capital is defined as potential and actual resources embedded in the relationships among social actors. For the executives, this third type of contact includes cases where they are contacting the search firm professionals with whom they have relationships on behalf of others in their networks who are looking for career changes. At the same time, this relationship builds a bridge for the headhunter into the executive's organization and social network wherein the headhunter contacts the executive in order to seek referrals for open searches in which the executive is not a candidate. This mutual resource, the referral network between executives and executive search firms may benefit both parties. The search firm professional benefits directly from the introduction of new candidates, while the executive benefits indirectly from a strengthened relationship with the search firm professional which may manifest itself at a later date when the executive is a candidate for a potential career opportunity.

Although these different literatures all point to interactions between executives and search professionals as a potential predictor of executive career success, they differ in their explanations of how the interactions occur and what aspect of an interaction is most salient in its effect on executive career success.

Defining ESR
Previous studies, including those by Finlay and Coverdill (2000, 2002) and Forret and Dougherty (2001, 2004) along with theories proposed by

Turner (1960), suggest that both executives and search professionals maintain contact with each other, and that such contacts could possibly influence executive career outcomes. Hence, based on the theories we described, we define ESR as the interactions between executives and search professionals; connections that may potentially lead to career benefits for the executives. According to Homans (1974), *interaction* (as one of the elementary form of social behavior) refers to the connectedness or the "being in contact" of two (or more) parties and it can be approached in terms of frequency and intensity. The interaction between executives and search professionals appears to represent a bi-directional process, and although the frequency of contact is important, the intensity of the interactions could be equally important for a full understanding of this new variable. Thus, the strength of the relationship could be manifested by both the frequency of the contacts as well as intensity.

Our literature review provided above suggested that there may be at least three facets associated with ESR depending on who takes a primary role in initiating and establishing the contacts. According to sponsored-mobility, ESR may reflect executive search firms' sponsorship, through which chosen executives will continue to grow by earning more career opportunities than those who are not chosen. According to contest-mobility, ESR may reflect executive's initiated contacts to acquire better positions in the career tournament in a long run. Finally, according to social capital, ESR may reflect the mutual resources both executives and executive search professionals invest.

Overview of scale development and research strategies
Given the initial definition of the ESR construct, we developed and validated the ESR scale following the procedures recommended by experts in scale development (Spector, 1992; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). As such, based on the definition provided above, we generated initial items that includes at least the three facets of ESR introduced above and had their relevance judged by experts in the industry. Next, we completed our examination of dimensionality and internal consistency, and finally concluded with a construct validity assessment.

These researchers emphasize that it is vital to employ multiple samples for each step in the scale validation process. Hence, we employed at least two samples for each step, as shown in Table 1. In total,

Table 1 Employing multiple samples for scale validation process and hypothesis testing

Types of construct reliability and/or validity	Study 1 sample (N=48)	Study 2 Exploration sample (N=300)	Study 2 Confirmation sample (N=300)	Study 3 sample (N=154)	Summary table
Number of items included	19 items	10 items	8 items	8 items	Tables 2 and 3
Internal consistency					
Item analysis and reliability	✔	✔	✔	✔	
Exploring dimensionality	✔	✔			Table 2
Confirming dimensionality					
Fit index and loadings			✔	✔	Table 3
Chi-square difference test			✔	✔	Tables 4 and 5
Convergent and discriminant validity					
Fornell and Larcker's (1981) procedure			✔	✔	Table 6
Campbell and Fiske's (1959) procedure				✔	Table 7
Nomological and concurrent validity			✔	✔	Table 8

we conducted three separate studies for scale validation. The purpose of Study 1 (N=48) was both to explore the dimensionalities of the measure and to analyze the internal consistency of the items. Study 2 was based on a large sample size (N=600). Thus, following the procedure used by Lastovicka *et al*. (1999), we randomly split the sample into two equal sets. The Exploration set (N=300) was used for exploring dimensionality and testing internal consistency (as in Study 1). The Confirmation set (N=300) was used to confirm the findings of Study 1 and Study 2 Exploration, and to also test the relationship between ESR and career outcomes. We calculated fit indices using LISREL and also performed chi-square difference tests to see if the three dimensionalities we conceptualized existed in the confirmation sample. Particularly, we confirmed dimensionality, tested convergent and discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) and Campbell and Fiske's (1959) procedures. We then tested nomological validity by calculating correlations among the proposed constructs and potential antecedents and consequences of the constructs. After reviewing the results, the Study 2 Confirmation processes were repeated once more in Study 3 (N=154) employing a separate sample.

Study 1
We first carried out Study 1, in which we conducted interviews, created the initial items, and tested these items. The eight interviews were conducted with executive search professionals from both small boutique search firms to specialist from the largest

search firm in the world. They took place over a six-month period and were conducted by the lead author, six in person and two via phone calls. Each interview lasted 45 min to an hour and was designed as open discussion to explore what possible items might help define the conceptualized construct of the ESR. In creating an item pool, we followed Loevinger's (1957) position: "The items of the pool should be chosen so as to sample all possible contents which might comprise the putative trait according to all known alternative theories of the trait" (p. 659). Hence, we sampled all contents that are potentially relevant to the target construct.

Method

Sample and procedure. As described above, to generate initial items, we conducted a series of interviews with executive search firm professionals in which we presented our proposed measures. These conversations were unstructured but focused on having each of the search professionals describe their processes for identifying, qualifying, recruiting, and placing executives with the employer openings they were attempting to fill. A more robust framing of the executive search relationship was developed through the information provided by these industry experts. These recruiters, along with the President of the Association of Executive Search Consultants (AESC), the premier industry association for the top 100 executive search firms in the world, reviewed multiple drafts of these scale items until

reaching a consensus that executive search relationship was represented with items that had both depth and breadth, as well as a frequency element. Concurrently, two experts in career success literature reviewed the items. As a result of the advice provided by the experts and search professionals, and after checking the *face validity* of the items, we generated 19 items. Redundancy and length for each item, as well as unclear meanings, were also considered (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). With these 19 items, we conducted this exploratory study as described below.

Using a convenience sample, a paper survey was distributed to a group of mid-career MBA students, senior level executives from two Fortune 250 manufacturing companies, and members of a regional professional accounting association in mid-western region of the United States (N=48).

Results

Exploring dimensionality. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used for two primary purposes: (1) to reduce the number of items; and (2) to identify underlying dimensions of the scale items in the initial pool. The item reduction using EFA maximizes the variance of the remaining items and enhances the reliability of the scales (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). We conducted an initial EFA for the original 19 items with an option of principle axis factoring with promax rotation. Initially five factors emerged, but we took only the first three factors, as the reliability associated with fourth and fifth factor were only 0.42 and 0.35. Thus, the nine items associated with these factors were eliminated. These nine items did not show strong face validity in subsequent reviews by the experts. As a result, the nineteen items in the preliminary scale development were reduced to ten. Using these ten items, we conducted an exploratory analysis with the same option described above. Using the criteria of eigenvalue over one, three factor structures emerged (see Table 2).

Interestingly, these preliminary results suggested that the 10 significant items could be meaningfully grouped based on who initiated the contact and with what purpose. The first factor represents contacts that are generally initiated by executive search firm professionals. The second factor represents contacts that are initiated by executives. The items that belong to the third factor generally describe

Table 2 Exploratory factor analyses

Scale items	Factor 1: Search firm-initiated contacts			Factor 2: Executive-initiated contacts			Factor 3: Contacts for mutual benefit		
	Study 1 sample (N=45)	Study 2 Exploration (N=300)	Study 3 sample (N=154)	Study 1 sample (N=45)	Study 2 Exploration (N=300)	Study 3 sample (N=154)	Study 1 sample (N=45)	Study 2 Exploration (N=300)	Study 3 sample (N=154)
Initial item 1 I have rarely been approached by executive search firms. (R)[a]	**0.94**	**0.92**	—	−0.27	−0.15	—	0.11	−0.04	—
Initial item 2 Several executive search firms have contacted me regarding employment opportunities in other companies.	**0.89**	**0.84**	**0.85**	0.03	−0.09	−0.16	−0.15	−0.05	0.04
Initial item 3 I have regularly been on a "first-name-basis" with multiple executive search firms.	**0.65**	**0.64**	**0.73**	0.29	0.22	0.10	−0.10	−0.08	0.03
Initial item 4 I have (frequently) been contacted by the same headhunter for different positions.	**0.62**	**0.48**	**0.60**	0.18	0.20	0.22	0.10	0.19	0.03

Table 2 *Continued*

Scale items	Factor 1: Search firm-initiated contacts			Factor 2: Executive-initiated contacts			Factor 3: Contacts for mutual benefit		
	Study 1 sample (N=45)	Study 2 Exploration (N=300)	Study 3 sample (N=154)	Study 1 sample (N=45)	Study 2 Exploration (N=300)	Study 3 sample (N=154)	Study 1 sample (N=45)	Study 2 Exploration (N=300)	Study 3 sample (N=154)
Initial item 5 I have frequently returned calls from executive search consultants[a]	0.17	0.33	—	0.29	0.12	—	0.21	0.25	—
Initial item 6 I have (frequently) contacted executive search consultants to discuss my career status.	0.14	−0.10	0.13	**0.44**	**0.80**	**0.69**	0.15	−0.05	−0.19
Initial item 7 I have (frequently) contacted executive search consultants just for the purpose of maintaining contact.	−0.10	−0.02	−0.13	**0.72**	**0.68**	**0.63**	0.00	0.12	0.25
Initial item 8 I have (frequently) sent my updated resume to executive search consultants just to keep it current with them.	−0.03	0.05	−0.04	**0.88**	**0.70**	**0.72**	−0.07	−0.11	0.02
Initial item 9 I have made referrals of prospective job candidates when contacted by executive search consultants.[b]	−0.03	−0.04	0.03	0.05	−0.14	−0.05	**0.84**	**0.73**	**0.81**
Initial item 10 I have seldom contacted executive search consultants on behalf of individuals who have asked for my help in securing employment. (*R*)	0.00	−0.03	0.08	−0.03	0.10	0.05	**0.58**	**0.44**	**0.50**
Coefficient alpha among bold items above	(0.85)	(0.82)	(0.83)	(0.74)	(0.75)	(0.74)	(0.62)	(0.70)	(0.73)

[a]These items were deleted due to extremely high or low loadings (>0.90 or <0.40).
[b]This item was reverse coded in Studies 1 and 2.
Notes: Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.
    The factor loadings of scale items that belong to same factor are in bold.

mutual contacts between search professionals and executives in regards to referrals, which in turn build common resources and networks. These three factors explain about 56% of the total variance. To maximize the unidimensionality for these three dimensions, we considered deleting items that showed extremely low or high loadings using the criteria (below 0.40 or above 0.90) suggested by Netemeyer *et al*. (2003). Items with extremely low loadings generally suggest low communality

between the item and the underlying factor. On the other hand, items with extremely high loadings suggest a redundancy. Based on these criteria, two items (Initial items 1 and 5) were considered to be candidates for deletion, but were included here and Study 2 Exploration (see Table 1) to verify that this pattern was recurring. The main purpose of the EFA was to explore underlying dimensions of ESR, and we concluded that three different types of contacts could represent the construct.

Internal consistency – item analysis and reliability. As three dimensions were identified in the EFA, we next tested for internal consistency using coefficient alpha. Initial item 5 was not included, as the loadings on the three factors were not only low but also fairly equal between factors (0.17, 0.29, and 0.21 respectively). As coefficient alpha is not a measure of unidimensionality, we used it to test internal consistency *only after* unidimensionality was established, as suggested by literature (Cortina, 1993; Clark and Watson, 1995; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). The coefficient alphas for the first factor (four items for search firm-initiated contacts), second factor (three items for executive-initiated contacts), and third factor (two items for contacts for mutual benefit) are 0.85, 0.74, and 0.62 respectively, suggesting internal consistency in Study 1 among the items for the first two factors. The third factor is lower than 0.70; however, as coefficient alpha is sensitive to sample size as well as number of items, we retained the third factor and items at this point and decided to retest the reliability in the next sample set.

Study 2
During the process of developing the 10-item measure in Study 1, we discovered the potential need to separate ESR into the three dimensions that were suggested by the results of Study 1 in order to explore the possibility that ESR includes three different types of contacts: search firm-initiated contacts regarding potential career opportunities for the executive; executive-initiated contacts representing attempts to enhance the executive's career success; and finally contacts serving to build and maintain mutual resources for both parties. However, due to the low sample size in Study 1, we wanted to first retest the appropriateness of the three-factor solution with a larger sample.

Method

Sample and procedure. After gaining approval of the resident of the AESC, a professional association founded in 1959 that represents retained executive search consulting firms worldwide, we conducted a web-based survey to collect data. The survey consisted of 83 items that we developed as part of the lead author's doctoral dissertation proposal process and were validated with the convenience sample as described above in Study 1 (Clerkin,

2005). The online survey was located on a secure university website that automatically gathered and tallied the responses to generate a totally anonymous and confidential data set. Access was granted to BlueSteps, an executive career management service maintained by AESC for their members, which gives executives exposure to over 4000 consultants in 1000 offices in 70 countries. BlueSteps subscribers must have a salary of $100,000 at minimum. The President of the AESC distributed an e-mail to 13,663 US-based BlueSteps subscribers inviting them to participate in the present study. Of the 10,188 emails successfully delivered, 756 individuals responded (7.42%). One hundred fifty-six surveys were not included in the analysis because they were missing key fields of information resulting in a sample of 600.

The demographic breakdown of the respondents was as follows: 89.3% were male; 87.8% were White; 70.7% were from middle-income, white-collar socioeconomic backgrounds or higher; and 85.3% were married. The educational demographics indicated that 32.0% held a bachelor's degree; 63.6% had completed a graduate degree; 12.7% graduated from an elite undergraduate institution; and 15.8% graduated from an elite graduate institution. The average amount of work experience was 24.0 years with standard deviation of 7.09; and 67.0% reported periods of unemployment of three months or more.

Measures. In addition to the 10-item scale listed in Table 2, there were additional measures included in the study. *Career promotions* was included in the survey as the following question given to the respondents: "Considering both current and previous employers, how many promotions have you received in your career?" A promotion was defined as a change in more than one of the following: (a) change in offices and/or types of furniture/décor in office; (b) significant increase in salary; (c) qualifying for a company bonus, incentive, or stock plan; (d) significant changes in job scope or responsibilities; and (e) changes in job level in the company. The career promotions measure was expressed as a natural log. This definition has been utilized in prior career success research (e.g., Whitely *et al.*, 1991).

Perceived career success was measured using a four-item scale (Cronbach's alpha=0.80). This measure has been used in prior research on professional and managerial career success and has been shown to have adequate reliability (e.g., Turban and

Dougherty, 1994; Kirchmeyer, 1998; Forret and Dougherty, 2001). A seven-point scale measured perceived career success with the following four items: (a) "How successful has your career been?"; (b) "Compared to your coworkers, how successful is your career?"; (c) "How successful do your 'significant others' feel your career has been?" (1=Very unsuccessful to 7=Highly successful); and (d) "Given your age, do you think your career is 'on schedule,' or ahead or behind schedule?" (1=Well behind schedule to 7=Well ahead of schedule).

Networking behaviors covered five dimensions. The basis for this construct was taken from a study by Forret and Dougherty (2004). Their dimensions included behaviors that were both internal and external to the respondent's employing organization. External dimensions, (a) maintaining contacts, (b) engaging in professional activities, and (c) participating in religious and community activities were included in this study, as were as internal dimensions, (d) socializing, and (e) increasing internal visibility.

We also included two additional measures. *Work experience* was measured by asking respondents to indicate how many years of full-time work experience they had completed (coded as the total number of years). *Career interruptions* were represented by asking respondents to indicate the number of times in their careers they had been unemployed for more than a three-month period (coded as the number of times).

Results

Exploring dimensionality. As previously explained, we followed the two-step approach advised by Lastovicka *et al.* (1999) by splitting the sample of Study 2 into two sets: the Exploration set used for exploring underlying dimensions once more but with a larger sample, and the Confirmation set used for confirming the underlying dimensions. We performed EFA on the 10 items remaining from Study 1 with the option of principle axis factoring as an extraction method. Using the criteria of eigenvalue over one, the analysis produced three underlying factors. The factor loadings from promax rotation are listed under the column "Study 2 Exploration" in Table 2. These three factors explain about 64% of the total variance.

The three-factor solution suggested by EFA in Study 2 Exploration agreed with the three-factor solution suggested by EFA in Study 1. Although the

loading values of some items changed, the overall grouping of the 10 items suggested by EFA from Study 2 Exploration matched well with that of Study 1. The two items (Initial item 1 and Initial item 5)[1] previously considered as candidates for item deletion in Study 1 due to extremely high (>0.90) and low (<0.40) loadings were also identified as having the same pattern of loading in Study 2 Exploration. Thus, based on the recommendation by Netemeyer *et al.* (2003), we deleted these two items for Study 2 Confirmation below.

Internal consistency – item analysis and reliability. Internal consistency was tested using coefficient alpha for Study 2 Exploration. Again, we did not include Initial item 5 due to its equally low loadings on the three factors. The coefficient alphas for search firm-initiated contacts (four items), executive-initiated contacts (three items), and contacts for mutual benefit (two items) in this study are 0.82, 0.75, and 0.70 respectively. These values all exceed 0.70, the cut-off level suggested by Nunnally (1978), implying internal consistency.

Confirming dimensionality. Since the EFA results of Study 2 Exploration once again suggested that ESR includes three types of contacts, we labeled these three different contacts accordingly: (1) search firm-initiated contacts; (2) executive-initiated contacts; and (3) contacts for mutual benefit. We then conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL on the Study 2 Confirmation set to confirm this three-factor solution. CFA is more stringent test of construct validity as it forces the loadings between a construct and item to be zero if the item theoretically should not load on the construct. EFA, on the other hand, freely estimates loadings of items on all underlying dimensions. Thus, for scale validation of known underlying dimensions, CFA is more appropriate (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). A CFA with the three types of contacts hypothesized (after deleting Initial items 1 and 5) produced an excellent fit (χ^2= 28.06, d.f.=17, *P*=0.044; *CFI*=0.99; *SRMR*=0.035). The loadings of the eight items on the three types of contacts are listed in column (1) of Table 3. All loadings are higher than 0.45.

We further tested whether the hypothesized three-factor solution is significantly better than alternative models where fewer numbers of factors might represent these eight items better. The results are summarized in Table 4. Compared

Table 3 Confirmatory factor analysis[a]

Scale and items		(1) Study 2 Confirmation: ESR only (N=300)[b]	(2) Study 2 Confirmation: ESR with other constructs (N=300)[c]	(3) Study 3: ESR with other constructs (N=154)[d]
Search firm-initiated contacts				
SIC1	Several executive search firms have contacted me regarding employment opportunities in other companies.	0.62	0.54	0.69
SIC2	I have regularly been on a "first-name-basis" with multiple executive search firms.	0.68	0.82	0.85
SIC3	I have frequently been contacted by the same headhunter for different positions.	0.76	0.73	0.77
Executive-initiated contacts				
EIC1	I have frequently sent my updated resume to executive search consultants just to keep it current with them.	0.58	0.62	0.68
EIC2	I have frequently contacted executive search consultants to discuss my career status.	0.83	0.68	0.73
EIC3	I have frequently contacted executive search consultants just for the purpose of maintaining contact.	0.72	0.75	0.63
Contacts for mutual benefit				
MIC1	I have made referrals of prospective job candidates when contacted by executive search consultants.	0.56	0.59	0.70
MIC2	I have seldom contacted executive search consultants on behalf of individuals who have asked for my help in securing employment.	0.47	0.45	0.64
Networking behavior – engaging in professional activities				
EP1	Given professional seminars or workshops.	—	0.52	0.51
EP2	Accepted speaking engagements.	—	0.54	0.49
EP3	Acted as a commentator for a newspaper, magazine, or talk show.	—	0.32	0.52
EP4	Taught a course.	—	0.43	0.51
EP5	Published articles in the company's newsletter, professional journals, or trade publications.	—	0.41	0.56
EP6	Attended professional seminars or workshops.	—	0.49	0.33
EP7	Attended conferences or trade shows.	—	0.50	0.53
EP8	Attended meetings of business-related organizations.	—	0.55	0.56
Networking behavior – maintaining contacts				
MC1	Given business contacts a phone call to keep in touch.	—	0.83	0.45
MC2	Sent thank you notes or gifts to others who have helped you in your work or career.	—	0.39	0.41
MC3	Given out business card.	—	0.37	0.36
MC4	Sent cards, newspaper clippings, faxes, or e-mails to keep in touch.	—	0.32	0.34
MC5	Gone to lunch with persons outside the company.	—	0.25	0.39
Networking behavior – church and community activities				
CC1	Participated in church social functions.	—	0.40	0.34
CC2	Participated in community projects.	—	0.67	0.77
CC3	Participated in church work projects.	—	0.40	0.40
CC4	Attended meetings of civic and social groups, clubs, and so forth.	—	0.45	0.36
Networking behavior – socializing				
SO1	Participated in company-sponsored bowling leagues, basketball leagues, and so forth.	—	0.15	—

Table 3 *Continued*

Scale and items		(1) Study 2 Confirmation: ESR only (N=300)[b]	(2) Study 2 Confirmation: ESR with other constructs (N=300)[c]	(3) Study 3: ESR with other constructs (N=154)[d]
SO2	Participated in social gatherings with people from work, besides going out for drinks.	—	0.24	—
SO3	Gone out for drinks after work.	—	0.53	—
SO4	Contacted your friends from college.	—	0.13	—
SO5	Played golf, tennis, and so forth with coworkers or clients.	—	0.64	—
SO6	Talked sports at work.	—	0.55	—
SO7	Attended social functions of your organization.	—	0.19	—
Networking behavior – increasing internal visibility				
IV1	Accepted new, highly visible work assignments.	—	0.58	—
IV2	Been on highly visible task forces or committees at work.	—	0.56	—
IV3	Increased internal visibility.	—	0.01	—
IV4	Stopped by other's offices to say hello.	—	0.22	—
Perceived career success				
PCS1	How successful has your career been?	—	0.89	0.90
PCS2	Compared to your co-workers, how successful is your career?	—	0.70	0.69
PCS3	How successful do your "significant others" feel your career has been?	—	0.66	0.66
PCS4	Given your age, do you think your career is "on schedule," or ahead or behind schedule?	—	0.56	0.55

[a]All loadings were significant at 0.001 significance level.
[b]Fit index for this model: χ^2=28.06, d.f.=17; CFI=0.99, SRMR=0.04.
[c]Fit index for this model: χ^2=895.07, d.f.=695; CFI=0.95, SRMR=0.06.
[d]Fit index for this model: χ^2=454.59, d.f.=350; CFI=0.94, SRMR=0.07.

to four alternative solutions, chi-square difference tests suggest that the hypothesized three-factor model is significantly better.

In addition, we also conducted a CFA on the Study 2 Confirmation sample in which networking behaviors and perceived career success variables were included in the model in order to later test nomological validity. We wanted to confirm that the nine factors (including the three types of ESR contacts, five networking behaviors, and perceived career success) have unidimensionality and are distinct from one another, as this is a necessary step before exploring the relationships among these variables to check nomological validity. The initial fit index suggests a need for fit improvement (χ^2=1128.44, d.f.=704, $P<0.001$; CFI=0.89; SRMR=0.07). A further investigation of the modification index suggests that fit improvement can be made by eliminating redundancy and allowing cross-loadings among scale items that belong to networking behaviors. To meaningfully compare various

constructs, a certain level of fit improvement was needed, as unidimensionality is a necessary condition. Since networking behavior is an established scale and our purpose was not to improve or modify it, we did not attempt to improve the fit by deleting any items of the networking behavior scale. Rather, we allowed error correlations among networking behaviors and cross-loadings of items on two networking constructs. Specifically, we allowed error correlation between the following pairs: EP6-EP7; PC1-PC3; SO2-SO7; EP8-PC4; EP1-PC2; and IV4-MC4. In addition, IV3 and MC5 were loaded on both their own construct and socializing, as the modification index for these cross-loading parameters were all very high. MC1 was also loaded on both maintaining contacts and church and community activities, as its cross-loading is suggested by the modification index. After the modification, the fit index suggests a very good fit (χ^2=895.07, d.f.=695, $P<0.001$; CFI=0.95; SRMR=0.06). The results of this CFA are listed column (2) of Table 3.

Table 4 CFA and fit index comparisons in Study 2 confirmation (N=300)[a]

Study and model	χ^2	d.f.	CFI	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δd.f.	P
Study 2 (N=300) – CFA with three types of executive search contacts only							
Hypothesized model (three-factor model)	28.06	17	0.99	0.035			
One-factor	61.68	20	0.96	0.053	33.62	3	0.000
Two-factor (search firm-initiated contacts+ executive-initiated contacts)	53.41	19	0.96	0.046	25.35	2	0.000
Two-factor (search firm-initiated contacts+contacts for mutual benefit)	36.39	19	0.98	0.043	8.33	2	0.016
Two-factor (contacts for mutual benefit+ executive-initiated contacts)	40.36	19	0.98	0.048	12.30	2	.002
Study 2 (N=300) – CFA with three types of executive search contacts, five types of networking behaviors, and perceived career success							
Hypothesized model (nine-factor model)	895.07	695	0.95	0.058			
Eight-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+engaging in professional activities)	1165.15	703	0.88	0.076	270.08	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+maintaining contacts)	994.12	703	0.92	0.066	99.05	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+church and community activities)	1014.98	703	0.92	0.068	119.91	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+socializing)	1103.98	703	0.89	0.070	208.91	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+increasing internal visibility)	975.81	703	0.93	0.065	80.74	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+engaging in professional activities)	1162.50	703	0.88	0.075	267.43	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+maintaining contacts)	994.17	703	0.92	0.066	99.10	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+church and community activities)	1013.30	703	0.92	0.068	118.23	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+socializing)	1102.83	703	0.89	0.070	207.76	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+increasing internal visibility)	976.95	703	0.93	0.065	81.88	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+engaging in professional activities)	946.22	703	0.93	0.063	51.15	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+maintaining contacts)	933.29	703	0.94	0.061	38.22	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+church and community activities)	945.38	703	0.94	0.063	50.31	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+socializing)	950.92	703	0.93	0.063	55.85	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+increasing internal visibility)	943.22	703	0.94	0.061	48.15	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+perceived career success)	1165.15	703	0.88	0.076	270.08	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+perceived career success)	1226.03	703	0.86	0.080	330.96	8	0.000
Eight-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+perceived career success	947.11	703	0.93	0.063	52.04	8	0.000

[a]Hypothesized models were also significantly better than models with fewer factors, but results are omitted for simplicity sake.

Although the results suggested a nine-factor solution, we further employed tests of chi-square difference to explore whether any further reduced factor structure may exist among these nine constructs that threaten the unidimensionality of the three-dimensional ESR scale and other existing scales. The hypothesized nine-factor model is significantly better than all other alternatives

($P<0.001$), as summarized in the results shown in Table 4.

Convergent and discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) procedure

Convergent validity. The idea of convergent and discriminant validity originated with Campbell and Fiske (1959). According to Campbell and Fiske, convergent validity is "the agreement between two maximally different methods in measuring the same trait" (p. 102). Discriminant validity, on the other hand, refers to the idea that the agreement between two measures of two different traits should not be too high, particularly when compared to the agreement between two different measures capturing the same trait (i.e., construct reliability). That is, if the agreement between measures capturing two different constructs is higher than the construct reliability of one or both of the two constructs, convergent validity suggests that the two constructs are not distinct from one another.

Although there may be disagreement as to whether multiple scale items are maximally different methods, Fornell and Larcker (1981), treating the multiple items as independent methods of measuring the same trait, came up with a measure of construct reliability, $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$, by employing structural equation modeling (SEM). The measure of $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$ implies the agreement among multiple items (independent efforts) measuring the same trait, suggesting convergent validity of a construct. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggest 0.50 as a rule of thumb. We calculated $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$ for the three types of ESR contacts using the Study 2 Confirmation sample. The $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$ for search firm-initiated contacts, executive-initiated contacts, and contacts for mutual benefit are 0.74, 0.73, and 0.51 respectively. Hence, the result suggests convergent validity of each of the proposed factors.

Discriminant validity. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), evidence of discriminant validity exists when the squared correlation between two constructs (γ^2 in SEM) is not bigger than construct reliability as measured by $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$. In a sense, construct reliability acts very similarly to what Campbell and Fiske (1959) calls "validity diagonal." Again using the Study 2 Confirmation sample, we calculated γ^2 for each combination, pairing one of the ESR contact types and one of the remaining variables that were included in Study 2. We then compared $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$ and γ^2. If γ^2 is greater than $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$, it

serves as an evidence that the pair of the constructs are not distinct from each other, suggesting a violation of discriminant validity. The results of this discriminant analysis are listed in Table 6.

For all the pairs between one of the ESR contact types and one of the remaining constructs, construct reliability was greater than the squared correlation between the two constructs, suggesting discriminant validity of each of the three types of contacts. Our Study 2 Confirmation test for nomological validity is included in the Study 3 results, as it was performed alongside the Study 3 tests for nomological validity.

Study 3

The purpose of the Study 3 was twofold. We first wanted to verify that the three-factor solution suggested by Studies 1 and 2 are justifiable from theoretical perspective and to re-confirm it with an independent sample. Second, we wanted to test the implication of these three types of contacts on executive career success using the Study 2 Confirmation sample and the new independent sample.

Method

Sample and procedures. An online survey was sent to 400 clients of a career management consulting company located in the mid-western region of the United States, with a response rate of 34% ($N=154$). With the approval of the Regional Vice President of the company, in an annual customer survey, we were allowed to insert our eight-item scale as well as an alternate version (a Likert scale based on frequency rather than agreement). As with the previous study, additional measures were also inserted. While in Study 2 we included all five of Forret and Dougherty's (2004) networking behaviors, in this study we selected only the three externally oriented networking behaviors (engaging in professional activity, maintaining contacts, and church and community activities), as they are activities primarily focused outside the respondent's employing organization and are most consistent with our notion how executive search firm relationships are established. We included the two career success variables (number of promotions represented as a log, and perceived career success) used in Study 2. In total we included five additional measures in Study 3 with our three types of contacts for ESR.

Results

Most of the test results in Study 3 were very similar to those in Study 2. Thus we briefly summarize the results and describe detailed results of multitrait-multimethod (MTMM) matrix that has not been used in Study 2.

Internal consistency, CFA, and Fornell and Larcker's (1981) procedure. Internal consistency using coefficient alpha was calculated for the eight items used by Study 3, just as in our previous studies. The three scale items that belong to search firm-initiated contacts, the three scale items representing executive-initiated contacts show internal consistency, and two remaining items for contacts for mutual benefit all show internal consistency (coefficient alpha = 0.83, 0.74, 0.73 respectively). We also conducted CFA on the sample (N=154) from Study 3. As with Study 2 Confirmation, we initially conducted CFA with only the three types of ESR contacts. The fit index suggested an excellent fit (χ^2=29.99, d.f.=17, P<0.001; *CFI*=0.98; *SRMR*=0.044). The chi-square difference tests suggest that the hypothesized three-factor models are significantly better than all four alternatives with fewer factors (P<0.001), validating three unidimensional, separate factors.

As in Study 2, another CFA with the three additional networking behaviors and the perceived career success produced very similar results. The initial fit index needed improvement (χ^2=555.38, d.f.=356, P<0.001; *CFI*=0.88; *SRMR*=0.08). Again, the modification index suggested cross-loadings and error correlations among items from networking behaviors only. After going through the same modification process in Study 2 Confirmation, the results suggest an excellent fit (χ^2=454.59, d.f.=350, P<0.001; *CFI*=0.94; *SRMR*=0.068). The loadings are listed in column (3) of Table 3.

Additional chi-square difference test (See Table 5) suggests that three ESR scales represent three unidimensional and separate factors and that these constructs are also different from networking behaviors and perceived career success.

Finally, as in Study 2, we also repeated convergent and discriminant validity tests suggested by Fornell and Larcker's (1981) procedure. In terms of convergent validity, we calculated $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$ for the three types of ESR contacts in Study 3. Although the construct reliability for contacts for mutual benefit in Study 2 Confirmation exceeded the 0.50 level suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the relatively lower level may have come from the fact

that the measures of contacts for mutual benefit has only two items and that both items in the scale are reverse coded, which may increase disagreement in responses. Thus, we decided to modify one measure (the first item of contacts for mutual benefit) so that it is no longer a reverse coded scale item in Study 3. After this modification, $\rho_{vc(\eta)}$ for the three types of ESR contacts in Study 3 suggest high levels of convergent validity, as the value is 0.82 for search firm-initiated contacts, 0.72 for executive-initiated contacts, and 0.71 for contacts for mutual benefit, all considerably exceeding 0.50. Again, the result suggests convergent validity of the proposed scales. In terms of discriminant validity, as can be seen in Table 6, just as in Study 2 Confirmation, for all the pairs between one of the ESR contact types and one of the remaining constructs, construct reliability was greater than the squared correlation between the two constructs, suggesting discriminant validity of each of the three types of contacts.

Discriminant and convergent validity using MTMM matrix. Discriminant and convergent validity of the final eight-item scale of the three types of ESR were also tested using the MTMM matrix approach originally suggested by Campbell and Fiske (1959). The MTMM matrix can be created by employing multiple traits and multiple methods. In Study 3, we included the three different traits of ESR contacts and two different methods of measuring those traits by employing the (1) agreement Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) and (2) frequency Likert scale (rarely to very often). In the survey, we randomly mixed these items to avoid any bias stemming from item sequence. Then MTMM matrix was created by calculating correlations among three traits and two methods. Table 7 shows the resulting MTMM matrix.

Evidence of *convergent validity* of the measures of the three types of contacts is provided in the validity diagonal (3) in Table 7. This is the extent to which the correlations are significantly different from zero and sufficiently large enough to encourage further examination of the validity (Campbell and Fiske, 1959; Churchill, 1979). All the entries in this block differed from zero (P<0.001) and are substantially large, meeting the requirement of convergent validity. That is, two different methods showed significant convergence in measuring the same trait.

Table 5 CFA and fit index comparisons in Study 3 (N=154)[a]

Study and model	χ^2	d.f.	CFI	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δd.f.	P
Study 3(N=154) – CFA with three types of executive search contacts only							
Hypothesized model (three-factor model)	29.99	17	0.98	0.044			
One-factor	108.61	20	0.83	0.010	78.62	3	0.000
Two-factor (search firm-initiated contacts+ executive-initiated contacts)	63.08	19	0.92	0.071	33.09	2	0.000
Two-factor (search firm-initiated contacts+contacts for mutual benefit)	76.14	19	0.89	0.088	46.15	2	0.000
Two-factor (contacts for mutual benefit+ executive-initiated contacts)	79.36	19	0.89	0.091	49.37	2	0.000
Study 3(N=154) – CFA with three types of executive search contacts, three types of networking behaviors, and perceived career success							
Hypothesized model (seven-factor model)	454.59	350	0.94	0.068			
Six-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+engaging in professional activities)	633.30	356	0.83	0.099	178.71	6	0.000
Six-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+maintaining contacts)	525.69	356	0.90	0.078	71.10	6	0.000
Six-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+church and community activities)	520.86	356	0.90	0.085	66.27	6	0.000
Six-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+engaging in professional activities)	589.46	356	0.86	0.086	134.87	6	0.000
Six-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+maintaining contacts)	525.43	356	0.90	0.077	70.84	6	0.000
Six-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+church and community activities)	512.22	356	0.91	0.082	57.63	6	0.000
Six-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+engaging in professional activities)	528.38	356	0.90	0.080	73.79	6	0.000
Six-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+maintaining contacts)	529.39	356	0.90	0.082	74.80	6	0.000
Six-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+church and community activities)	526.12	356	0.90	0.079	71.53	6	0.000
Six-factor model (search firm-initiated contacts+ perceived career success)	672.55	356	0.81	0.098	217.96	6	0.000
Six-factor model (executive-initiated contacts+perceived career success)	609.69	356	0.85	0.096	155.10	6	0.000
Six-factor model (contacts for mutual benefit+perceived career success)	527.96	356	0.90	0.080	73.37	6	0.000

[a]Hypothesized models were also significantly better than models with fewer factors, but results are omitted for simplicity sake.

Evidence of *discriminant validity*, on the other hand, requires three comparisons (Churchill, 1979; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). First, the entries in diagonal (3) should be higher than entries in the heteromethod block (4) that share the same row and column. Second, the correlations in the validity diagonal (3) should be higher than the correlations in the heterotrait-monomethod block (2). The idea is that the agreement between two methods on a same trait should be higher than agreement between two different traits using a common method. That is, for these three contacts to be discriminant from one another, measures of three traits using the same method should not correlate too highly, and the criteria to

determine their correlation levels come from the validity diagonal (3). The third requirement is that the pattern of correlations should be the same in all the heterotrait triangles (block 2 and block 4). The MMTM matrix shown in Table 5 meets these three requirements, suggesting discriminant validity among the three constructs.

Testing the relationship between ESR and career success. We predicted that there would be relationships among three types of contacts and career success variables, which we tested by measuring their nomological and concurrent validity. More specifically, *nomological validity* and *concurrent validity* were tested using potential antecedents

Table 6 Testing convergent and discriminant validity using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) procedure

Constructs	$\rho_{vc(\eta)}$ (Construct reliability)		γ^2 (Squared correlation between two constructs)		Evidence of convergent validity ($\rho_{vc(\eta)} > 0.50$)		Evidence of discriminant validity ($\rho_{vc(\eta)} > \gamma^2$)	
	Study 2 Confirmation (N=300)	Study 3 (N=154)	Study 2 Confirmation (N=300)	Study 3 (N=154)	Study 2 Confirmation (N=300)	Study 3 (N=154)	Study 2 Confirmation (N=300)	Study 3 (N=154)
Search firm-initiated contacts	0.74	0.82			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
with executive-initiated contacts	—	—	0.29	0.26	—	—	Yes	Yes
with contacts for mutual benefit	—	—	0.10	0.09	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – engaging in professional activities	—	—	0.01	0.04	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – maintaining contacts	—	—	0.01	0.00	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – church and community activities	—	—	0.00	0.00	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – socializing	—	—	0.02	—	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – increasing internal visibility	—	—	0.02	—	—	—	Yes	Yes
with perceived career success	—	—	0.02	0.08	—	—	Yes	Yes
Executive search-initiated contacts	0.73	0.72			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
with search firm-initiated contacts	—	—	0.29	0.26	—	—	Yes	Yes
with contacts for mutual benefit	—	—	0.06	0.05	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – engaging in professional activities	—	—	0.00	0.01	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – maintaining contacts	—	—	0.02	0.03	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – church and community activities	—	—	0.00	0.03	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – socializing	—	—	0.01	—	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – increasing internal visibility	—	—	0.01	—	—	—	Yes	Yes
with perceived career success	—	—	0.00	0.01	—	—	Yes	Yes
Contacts for mutual benefit	0.51	0.71			Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
with search firm-initiated contacts	—	—	0.10	0.09	—	—	Yes	Yes
with executive-initiated contacts	—	—	0.06	0.05	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – engaging in professional activities	—	—	0.00	0.00	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – maintaining contacts	—	—	0.01	0.00	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – church and community activities	—	—	0.00	0.03	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – socializing	—	—	0.00	—	—	—	Yes	Yes
with networking behavior – increasing internal visibility	—	—	0.01	—	—	—	Yes	Yes
with perceived career success	—	—	0.01	0.02	—	—	Yes	Yes

and consequences of the three types of contacts between executives and search firm professionals. If there is construct validity of our measures, they should fit "lawfully" into a network of relationships, or a "nomological network" (Cronbach and Meehl, 1955). As potential antecedents, we included Forret and Dougherty's five types of networking behaviors (2001, 2004), and we included promotion

Table 7 Study 3 multitrait-multimethod matrix

	Method 1 – Agreement Likert scale (Strongly disagree – Strongly agree)			Method 2 – Frequency Likert scale (Rarely – Very often)		
	Search firm-initiated contacts	Executive-initiated contacts	Contacts for mutual benefit	Search firm-initiated contacts	Executive-initiated contacts	Contacts for mutual benefit
Method 1 – Agreement Likert scale						
Search firm-initiated contacts	(1) 0.82					
Executive-initiated contacts	(2) 0.51	0.72				
Contacts for mutual benefit	0.30	0.23	0.71			
Method 2 – Frequency Likert scale						
Search firm-initiated contacts	(3) 0.60	(4) 0.27	0.20	(1) 0.70		
Executive-initiated contacts	(4) 0.37	0.66	0.22	(2) 0.20	0.66	
Contacts for mutual benefit	0.24	0.21	0.42	0.17	0.15	0.59

log and perceived career success as potential consequences. Since the data were collected at the same time, testing the nomological validity this way also suggests concurrent validity. Conceptually, these antecedents and consequence should most likely correlate with the three types of contacts with different magnitude. As CFA had previously confirmed the unidimensionality of the constructs, we created correlations among the constructs, as shown in Table 8.

As potential antecedents of ESR, we expected that some networking behaviors may also be associated with the three ESR contact types. In Study 3, a pattern was observed that the first two types of contacts had more significant correlations with networking behaviors than did contacts for mutual benefit. The results suggest that contacts for mutual benefit is least affected by networking behaviors. We then returned to our Study 2 Confirmation sample for testing and found that search firm-initiated contacts were significantly correlated with

four of five networking behaviors; all except church and community activities. Executive search-initiated contacts were significantly correlated with maintaining contacts and increasing internal visibility. The contacts for mutual benefit were significantly correlated with none of the networking behaviors.

Regarding potential consequences, in Study 3 only search firm-initiated contacts were significantly correlated with perceived career success ($r=0.28$, $P<0.001$) and career promotion log ($r=0.19$, $P<0.05$). Neither contacts for mutual benefit nor executive-initiated contacts were significantly correlated with any of the career success variables, confirming our prediction that search firm-initiated contacts would be most strongly associated with career success. Again looking back at the Study 2 Confirmation sample, we found that promotion log and perceived career success were both significantly correlated with search firm-initiated contacts ($r=0.14$ and 13 respectively,

Table 8 Correlations among major constructs[a]

Variables	Study 2 Confirmation sample (N=300)			Study 3 (N=154)		
	Search firm-initiated contacts	Executive-initiated contacts	Contacts for mutual benefit	Search firm-initiated contacts	Executive-initiated contacts	Contacts for mutual benefit
Search firm-initiated contacts	(0.74)	0.54***	0.32***	(0.82)	0.51***	0.30***
Executive-initiated contacts	0.54***	(0.73)	0.25***	0.51***	(0.72)	0.23**
Contacts for mutual benefit	0.32***	0.25***	(0.51)	0.30***	0.23**	(0.71)
External networking – engaging in professional activities	0.12**	0.06	−0.01	0.20*	0.08	−0.01
External networking –maintaining contacts	0.16**	0.15**	0.11*	0.00	0.16	0.02
External networking – church and community activities	0.04	0.07	0.07	0.00	0.18*	0.16
Internal networking – socializing	0.13**	0.09	0.00	—	—	—
Internal networking – increasing internal visibility	0.13**	0.12**	0.08	—	—	—
Work experience	−0.03	−0.03	0.06	0.01	−0.06	−0.04
Career interruption	0.10	0.08	0.15**	0.03	0.12	0.06
Promotion log	0.14**	0.01	0.19***	0.19*	0.12	0.14
Perceived career success	0.13**	0.00	0.12**	0.28***	0.05	0.11

[a]Numbers in the parenthesis are construct reliabilities ($\rho_{vc(\eta)}$).
***$P < 0.001$.
**$P < 0.01$.
*$P < 0.05$ (two-tailed).

$P < 0.01$). Contacts for mutual benefit were also significantly correlated with perceived career success ($r=0.12$, $P < 0.01$) and career promotion log ($r=0.19$, $P < 0.001$). However, executive-initiated contacts were not significantly correlated with either of the career success variables. Again, the results confirmed that search firm-initiated contacts are most reliably associated with career success.

Discussion

Career success research has long overlooked the role of ESR in executive career success. The purpose of this study was to conceptualize a construct and scale that provide a useful measure of this important variable. We used diverse empirical methods throughout each distinct study with results that consistently show that the proposed ESR scale has a three unidimensional factor structure, as well as internal consistency reliability, discriminant validity, convergent validity, and nomological validity. Our methods and results are all in conformance with recognized standards for scale development (e.g., Spector, 1992; Netemeyer *et al.*, 2003). ESR is shown to be useful for empirical exploration and understanding of differences in career outcomes among executives.

Overall our results are fairly consistent with the body of literature from career success, networking, and executive search literature. Our results show that search firm-initiated contacts were significantly associated with career success measures that include promotions and perceived career success. These findings are in alignment with the Bretz *et al.* (1994) description of a "pull effect" that occurs when rapid career moment may be seen as a signal of accomplishment and subject the manager to the attention of executive search professionals. In contrast, executive-initiated contacts did not serve as a significant predictor of these same career success measures. Finlay and Coverdill (2002) make it clear that the role of executive search is to find candidates for clients, not jobs for candidates, so our findings that executive contacts are less powerful relative to career movement and success seem reasonable. Likewise, contacts for mutual benefit were also limited in their ability to significantly predict these career success measures. This third aspect of the executive search relationship is most closely aligned with Forret and Dougherty (2004) networking behaviors and may possibly be something that matures and grows in strength and value over time and possibly is not captured as cleanly in this study. That is to say, it could have substantial

positive career benefits that are captured later in an executive's career. The findings, at least based on our study, suggest that as far as executive career success is concerned, being identified as an elite executive by an executive search firm could be much more important than executives themselves initiating contacts.

As can be seen from our results, search firm-initiated contacts were most closely associated with career success. Perhaps this is to be expected since, as previously mentioned, most of the executive search literature implies that search firms tend to operate according to the sponsored mobility perspective. Finlay and Coverdill (2002) emphasize that it is the search firm professionals who actively maintain the database and contacts with executives who are not necessarily planning a change of employment. Furthermore, there is the possibility that executives who are unsuccessful in their careers may initiate contacts. This potentially negative association could offset the positive relationship suggested by networking behavior literature. Conversely, contacts for mutual benefits may yet be associated with executive career success, but it may take executives early in their careers more time to build such social capital. Thus its effectiveness may depend on the career stage of the executives.

Limitations and directions for future studies

Although the result of our study found empirical support for the supposition that ESR plays a role in executive career success, a variety of follow-up studies seem warranted. First, ESR needs further refinement. We see a particular need to use descriptive and qualitative research methods to better understand the domain of behaviors representing ESR. Contacts for mutual benefit may need to measure more items so that internal consistency and construct reliability can be enhanced. Thus, future research may modify the scale to include more than two items.

Future studies can take part or all of our ESR scale and investigate career outcomes as well as antecedents that lead to different aspect of ESR. There could be individual characteristics as well as social characteristics that may predict an executive's tendency to focus on one aspect of ESR over the others. Even though we included career success measures, there are many other career outcomes such as mobility, negotiating salaries, idiosyncratic deals that can be predicted by ESR.

In testing nomological validity, we used simple correlational analysis between potential antecedents

(networking behaviors), consequences (promotion and perceived career success), and the proposed three types of ESR contacts. However, only more comprehensive model testing after controlling for various human capital variables will adequately deal with predictive validity of the three types of contacts. In the current project, the sample size was not big enough to conduct SEM for all the three studies; thus we draw the conclusions from the correlational studies. However, employing SEM and more complete CFA would be advisable in future studies.

Additionally, while we interviewed a group of knowledgeable executive search professionals, this approach needs to be expanded. We suggest similar interviews should be conducted with individuals in organizations who regularly use executive search services to fill open positions, and with the individual managers and executives who become job candidates through executive search. Regarding executive search professionals, we encourage the gathering of information about how these individuals go about identifying managerial and executive talent. A better understanding of the characteristics, behaviors, and human capital assets that executive search professionals value in their search for managerial talent will strengthen this stream of research and help build a more comprehensive model of the antecedents of ESR.

Conclusions

We believe that career theorists, hiring managers, human resource professionals, executive search professionals, and individual career aspirants will find interest in this focus on the antecedents and career consequences of forming relationships with executive search professionals. We have introduced a measure and advanced a preliminary model/framework for studying these processes and hope that this stimulates additional research on this topic and subsequent modifications to the framework. While this is an exploratory first step, it represents a necessary step in a process to better estimate models of career success and attainment. The large and growing industry that brokers the movement of managerial and executive talent across organizational and international boundaries has not been adequately represented in models of the career attainment process. This oversight needs to be corrected. The findings from the current study should provide encouragement to other researchers to learn more about this mysterious industry and its effects upon the performance of client companies and the career trajectories of individuals.

Note

[1]In an additional CFA analysis later with these two deleted items included, modification indices suggested that significant fit improvement can be made by allowing error correlation between Initial item 1 and Initial item 2 in Table 1 (MI=44.72). Also, significant improvement by allowance of cross-loading of Item 5 on both *Search firm initiated contacts* and *Contacts for mutual benefit* is indicated (MI=10.36). This confirmed the redundancy of Initial item 1 suggested by extremely high loading in EFA, and low communality between Initial item 5 and three types of contacts; thus, deleting these two items was also supported in further CFA analyses.

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