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Personality, Interpersonal Skills, and Students' Job Search Behaviors

by

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ABSTRACT

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The ways that people identify and pursue employment opportunities represents an important aspect of organizational life, and students who are entering the job market for the first time have a vested interest in their own job search, as the activities they engage in during the search process have direct implications for their future career success. Building from socio-cognitive and self-regulatory theories of job search and career choice (e.g., Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), the present dissertation examined the roles of Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, proactive personality, and political skill for predicting students’ preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors. These distal characteristics were posited to influence students’ job search behaviors through two mediating mechanisms: job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. In addition, recent research suggests that the same personality trait might simultaneously influence the job search process in both positive and negative ways depending on the mediating mechanisms examined (Zimmerman, Boswell, Shipp, Dunford, & Boudreau, 2012). The present dissertation offers an alternative, yet complimentary explanation for these opposing effects, where narrower traits within a broad personality domain might demonstrate distinctive relationships with various aspects of the job search process. To this end, the present dissertation examined the roles of six meso-level aspects for the Big Five personality traits of Conscientiousness (i.e., Industriousness and Orderliness), Extraversion (i.e., Enthusiasm and Assertiveness),
and Neuroticism (i.e., Volatility and Withdrawal; see DeYoung, Quilty, & Petersen, 2007) for predicting students’ job search behaviors. Findings for a sample of 280 graduating seniors revealed that Extraversion, proactive personality, and political skill positively predicted a variety of job search behaviors, whereas Conscientiousness was not related to these behaviors. Contrary to expectations, Neuroticism was positively related to students’ preparatory search behaviors. Job search self-efficacy and job search clarity did not meaningfully mediate the relations between students’ distal characteristics and their engagement in job search. A number of interesting relationships were identified for the meso-level personality aspects, where some aspects within a broad personality domain were meaningfully related to the job search process, while others were not. Considerations and directions for future research are discussed.
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Personality, Interpersonal Skills, and Students’ Job Search Behaviors

Chapter 1: Introduction

People spend a substantial portion of their waking lives at work. As such, how people identify and pursue employment opportunities represents an important aspect of organizational life. Within this context, the ways that students seek out and obtain employment are of interest to a wide range of stakeholders, including the job seekers themselves, university administrators, and organizations and those who represent them (Saks, 2005). Students seeking employment after college have a vested interest in their own job search, as the activities they engage in during the search process have direct implications for their future success (Steffy, Shaw, & Noe, 1989). Universities, likewise, have an interest in demonstrating a pattern of successful career placement for their alumni. From a recruitment perspective, organizations want to attract the best possible talent to fill job vacancies; thus, understanding how recent graduates pursue employment can help businesses focus their recruitment efforts.

Research over the past decade has increasingly examined the role of individual differences in job search behaviors (Boswell, Zimmerman, & Swider, 2012; Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001; Saks, 2006; Zikic & Saks, 2009; Zimmerman, Boswell, Shipp, Dunford, & Boudreau, 2012). College students, who are often entering the job market for the first time, are among the most frequently studied populations of interest in this area (Boswell et al., 2012; Saks, 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1999). College is a time when students engage in a wide range of activities that inform important decisions, such as the choice of college major (Galotti et al., 2006), which influence—and often create—
their future employment opportunities. Indeed, students’ first job after college is a key predictor of their future success and earnings (Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Steffy et al., 1989).

Of the various individual difference characteristics related to students’ successful job search, personality traits often demonstrate meaningful relationships with search behavior and employment outcomes (e.g., Côté, Saks, & Zikic, 2006; Crossley & Stanton, 2005; Kanfer et al., 2001; Turban, Stevens, & Lee, 2009). Much of this research shows that these distal personality traits affect job seekers’ behavior through their influence on search-specific self-efficacy and search goal clarity (Brown, Cober, Kane, Levy, & Shalhoop, 2006; Moynihan, Roehling, LePine, & Boswell, 2003; Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002). In addition, some authors have suggested that people higher in proactivity demonstrate greater job search success (Brown et al., 2006; Claes & De Witte, 2002; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999; Zimmerman et al., 2012).

Although traditional predictors of employee performance (e.g., cognitive ability, Conscientiousness) are potentially useful in determining job search success, Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic, and Kaiser (2013) have suggested that these predictors may not fully capture what employers realistically seek out in their applicants. According to Hogan et al., applicants’ social skills and success in interpersonal interactions may also represent an important source of information for selecting employees—at least from the practical viewpoint of the organization, if not also supported by validity evidence (e.g., Chia, 2005; Fox & Spector, 2000; Lievens & Sackett, 2012; Tziner, Vered, & Ophir, 2004; van Hoye, van Hooft, & Lievens, 2009).

The present dissertation extends past research in the area of job search behaviors by examining the roles of a number of distal individual difference characteristics in the
search for employment. More specifically, I examine individual differences in students’ personality traits, proactivity, and interpersonal skills, which are all posited to influence students’ search behaviors. Building from socio-cognitive and self-regulatory theories of job search and career choice (Bandura, 1986, 1989; Kanfer et al., 2001; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Zikic & Saks, 2009), these distal individual difference characteristics are expected to relate to students’ engagement in search behaviors through their effects on students’ search-related self-efficacy and search goal clarity, which in turn should influence actual engagement in search behaviors and eventual employment.
Job Search Behaviors

Job search behaviors are broadly defined as self-directed actions in which job seekers engage to identify, initiate, and pursue opportunities for employment (Kanfer et al., 2001). These activities include, but are not limited to, gathering information about employment opportunities, generating and evaluating alternatives, and choosing from employment alternatives (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994; Saks, 2005, 2006). Traditionally, job search behaviors have been operationalized by asking job seekers to indicate the level of effort they have dedicated towards and frequency with which they have engaged in a variety of search related behaviors (e.g., preparing a résumé, information gathering, filling out job applications, and preparing for interviews; Barber et al., 1994; Blau, 1994; Werbel, 2000). Intuitively, increased engagement in search behaviors should translate into greater opportunities for employment success (Kanfer et al., 2001; Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987). Job search behaviors play a critical role in the employment process, as search behaviors, in part, dictate the availability of employment alternatives throughout the search period (Barber et al., 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2002). In the most comprehensive meta-analysis on the antecedents and outcomes of job search behaviors to date, Kanfer et al. (2001) found small-to-moderate, positive correlations between job search behaviors and employment status ($r = .21$) and number of job offers received ($r = .28$), correcting for sampling error variance only, and a small, negative correlation between increased job search behavior and duration of unemployment ($r = -.14$).
According to Kanfer et al. (2001), job search is the outcome of a self-regulatory process that begins with the identification of and commitment to pursue an employment goal (see also, Bandura, 1986, 1989). Further, Kanfer et al. argue that individual differences in job search behaviors are largely self-determined (via job search effort and intensity), where the search activities in which the job seeker engages determine the variety and number of employment opportunities from which to choose (Saks, 2005). This self-regulatory job search process terminates upon achieving or abandoning the goal of employment.

**Job search sources.** Research in the area of job search behaviors has often considered the means by which job seekers identify and gather information about potential employment opportunities, or job search sources (Saks, 2006). Traditionally, these sources have been categorized into two types: *formal sources*, which include public avenues of recruitment such as job postings, newspaper and online advertisements, and employment counseling; and *informal sources*, which include private avenues of recruitment such as friends, relatives, coworkers, or those already employed by the organization but not acting in an official capacity (Barber et al., 1994; Saks, 2005).

One key search strategy using informal sources is *networking*—or actions aimed at contacting friends, acquaintances, and referrals to seek out information and advice regarding employment (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). Several recent studies have examined the role of networks in the job search process (e.g., Burger & Caldwell, 2000; McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007; Tziner et al., 2004; van Hoye et al., 2009). For example, Wanberg et al. (2000) found that networking behaviors were negatively associated with exhaustion of unemployment benefits, and positively related to
reemployment outcomes. Similar research has found that job seekers who engaged in more frequent networking behaviors have shorter lengths of unemployment (e.g., $r = - .19$; Tziner et al., 2004), and that those who use social search strategies, including informal networks, demonstrate greater success in obtaining follow-up interviews (Burger & Caldwell, 2000). More recently, van Hoye et al. (2009) found that job seekers who had larger and stronger social networks received a greater number of job offers during the search process than those with weaker social networks, above and beyond the use of more traditional search strategies (e.g., reading newspaper advertisements, using internet resources); however, networking was unrelated to employment status in this study (see also, Wanberg et al., 2000). This body of research suggests that job seekers’ use of informal networks is key to understanding the job search process.

**Job search effort and intensity.** The job search literature has operationalized individual differences in search behaviors by distinguishing between two related, but distinct characteristics of the search process: *job search effort* and *job search intensity*. Job search effort refers to the resources (energy, time, and persistence) that job seekers dedicate to their search activities (Blau, 1993, 1994; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2006). Generally, measures of job search effort are less focused on the specific job search activities job seekers engage in, but rather ask job seekers to rate the overall level of effort they exerted in their search (e.g., “gave my best effort to find a new job”; Blau, 1993, 1994; Saks, 2005). Job search intensity, on the other hand, refers to the frequency with which job seekers engage in employment-oriented behaviors (Saks, 2006). Measures of search intensity typically ask job seekers to indicate how frequently they
participated in a set of search-related behaviors (e.g., “prepared/revised a résumé”, “filled out a job application”; Blau, 1993, 1994) over a standard period of time (Saks, 2005).

**Preparatory vs. active search behaviors.** Much of the literature on job search has aggregated across a variety of search behaviors, where higher scores on combined measures of search intensity are positively related to search success. Recently, however, researchers have reasoned that search behaviors are temporally ordered, with some activities occurring more frequently during the early stages of the search process (e.g., identifying employment opportunities) and others occurring primarily in the later stages of the search process (e.g., participating in job interviews). Drawing on Soelberg’s (1967) job search and choice model, Blau (1993, 1994) distinguished between two types of job search behaviors: preparatory job search behaviors and active job search behaviors. Preparatory search behaviors encompass those activities a job seeker engages in to gather information, identify opportunities for employment, and prepare relevant materials (e.g., résumés); whereas active search behaviors encompass those activities that a job seeker engages in once the job search process has started, such as sending in résumés, communicating with potential employers, and participating in employee selection procedures (e.g., employment interviews; Blau, 1993, 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Soelberg, 1967; see also, Kinicki & Latack, 1990). Examining these two phases in congruence gives a general picture of the behaviors that job seekers engage in while attempting to find employment, given that job seekers are likely to alternate between preparatory and active search behaviors over the course of their job search. However, examining preparatory and active search behaviors as distinct, yet related aspects of job search might provide a more nuanced understanding of the search process (Saks, 2006).
In a series of studies, Saks and Ashforth (e.g., Saks, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1999, 2000, 2002) examined the influence of preparatory and active job search behaviors on search outcomes. For instance, Saks and Ashforth (1999) found that active \( r = .20 \), but not preparatory \( r = .06 \) job search behaviors demonstrated meaningful relations with students’ employment status at the time of their graduation. Conversely, preparatory \( r = .27 \), but not active \( r = .14 \) search behaviors were statistically significantly correlated with employment status four months post-graduation among those who had not accepted a job offer at the time of graduation (note, preparatory and active search behaviors correlated \( r = .62 \)). In a related study, Saks and Ashforth (2000) found that both preparatory \( r = .24 \) and active \( r = .22 \) job search behaviors were related to the number of job offers received, and that active search intensity predicted number of interviews received \( r = .26 \). Similarly, Saks and Ashforth (2002) found both preparatory and active search behaviors to demonstrate meaningful relations with job seekers’ perceived person-organization and person-job fit at the time of organizational entry; however, neither factor was related to job seekers’ employment outcomes following four months of employment (e.g., job satisfaction, perceived fit). Finally, Saks (2006) examined the associations between preparatory and active job search intensity, job search effort, and a variety of search outcomes (e.g., number of interviews, employment status). Saks found active job search intensity to be the strongest predictor of number of job interviews received \( r = .55 \) and job offers \( r = .27 \); however, preparatory job search intensity only demonstrated a small-to-moderate relationship with number of job interviews \( r = .21 \), and a small, statistically non-significant relationship with number of job offers \( r = .11 \). Collectively, the findings of this research by Saks and Ashforth suggest that although
both preparatory and active job search behaviors are positively associated with search success criteria, active search behaviors might play a more dominant role in determining a job seekers’ eventual search and employment outcomes; further, different types of search activities (e.g., preparatory vs. active) demonstrate differential relationships with search outcomes, depending on the criteria of interest (Saks, 2006) and the timeframe in which such criteria are examined (Saks & Ashforth, 1999).

**Job Search Outcomes**

Research on job search behaviors across a variety of contexts has considered a number of criteria for job search success. Among these, researchers have most frequently operationalized job search success through the number of interviews and employment offers received (e.g., Moynihan et al., 2003; Saks & Ashforth, 1999), length of job search (e.g., Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999), and employment status (e.g., Schwab et al., 1987). Beyond these direct outcomes, others have identified alternative objective indicators of search success (e.g., starting income; Werbel, 2000) and affective responses to the work environment and the work itself (e.g., job satisfaction, person-job fit; Saks, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Wanberg et al., 2002) as important outcomes of the job search process.

Early researchers in the area of job search behaviors decried the inconsistencies in the operationalization of job search criteria and a lack of an organizing taxonomy for the various outcomes of interest examined in the literature (Brasher & Chen, 1999). In response to such criticisms, Saks (2005) organized the various job search criteria into a series of temporally consecutive clusters of outcomes, labeled the *unfolding process of job search success* (see also, Barber et al., 1994; Brasher & Chen, 1999; Saks, 2006; Saks
& Ashforth, 2000). According to this model, job search behaviors lead to proximal job search outcomes (e.g., interviews obtained), which lead to subsequent search outcomes (e.g., number of job offers), which in turn lead to employment once the job seeker accepts an offer amongst alternatives.

Saks (2005) divided the various outcomes examined in the literature into three categories, following the temporal sequence of the unfolding process. First, job search outcomes are those that take place during the search process itself, such as the number of interviews a job seeker participates in, and the number of job offers a job seeker receives (prior to job choice). Second, employment outcomes reflect those outcomes that are a result of the job search process, primarily indexed through employment status, but also manifest in job seekers’ perceptions of person-job and person-organization fit prior to organizational entry. Third, and finally, indices of employment quality reflect those cognitive-affective processes that occur after the job seeker begins employment, such as levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and post-employment person-job and person-organization fit. However, associations between job search behaviors and this latter category have been inconsistent, where several studies have found statistically non-significant relationships between job seekers’ search effort and intensity and these outcomes (e.g., Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Wanberg et al., 1999, 2000; Werbel, 2000).

Based on the unfolding process of job search success, job search behaviors should demonstrate stronger relationships with more proximal search outcomes (e.g., interviews obtained), and smaller relationships with subsequent outcomes in the unfolding process. Indeed, Saks (2006) found support for this position, where job sources, self-efficacy, and search behaviors—especially, active job search intensity—predicted 33% of the variance
in number of interviews received, 23% of the variance in number of job offers received, and just 13% of the variance in employment status. Further, the addition of prior search outcomes (e.g., number of interviews received) contributed incremental variance to the prediction of subsequent outcomes after controlling for job seekers’ self-efficacy and search activities.

Given the various operationalizations of job search success (Barber et al., 1994; Brasher & Chen, 1999; Saks, 2005), one might expect a variety of alternative predictors to contribute to our understanding of the job search process. As such, researchers have examined the role of a number of potential individual difference characteristics in the job search process, ranging from distal personality traits (e.g., Conscientiousness, Extraversion; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999) to more proximal predictors of job search behaviors and success (e.g., job search self-efficacy; Zimmerman et al., 2012). Thus, I next review a number of the key individual difference characteristics implicated in the research on job search behaviors and outcomes, and the mechanisms that mediate these relations.

**Distal Predictors of Job Search Behaviors and Outcomes**

**Personality traits.** Personality traits are among the most frequently studied predictors of job search behaviors and search outcomes (e.g., Côté, Saks, & Zikic, 2006; Crossley & Stanton, 2005; Kanfer et al., 2001; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Steffy et al., 1989; Turban et al., 2009; Tziner et al., 2004). Generally, this research has been conducted using the Five Factor Model of personality (or the *Big Five*), which organizes personality traits into five broad, higher-order factors typically labeled as Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism (or its
Research examining relations between personality traits and job search behaviors generally posits that the influence of personality traits on search behaviors is expressed in the selection of specific search strategies and the decision to engage in search activities (Kanfer et al., 2001). According to Kanfer (1992), personality traits exert their influence on employment status in part through their effects on more proximal, motivational processes, such as job search engagement. As such, the relations between such personality traits and these motivational processes should be stronger than those relations observed between personality traits and employment outcomes. Kanfer et al. (2001) found moderate, positive associations between Extraversion ($r = .46$) and Conscientiousness ($r = .38$) with job search behaviors, and small-to-moderate relations for Openness ($r = .27$) and Agreeableness ($r = .15$), correcting for sampling error variance alone. Further, Kanfer et al. found a weak, negative relationship for Neuroticism and job search behaviors ($r = -.07$). With respect to job search outcomes, Kanfer et al. reported weak to small, negative relationships between each of the Big Five traits and duration of job search ($rs$ ranged -.01 for Neuroticism to -.12 for Conscientiousness); negative correlations between Neuroticism and employment status ($r = -.09$) and number of job offers ($r = -.22$); and finally, small, positive relationships between Conscientiousness and employment status ($r = .13$) and number of offers ($r$
Notably, these authors reported small-to-moderate correlations between motivational variables and overall job search (e.g., self-efficacy, $r = .27$).

A number of primary studies also demonstrate the importance of the personality traits as distal predictors of job search behaviors and employment outcomes. These studies have examined relations between the Big Five and a number of search behaviors, such as career exploration and information seeking (e.g., Reed, Bruch, & Haase, 2004), networking (e.g., Tziner et al., 2004; Wanberg et al., 2002), interviews (e.g., Tay, Ang, & Van Dyne, 2006; Burger & Caldwell, 2000), and a variety of other search-related activities (e.g., Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2006; Boudreau, Boswell, Judge, & Bretz, 2001; Schmit, Amel, & Ryan, 1993). Of the Big Five, Conscientiousness is among the most frequently studied personality traits for predicting job search behaviors and outcomes (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Côté et al., 2006; Kanfer et al., 2001; Turban et al., 2009). In a study of graduating college seniors, Brown et al. (2006) examined the role of Conscientiousness and trait proactivity for predicting students’ job search effort and intensity, along with students’ confidence in their ability to engage in successful search behaviors (i.e., job search self-efficacy, described below). These authors reported small, positive correlations between Conscientiousness and job search effort ($r = .16$) and intensity ($r = .18$), but Conscientiousness was not statistically significantly related to number of interviews or job offers. However, Conscientiousness did demonstrate a moderate, positive correlation with students’ self-efficacy ($r = .38$), which in turn was related to these outcomes ($rs = .18, .19$, for number of interviews and job offers,

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Kanfer, Wanberg, and Kantrowitz (2001) were unable to examine relationships for Extraversion, Openness, and Agreeableness with employment status and number of job offers due to insufficient numbers of studies examining these relationships.

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respectively). Brown et al. next tested a series of structural equation models to examine
the mediating effects of job search self-efficacy on personality-job search relationships.
Results indicated that job search self-efficacy fully mediated the influence of proactivity
on search behaviors; however, Conscientiousness was not related to job search outcomes
directly or indirectly. Brown et al. posited that these null results for Conscientiousness
might be an artifact of the overlap between Conscientiousness and the narrower trait of
proactivity ($r = .42$), and suggested that facets of Conscientiousness (e.g., Achievement-
Striving) may demonstrate meaningful relations with search outcomes.

In a related study, Côté et al. (2006) examined the criterion-related validity of
Conscientiousness for predicting job search clarity (i.e., goal strength; described below)
and a number of job search outcomes. These authors reported small-to-moderate
correlations for Conscientiousness with job search self-efficacy ($r = .28$) and search
clarity ($r = .31$). Similar to the results of Brown et al. (2006), however, Côté et al. (2006)
failed to find statistically significant relationships between Conscientiousness and search
outcomes; yet, job search clarity was statistically significantly related to job search
behaviors and several search outcomes (i.e., number of interviews, employment status),
suggesting a potential indirect relationship between job seekers’ distal Conscientiousness
and the job search process through the effects of search goal strength. Collectively, the
results of Brown et al. (2006) and Côté et al. (2006) suggest that Conscientiousness may
influence search behavior through a number of more proximal mediating mechanism,
such as search-related goals and efficacy beliefs.

Research on the job search process has also considered a number of the Big Five
personality traits beyond Conscientiousness. For instance, Burger and Caldwell (2000)
examined the role of Extraversion and positive affect for predicting graduating college seniors use of social (e.g., informal networking) versus nonsocial (e.g., newspaper ads) search strategies for seeking employment. These authors found a moderate, positive correlation for Extraversion with social search strategies ($r = .35$), and a small-to-moderate, negative correlation with nonsocial search strategies ($r = -.22$). Further, Extraversion demonstrated a moderate positive correlation with interview success ($r = .30$), as indexed by invitations to second-round interviews. However, a series of hierarchical regressions revealed that Extraversion did not predict incremental variance in social search strategies or interview success above and beyond the influence of positive affectivity, but predicted incremental variance in the use of nonsocial strategies.

More recently, Zimmerman et al. (2012) examined the influence of Extraversion and Neuroticism on job search behaviors in a sample of employed job seekers. These authors posited that individual broad personality traits (e.g., the Big Five) might simultaneously exert both positive and negative influences on job seekers’ search behaviors depending on the mediating mechanisms examined. These authors found Extraversion to correlate positively with job seekers’ job search self-efficacy ($r = .30$), but negatively with engagement in search behaviors ($r = -.16$). Moreover, Neuroticism correlated negatively with job search self-efficacy ($r = -.21$) but positively with search related behaviors ($r = .15$). Zimmerman et al. (2012) next tested a series of partial mediation hypotheses examining five potential mediators of personality-job search behaviors relations. These analyses revealed interesting and complex associations between Extraversion and job search behaviors, where Extraversion had positive effects on a number of mediating mechanisms (e.g., ambition, job search self-efficacy), but a
negative direct effect on search behaviors themselves. Likewise, a number of complex associations were revealed for the broad trait of Neuroticism, where Neuroticism was positively related to a number of mediating mechanisms in employed job seekers’ considering alternative employment (e.g., ambition, job burnout, financial strain), but was negatively related to job seekers’ job search self-efficacy.

The aforementioned research generally supports associations between the Big Five personality traits of Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Conscientiousness and job search behaviors and outcomes (e.g., Boswell et al., 2006; Boudreau et al., 2001; Kanfer et al., 2001; Schmit et al., 1993; Zimmerman et al., 2012). To this end, I examine these three Big Five personality traits to determine their role in the job search process.

Proactive personality. Proactive personality is a stable disposition to take personal initiative in a broad range of activities and situations in order to actively shape the self and the environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Li, Liang, & Crant, 2010; Siebert et al., 1999). The literature on proactivity has largely arisen from the interactionist perspective of people and environments, recognizing the role of individual differences for influencing environmental conditions (Grant & Ashford, 2008). According to Crant and his colleagues (e.g., Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000), people high in proactivity identify and act on opportunities presented in the environment, demonstrate personal initiative to influence such opportunities, take action, and persist until meaningful change occurs. Conversely, people low in proactivity generally fail to seize opportunities when they are presented, and exhibit a more passive and reactive disposition towards their environment.
Research in the area of individual differences in proactivity-related constructs (e.g., proactive personality, personal initiative, voice; Bateman & Crant, 1993; Fay & Frese, 2001; Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010) has identified a number of behaviors that proactive people tend to exhibit that might inform the job search process (e.g., Fuller & Marler, 2009; Grant & Ashforth, 2008). First, one of the hallmark behaviors that proactive people engage in at work is feedback seeking (e.g., Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003); specifically, individuals higher in proactivity are more likely to seek out external sources to confirm their level of performance on the job. In the job search context, the tendency to seek out feedback might result in individuals higher in proactivity contacting potential employers more frequently, including confirming interview times and seeking additional information after an initial interview, which may, in turn, translate to positive perceptions of the job seeker and more positive search outcomes. A second key behavior exhibited by proactive people with direct influence on the search process is the increased tendency towards network building (e.g., McArdle et al., 2007; Thompson, 2005). As noted, networking behaviors have been implicated as beneficial to the job search process (e.g., Tziner et al., 2004; van Hoye et al., 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000), and as such, people higher in proactivity should be more likely to engage in socially-oriented job search behaviors given their propensity to seek out connections and opportunities through informal sources.

Third, and finally, proactive personality is meaningfully associated with individual differences in the pursuit of personal and organizational goals (e.g., Fay & Frese, 2001; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010), overlapping with several broad dimensions of the Big Five (i.e., Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Openness; Brown et al., 2006;
Grant & Ashford, 2008; Fuller & Marler, 2009). Recently, Fuller and Marler (2009) reported statistically significant corrected meta-analytic correlations between proactive personality and four of the Big Five traits: most notably Extraversion ($\rho = .41$), Conscientiousness ($\rho = .34$), and Openness ($\rho = .34$). Given that job search is largely self-determined (Kanfer et al., 2001), highly proactive people might identify clearer search goals during the search process, potentially resulting in increased effort and narrower search parameters (see Côté et al., 2006; Wanberg et al., 2002).

In line with these behavioral tendencies of highly proactive job seekers, research has broadly linked individual differences in proactive personality to a variety of workplace outcomes, such as personal achievement, attributions of transformational and charismatic leadership, overall job performance, and markers of career success including salary, promotions, and job satisfaction (e.g., Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 1995; Crant & Bateman, 2000; Fuller & Marler, 2009; Parker et al., 2010; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001; Thompson, 2005). In a recent meta-analysis of employee proactivity at work, Thomas et al. (2010) reported a small-to-moderate positive correlation between proactive personality and overall job performance ($\rho = .26$), corrected for measurement artifacts (cf. $\rho = .35$; Fuller & Marler, 2009).

Several primary studies inform relationships between proactive personality and job search behaviors and outcomes (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Claes & De Witte, 2002; McArdle et al., 2007; Schmit et al., 1993). In an early study on proactivity during the job search process, Schmit et al. (1993) examined assertive job-seeking strategies—similar to the concept of active job search behaviors (Blau, 1993, 1994)—in a sample of unemployed individuals seeking reemployment. These authors found individual
differences in assertive job seeking to statistically significantly predict job seekers’ likelihood of reemployment. In a subsequent study, Claes and De Witte (2002) examined proactive personality as a predictor of search behaviors in a sample of Flemish graduating college seniors. Claes and De Witte reported a small, positive correlation between proactive personality and students’ perceptions of the availability of job opportunities ($r = .21$), and a moderate, positive correlation between proactivity and job search behaviors ($r = .31$). As mentioned, Brown et al. (2006) examined the roles of Conscientiousness and proactive personality as predictors of a number of search-related outcomes. Brown et al. found small-to-moderate correlations between proactive personality and numbers of interviews ($r = .21$) and job offers ($r = .22$). Further, these authors found that job search self-efficacy—confidence in one’s capabilities to successfully perform job search activities (Saks, 2005, 2006)—fully mediated the relationship between proactive personality and job search behaviors, search effort, and search outcomes. Finally, in a study of unemployed people seeking reemployment, McArdle et al. (2007) found moderate positive correlations between proactive personality and job seekers networking ($r = .34$) and job search ($r = .32$) activities, and a small-to-moderate positive correlation with reemployment outcomes ($r = .24$). Collectively the aforementioned research on proactivity suggests that individual differences in proactive personality represent a key distal predictor of job seekers’ search behaviors and eventual employment outcomes. Further, this research posits a number of mediating mechanisms through which proactive personality may influence the job search process, including job search self-efficacy (e.g., Brown et al., 2006), goal strength (e.g., Fay & Frese, 2001; Parker et al., 2010), and socially-oriented search behaviors (e.g., McArdle et al., 2007; Thompson, 2005).
The present dissertation extends past research on the role of proactive personality in students’ job search efforts by examining a number of potential proximal mediating mechanisms that may transmit the effects distal personality traits—namely, the Big Five personality traits and their facets, and proactive personality—on subsequent search behaviors and outcomes. Before discussing more proximal predictors of job search behavior, I next discuss an alternative class of distal predictors of search behaviors and employment outcomes, namely, individual differences in human capital and interpersonal skills.

**Human capital and interpersonal skills.** In general, research has shown individual differences in typical measures of human capital—career oriented characteristics such as educational attainment, work experience, training, skills, and knowledge (McArdle et al., 2007)—to be modest predictors of job search behaviors (Saks, 2005; see Kanfer et al., 2001). In their meta-analysis, Kanfer et al. found correlations between education and work experience, and job search behaviors of practically insignificant to small magnitudes (e.g., \( r = -0.15 \), for job tenure). Of note, however, is the limited scope of the variables considered. Specifically, background characteristics such as these may demonstrate modest relations with search behaviors and outcomes across employment contexts. Other biographical information relevant to college student behaviors (e.g., participation extracurricular activities; Tay et al., 2006), however, might be more useful for predicting students’ search activities and eventual employment.

Research on job search behavior and academic performance has shown students’ grade point averages (GPA) to demonstrate small, positive correlations with the preparatory and active search activities, and employment success for recent graduates.
reported a strong positive correlation between student grades and invitations to an initial interview \((r = .63)\), moderate-to-strong positive correlations between grades and subsequent-round interviews \((r = .48)\), and moderate positive correlations between student grades and number of job offers received \((r = .32)\). Similarly, Tay et al. (2006) found a moderate, positive correlation between students’ GPA and interview success \((r = .38)\); further, these authors found a strong, positive correlation between GPA and the number of interviews received \((r = .66)\), despite a negative correlation between students’ GPA and number of applications submitted \((r = -.18)\). These results suggest that although students with higher GPAs may be more selective in applying for jobs, students’ successful prior academic performance is a strong predictor of initial interview offers.

However, not all studies have found clear correlations between GPA and job search behaviors. For instance, Steffy et al. (1989) failed to find a significant relationship between GPA and engagement in search behaviors. Rather, GPA had a direct influence on job search outcomes (e.g., number of on-site interviews) and an indirect influence on search outcomes through its impact on search expectations. These authors posited that students’ prior academic performance influences search behaviors through its impact on students’ self-evaluations and job search self-efficacy, where students’ past experiences of success contribute to their expectations of achieving employment.

Although academic performance has been traditionally operationalized in terms of student GPA, recent research has begun to recognize the need to consider alternative indicators of student success as part of the academic performance domain, including students’ participation in extracurricular activities and their interpersonal skills (e.g.,
Oswald, Schmitt, Kim, Ramsey, & Gillespie, 2004). Several past studies provide
supporting evidence that these extracurricular indicators of academic success predict a
variety of job search outcomes. In a study on the role of positive affectivity and
Extraversion in the job search process, Burger and Caldwell (2000) found these
personality traits to predict students’ engagement in social activities in college ($r_s$ = .40, .31, respectively), and interview success ($r_s$ = .35, .30, respectively). Moreover,
students’ participation in social activities was positively associated with interview
success ($r = .39$). Although these authors did not test the mediating effects of
participation in social activities between job seekers’ individual difference characteristics
(here, positive affect and Extraversion) and interview success, one might posit a temporal
process by which students’ personality influences their engagement in various social
activities, which in turn influence their success in obtaining interviews and eventual
employment.

Hogan et al. (2013) note that it is these interpersonal skills (e.g., social sensitivity,
cooperation, negotiation, listening and communication) developed during social activities
that impact the likelihood that an interviewee receives an offer, based on the
organization’s desire for applicants with higher levels of such skills (see also, Lievens &
Sackett, 2012). Chia (2005) provided supporting evidence for this position. In a study of
students applying for positions in Chinese accounting firms, Chia examined relationships
between students’ participation in extracurricular activities and their scores on the
Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i; Bar-On, 1997) with job search outcomes (i.e.,
number of initial and follow-up interviews received, number of job offers received).
Although students’ participation in extracurricular activities was modestly correlated with
initial interview offers ($r = .21$), extracurricular activities were moderately correlated with subsequent interviews ($r = .39$) and number of job offers received ($r = .43$).

Chia (2005) posited that the increase in the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and later job search outcomes was related to the emphasis placed on social skills at later phases of the search process, and that participation in such extracurricular activities facilitated the development of such skills. Chia reported a similar pattern of relationships for students’ levels of emotional intelligence—defined as the ability to monitor one’s own emotions and the emotions of others, and to use this information to guide behavior (Salovey & Mayer, 1989/1990)—for predicting job search outcomes as those found extracurricular activities. Specifically, emotional intelligence was unrelated to initial interview offers ($r = -.03$), but demonstrated a small-to-moderate positive relationship with subsequent interview offers ($r = .28$), and a strong positive relationship with number of job offers received ($r = .57$). Furthermore, when second-round interviews and number of job offers were simultaneously regressed on emotional intelligence, extracurricular activities, and student grades, only emotional intelligence was a significant predictor of these outcomes (note, also, that earlier interviews significantly predicted outcomes at later stages of the job search process). The results of the study by Chia (2005) suggest that although interpersonal skills may not be a major determinant of initial interview offers, the importance of such skills increases as job seekers progress to later stages of the job search process.

Tay et al. (2006) also provide some supporting evidence for this position in their research on interview success in graduating accounting majors. These authors examined relationships between students’ prior leadership experience, and the number of interviews
received and interview success (operationalized as the total number of job offers received). Although leadership experience was not statistically significantly related to the number of interviews students’ received ($r = .07$), Tay et al. reported a small positive correlation between leadership experience and interview success ($r = .18$). These findings again suggest that although interpersonal skills—developed during leadership experiences—may not play an integral role in securing initial interviews, students with higher interpersonal skills are more likely to be perceived as qualified candidates, potentially leading to subsequent interviews and job offers.

The aforementioned research suggests that interpersonal skills play a key role in job seekers’ obtaining of interviews and eventual employment. To this end, I consider the role of one key class of interpersonal skills in the job search process, namely, political skill—the ability to understand others at work, and to use knowledge gained through interpersonal interactions to influence others in order to further personal and/or organizational goals (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004; Ferris et al., 2005, 2007). Given the findings of research on interpersonal behaviors and job search outcomes, the direct and indirect pathways through which political skill, as an index of human capital, influences job search and employment outcomes are of interest. Having described the research on personality and human capital predictors in the job search process, I next turn to a discussion of two potential mediating mechanisms through which the effects of distal individual difference characteristics are transmitted.

**Proximal Predictors of Job Search Behaviors and Outcomes**

**Job search self-efficacy.** Job search self-efficacy refers to the confidence in one’s ability to successfully perform the activities required for obtaining employment
(Saks, 2005, 2006), and studies have shown job search self-efficacy to be one of the most robust predictors of job search behaviors and employment success (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Moynihan et al., 2003). Individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy for a given task (e.g., job search) are more likely to persist in task engagement in the face of task difficulty (Bandura, 1986; Kanfer, 1990; Kanfer et al., 2001). Research has consistently shown job search self-efficacy to demonstrate meaningful relationships with a wide range of search-related behaviors, including both preparatory and active search behaviors (e.g., Saks, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1999), assertive search strategies (e.g., Schmit et al., 1993), number of interviews and job offers (Brown et al., 2006), search duration, and employment status (Kanfer & Hulin, 1985; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005). As noted, in their meta-analysis of the antecedents and outcomes of job search behaviors, Kanfer et al. (2001) reported a small-to-moderate correlation between self-efficacy and job search ($r = .27$), correcting for sampling error variance only, and job search self-efficacy was positively related to employment status ($r = .09$), number of job offers ($r = .28$), and negatively related to the duration of job search ($r = -.12$).

A number of primary studies support the role of job search self-efficacy as a predictor of job search behaviors. For instance, Saks and Ashforth (1999) found small-to-moderate correlations between job search self-efficacy and job search intensity and active job search behaviors ($rs = .26, .28$, respectively), and a moderate positive correlation between job search self-efficacy and more proximal preparatory search behaviors ($r = .37$). In a subsequent study on change in job search behaviors over time, Saks and Ashforth (2000) found a similar pattern of relationships between job search self-efficacy and initial preparatory ($r = .37$) and active ($r = .19$) search behaviors;
however, these relations were found to decrease over time, such that the correlation
between job search self-efficacy and preparatory search behaviors at time two was
seemingly weaker in magnitude ($r = .26$), and the relationship between job search self-
efficacy and active search behaviors was no longer statistically significant ($r = .07$).

Research has generally supported the role of job search self-efficacy for
predicting a variety of job search outcomes, including number of interviews, job offers,
and employment status (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Moynihan et al., 2003; Saks, 2006). For
example, Moynihan et al. (2003) found a statistically significant positive relationship for
job search self-efficacy with number of job offers from preferred employers ($r = .31$);
however, these authors also reported a negative relationship for job search self-efficacy
with number of interviews ($r = -.26$), and a statistically non-significant relationship with
number of job offers received ($r = .12$). These authors posited that self-efficacy might
not demonstrate meaningful relationships with search outcomes because individuals exert
less control over outcomes of the search process, relative to the influence of motivational
factors (e.g., self-efficacy) on self-directed search behaviors. In addition, Moynihan et al.
found an interaction between job search self-efficacy and the number of interviews
received—qualifying the aforementioned negative association—such that job seekers
higher in self-efficacy who were offered a greater number of interviews received a
greater number of job offers overall than those job seekers higher in self-efficacy who
received offers for relatively few interviews, and such that there were no differences in
employment offers for job seekers low in self-efficacy independent of the number of
interviews received.
Saks (2006) reported correlations between job search self-efficacy and a variety of job search outcomes from small ($r = .25$, employment status) to moderate ($r = .34$, number of interviews; $r = .37$, number of job offers) in magnitude. Similar to Moynihan et al. (2003), Saks (2006) examined the moderating role of job search self-efficacy for predicting relationships between interviews and subsequent outcomes. Although the interaction between job search self-efficacy for predicting the number of job offers received was not significant, Saks found that the interaction between job search self-efficacy and number of job offers predicted incremental variance in employment status above and beyond the main effects of these predictors alone ($\Delta R^2 = .05$), where job seekers low in self-efficacy were more likely to accept an offer compared to those higher in self-efficacy. Finally, Brown et al. (2006) reported small positive correlations between job search self-efficacy and numbers of interviews ($r = .18$) and job offers ($r = .19$) received. Collectively, this research suggests that the influence of job search self-efficacy declines at later stages of the job search process; specifically, as situational strength increases, alternative predictors play a larger role in determining such outcomes.

**Job search clarity.** Beyond differences in search specific self-efficacy, Wanberg et al. (2002) suggested that job seekers’ goals should play a mediating role in the relations between individual differences and job search outcomes (see also, Bandura, 1989; Kanfer, 1992). To this end, Wanberg et al. (2002) introduced the concept of job search clarity, or the extent to which job seekers have clear job search objectives and a clear idea of the type of career, work, or job desired (Côté et al., 2006; Wanberg et al., 2002; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Individuals with higher-levels of job search clarity should demonstrate more focus in their job search activities, dedicating more resources to
pursuing job options to meet specific goal end-states. Conversely, those low in search clarity should spend more time seeking out a variety of opportunities in their job search and exploring alternative career paths, thus reducing the effort dedicated towards intense search activities within a given career area. Wanberg et al. (2002) posited that these differences in job search clarity would result in differences in job seekers’ quality of eventual employment. These authors found that job search clarity predicted higher levels of organizational fit ($\beta = .12$) and lower turnover intentions ($\beta = -.07$) among recently unemployed people seeking reemployment.

In a subsequent study, Zikic and Saks (2009) examined the mediating role of job search self-efficacy and job search clarity between career exploration activities and job search behaviors. Results suggested that job seekers who engage in more career exploration tended to demonstrate clearer job-search goals than those who did not engage in career exploration. Job search clarity, in turn, was statistically significantly related to both job search intentions and search intensity ($r = .21, .34$, respectively), suggesting a potential mediating pathway from career exploration to job search behaviors through job-search goals. The results of these two studies suggest that goal clarity plays a pivotal role in determining job seekers’ search effort and may potentially be an important predictor of eventual success in the work environment.

It is notable that Zikic and Saks (2009) did not include distal personality characteristics in their study; and indeed, associations between personality traits and job search clarity are understudied in the job search literature. Côté et al. (2006), however, provide some indication regarding the relations between Conscientiousness, job search clarity, and search behaviors. As noted, Côté et al. found a moderate, positive association
between Conscientiousness and job search clarity ($r = .31$). Further, these authors found job search clarity to demonstrate a strong, positive association with job search intensity ($r = .52$), and small-to-moderate positive associations with number of job interviews ($r = .20$) and employment status ($r = .21$). Although the results of Côté et al. suggest that job search clarity might mediate the relations between Conscientiousness and actual engagement in job search behavior, additional research is needed to support this claim.

**Job Search Behaviors in College Students**

A broad examination of the job search literature reveals several inconsistent findings with respect to the relationships between distal personality traits, motivational mediating mechanisms (e.g., self-efficacy), and a variety of job search criteria. Specifically, some studies have found statistically and practically significant relationships between personality traits, job search self-efficacy, and job search outcomes (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2006), whereas other studies have found statistically and practically non-significant relations between these constructs (e.g., Côté et al., 2006; Moynihan et al., 2003; Saks & Ashforth, 2000). Boswell et al. (2012) suggest that the job search context—whether participants are new entrants to the market, unemployed job seekers, or currently employed individuals seeking career change—offers one potential explanation for these seemingly inconsistent results.

According to Boswell et al. (2012), new entrants to the job market—such as graduating college students—are generally seeking their first full-time employment opportunities, and as such may be unfamiliar with the various activities necessary for obtaining employment (see also, Turban et al., 2009). Further, graduating students may vary in their career focus: some students may hold clear employment goals and seek out
opportunities within a given field (e.g., human resource management, chemical engineering), whereas others may have less focused search goals and may seek out opportunities across numerous career options (Werbel, 2000). Given this lack of familiarity with the labor market and variation in search focus, the role of individual differences in motivation (i.e., personality traits) becomes even more vital than for job seekers seeking employment opportunities in other contexts, who may rely more on personal experience and informal networks to identify employment opportunities (see Boswell et al., 2012; Côté et al., 2006; Tziner et al., 2004; Werbel, 2000). Meta-analytic evidence supports this potential distinction between the role of motivational characteristics in the search process between new entrants to the market (e.g., recent college graduates) and other types of job seekers. Specifically, Kanfer et al. (2001) found that measures of several Big Five personality traits (i.e., Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism) demonstrated stronger associations with job search behaviors for new entrants into the job market than for unemployed job seekers pursuing reemployment. Conversely, self-esteem and social support demonstrated stronger relations with job search behaviors for unemployed job seekers than for new entrants. Boswell et al. (2012) suggest that distal personal characteristics (e.g., personality traits) partially determine new entrants’ ability to form clear search goals (i.e., job search clarity) and influence their confidence in their ability to find employment (i.e., job search self-efficacy) more so than for job seekers in other contexts, who may have well defined goals and clearer knowledge of their own abilities before beginning the search process (see also, Kanfer, 1992; Kanfer et al., 2001). Thus, individual differences in new entrants’ distal personality traits may play a greater role in determining their job search behaviors and
eventual success than for job seekers in other search contexts: This, in part, may explain why personality traits sometimes demonstrate inconsistent and statistically non-significant correlations with search behaviors and employment outcomes.

Collectively, this body of research suggests a number of important individual difference characteristics that play key roles in students’ search for employment. Specifically, because the job search environment is potentially weaker for new entrants (e.g., students) seeking employment for the first time as compared to those whom are currently, or have previously been employed, motivational characteristics may play a larger role in new entrants search behaviors. Having described the distal human capital and personality characteristics that influence students’ job search behaviors and outcomes, and several mediating mechanisms through which they exert their influence, I next turn to a discussion of the specific aims of the dissertation.

**Aims of the Dissertation**

Building from the literature on personality traits and job search behaviors (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Côté et al. 2006; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Zimmerman et al., 2012), the present dissertation examines the influence of distal individual difference characteristics on recent college graduates’ job search behaviors. Specifically, I examine a number of hypotheses relating students’ personality traits, proactivity, and political skill to engagement in preparatory, active, and networking search behaviors through the effects of two proximal mediating mechanisms: job search self-efficacy and job search clarity.
Figure 1. Conceptual framework for target distal and proximal predictors of job search, job search behaviors, and job search outcomes. Arrows reflect the temporal order of search process (e.g., Saks, 2005). Focal variables for hypothesized relations are within dashed lines. ¹Big Five factors and aspects (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007).

Figure 1 presents the general organizing framework for the study hypotheses, in line with the unfolding process of job search success (Saks, 2005; see also, Barber et al., 1994; Brasher & Chen, 1999; Saks, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 2000). I focus on a series of hypotheses concerning the first three boxes in the figure, namely, the influence of distal predictors on job search behaviors through the effects of more proximal predictors (see variables within the dashed lines in Figure 1). Although not the focus of specific hypotheses for the dissertation, individual differences in such search behaviors are thought to have a direct influence on the number of job interviews students’ receive. Interviews, in turn, influence the number of job offers received, which directly affects employment status and general indices of employment quality (e.g., job satisfaction). I examine these associations in an exploratory manner. Using this guiding framework, I next discuss my specific hypotheses.
Broad personality traits and students’ job search behaviors. As noted, a number of recent studies have implicated three broad personality traits as particularly relevant to the job search process (e.g., Boswell et al., 2006; Boudreau et al., 2001; Kanfer et al., 2001; Zimmerman et al., 2012). Specifically, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism are generally thought to influence students’ job search behaviors through their influence on students’ motivation to direct effort toward the pursuit of employment opportunities, and to persist in their job search activities (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Zimmerman et al., 2012).

Conscientiousness reflects such traits as industriousness, organization, perseverance, self-discipline and achievement orientation (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993). People higher in Conscientiousness tend to be more methodical and to set clearer performance goals than those who are lower in Conscientiousness (e.g., Côté et al., 2006; Kanfer et al., 2001). Research has found Conscientiousness to predict proximal motivational traits within the job search process (e.g., job search self-efficacy, job search clarity), which, in turn, directly influence job seekers’ engagement in search activities (Brown et al., 2006; Côté et al., 2006). To this end, the present dissertation seeks to confirm past findings for Conscientiousness and students’ job search behaviors: specifically, higher levels of Conscientiousness will be positively related to engagement in both preparatory and active job search behaviors.

Hypothesis 1. Conscientiousness will be positively related to students’ engagement in preparatory and active job search behaviors.

Extraversion reflects the tendency to be positive, socially oriented, active, and assertive (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993). During job search, people higher in Extraversion tend to rely to a greater extent on social (e.g., networking) rather than non-
social job search strategies (Burger & Caldwell, 2000). Furthermore, people higher in Extraversion tend to take a more active approach to seeking employment than those who are lower in Extraversion (Zimmerman et al., 2012). To this end, the present dissertation seeks to extend past research by examining the associations between Extraversion and students’ job search behaviors: specifically, higher levels of Extraversion will be positively related to engagement in active job search behaviors and students’ networking behaviors.

**Hypothesis 2.** Extraversion will be positively related to students’ engagement in active job search behaviors and networking behaviors.

Neuroticism reflects the tendency to be anxious, to have a negative outlook, to be self-conscious or depressed, and to demonstrate anger or hostility (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993). People higher in Neuroticism tend to avoid active engagement in search-related activities, are generally more risk-averse, and are more sensitive to rejection during the job search process (Zimmerman et al., 2012). As such, Neuroticism is negatively associated with engagement in a variety of job search activities. To this end, the present dissertation seeks to extend past research relating Neuroticism to students’ job search behaviors: specifically, higher levels of Neuroticism will be negatively related to engagement in preparatory search, active search, and networking behaviors.

**Hypothesis 3.** Neuroticism will be negatively related to students’ engagement in preparatory and active job search behaviors, and networking behaviors.

Individual differences in distal personality traits, such as the Big Five, are thought to influence job seekers’ search behaviors through their effects on more proximal, mediating mechanisms in the job search process (Kanfer et al., 2001). Two specific mediating mechanisms that have received attention in the job search literature are job
search self-efficacy (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Moynihan et al., 2003; Saks, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1999) and job search clarity (e.g., Côté et al., 2006; Wanberg et al., 2002; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Students with higher levels of Extraversion and Conscientiousness are generally thought to hold stronger efficacy-beliefs regarding their successful pursuit of employment. As such, both Extraversion and Conscientiousness should positively influence students’ job search behaviors through their effects on job search self-efficacy.

Conversely, students with higher levels of Neuroticism are thought to generally avoid active engagement in job search behaviors (Zimmerman et al., 2012), where Neuroticism may negatively influence students’ job search behaviors by diminishing students’ self-efficacy. In addition, students with higher levels of Conscientiousness tend to be more organized and goal-directed; thus, Conscientiousness might, in part, influence job search behaviors through the development of clearer job search goals (i.e., job search clarity).

To this end, I hypothesize that Conscientiousness will be positively correlated with both job search self-efficacy and job search clarity, which will operate in tandem as alternative mediating mechanisms for the associations observed for Conscientiousness and students’ engagement in preparatory and active job search behaviors. Furthermore, Extraversion will be positively correlated with job search self-efficacy, which will, in turn, partially mediate the positive associations observed for Extraversion and active and networking job search behaviors. Finally, Neuroticism is expected to have a negative influence on students’ engagement in job search behaviors, where students’ job search self-efficacy will partially mediate the negative influence of Neuroticism on preparatory search, active search, and networking behaviors.
Hypothesis 4a. Job search self-efficacy will partially mediate the relations between Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism, and students’ engagement in job search behaviors.

Hypothesis 4b. Job search clarity will partially mediate the relations between Conscientiousness and students’ engagement in job search behaviors.

Narrow personality traits and students’ job search behaviors. Research in the area of personality and job search behaviors has almost exclusively examined the role of the Big Five in the job search process (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Burger & Caldwell, 2002; Côté et al., 2006; Kanfer et al., 2001; Reed et al., 2004; Tziner et al., 2004; Wanberg et al., 2002; Zimmerman et al., 2012). However, some researchers have argued that the Big Five may be too broad to fully capture the relations between personality traits and organizationally relevant outcomes (e.g., job performance, job search behaviors); rather, narrower traits within the Big Five might provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of personality in applied contexts (e.g., Hough, 1992; Hough & Oswald, 2005; Oswald & Hough, 2010; Oswald, Hough, & Ock, 2013; but see Hogan & Roberts, 1996; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1996; Schneider, Hough, & Dunnette, 1996).

As mentioned, Zimmerman et al. (2012) suggested that broad personality traits might exert both positive and negative influences on job search behaviors simultaneously, depending on the mediating mechanisms examined. However, an alternative, yet complementary explanation for such opposing relations is the potential for differential relations between narrower traits within a broad personality domain and specific aspects of the job search process.

The question of how narrower personality traits within the Big Five are related to more proximal mediating mechanisms and the expression of distal behaviors (e.g., preparatory and/or active search behaviors) is as of yet unclear. Recent research by
DeYoung and his colleagues (e.g., DeYoung, 2010; DeYoung, Quilty, & Petersen, 2007; see also, Judge, Rodell, Klinger, Simon, & Crawford, 2013), however, provides one potential framework from which predictions from narrower traits within the Big Five to outcomes might be drawn. Specifically, DeYoung et al. (2007) identified two meso-level personality aspects within each of the Big Five factors that appear to arise from distinct genetic influences underlying individual variation in personality traits (see DeYoung & Gray, 2009; Jang, Livesley, Angleitner, Reimann, & Vernon, 2002). These aspects are thought to exist at an intermediate level of the personality hierarchy, situated between the broad Big Five factors and narrow facets of personality within the Big Five.

According to DeYoung et al. (2007), Conscientiousness comprises two intermediate personality aspects that distinguish between proactive and inhibitive components of the general trait (see also, Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991; Roberts, Chernyshenko, Stark, & Goldberg, 2005). *Industriousness* includes those characteristics within the Conscientiousness domain related to proactive engagement in behavior, such as self-efficacy and achievement striving, whereas *Orderliness* includes those characteristics related to behavioral inhibition, such as dutifulness and cautiousness. In the job search context, both Industriousness and (to a lesser extent) Orderliness should be positively associated with students’ engagement in search behaviors. These aspects, however, might operate through different mediating mechanisms in order to influence engagement in job search behaviors. Specifically, Industriousness may influence students’ job search behaviors through their influence on job search self-efficacy, as characteristics such as efficacy and achievement striving might influence job seekers’ perceptions of their ability to engage in successful search. In addition, both
Industriousness and Orderliness may exert a positive influence on students’ formation of clear job search goals (i.e., job search clarity), as both proactive and inhibitive forces are needed to engage in goal-directed behavior. To this end, I hypothesize the following mediating relations between the Conscientiousness aspects of Industriousness and Orderliness, and job search behaviors.

**Hypothesis 5.** The Conscientiousness aspects of Industriousness and Orderliness will be positively related to students’ preparatory and active job search behaviors.

**Hypothesis 6a.** Job search self-efficacy will partially mediate the relations between the Conscientiousness aspect of Industriousness and students’ job search behaviors.

**Hypothesis 6b.** Job search clarity will partially mediate the relations between the Conscientiousness aspects of Industriousness and Orderliness, and students’ job search behaviors.

For Extraversion, DeYoung et al. (2007) posited Assertiveness to reflect those personality characteristics within Extraversion related to individual differences in agency and dominance, whereas Enthusiasm was posited to reflect those characteristics related to general differences in positivity and reward sensitivity, including those facets thought to reflect those qualities of Extraversion most commonly associated with sociability (see also, Depue & Collins, 1999). Both the Assertiveness and Enthusiasm aspects of Extraversion should generally demonstrate positive correlations with students’ engagement in job search behaviors—particularly those behaviors that require high levels of activity (e.g., active job search) and social interaction (e.g., networking). Distinctions between these two aspects, however, may be manifest in the specific types of behaviors in which students engage. Specifically, the Enthusiasm aspect of Extraversion may manifest itself through engagement in social search strategies, such as networking. On the other hand, Assertiveness may manifest itself in terms of general engagement in
active search strategies. Furthermore, while proximal individual differences may mediate relations between students’ agency in the job search context (e.g., job search self-efficacy), the effects of positivity and sociability (i.e., Enthusiasm) to actual search behaviors may be more direct. To this end, I hypothesize the following relations between the Extraversion aspects of Assertiveness and Enthusiasm, and students’ engagement in active job search and networking behaviors.

Hypothesis 7a. The Extraversion aspect of Assertiveness will be positively related to students’ active job search behaviors.

Hypothesis 7b. The Extraversion aspect of Enthusiasm will be positively related to students’ networking behaviors.

Hypothesis 8. Job search self-efficacy will partially mediate the relations between the Extraversion aspects of Assertiveness and Enthusiasm, and students’ job search behaviors.

Finally, DeYoung et al. (2007) distinguished between two aspects within the broad Neuroticism domain: Volatility—reflecting irritability, aggressiveness, and impulsiveness—and Withdrawal—reflecting anxiety, depression, and negativity. In the job search context, both of these aspects should negatively influence students’ active engagement in job search. Thus, differences between Neuroticism aspects may be expressed in terms of the relative magnitudes of association, rather than in terms of the direction of effects. To this end, I hypothesize the following relations between the Neuroticism aspects of Volatility and Withdrawal, and students’ engagement in preparatory search, active search, and networking behaviors.

Hypothesis 9. The Neuroticism aspects of Volatility and Withdrawal will be negatively related to students’ preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors.
Hypothesis 10. Job search self-efficacy will partially mediate the relations between the Neuroticism aspects of Volatility and Withdrawal, and students’ job search behaviors.

Proactive personality and students’ job search behaviors. Individual differences in proactivity during the job search process largely reflect a job seeker’s dispositional tendency to actively seek out opportunities to change the self and the environment in order to further search objects (see Crant, 2000; Grant & Ashford, 2008). As noted, research has suggested that highly proactive job seekers engage in more frequent job search activities than those lower in proactivity (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Claes & De Witte, 2002; McArdle et al., 2007), such as seeking search-specific feedback from potential employers, building and leveraging informal networks, and identifying clear employment goals. To this end, the present dissertation will reaffirm the relations between individual differences in proactive personality and students’ job search behaviors, where proactive personality is predicted to be positively related to students’ engagement in preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors.

Hypothesis 11. Proactive personality will be positively related to students’ preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors.

Furthermore, research has suggested that individual differences in proactivity may transmit their effects on job search behaviors through more proximal motivational process, such as job search self-efficacy. Conceptually, highly proactive people tend to feel a greater sense of agency (i.e., self-efficacy) across situations, which then carries over to specific behavioral contexts, such as when searching for employment (Brown et al., 2006; Fay & Frese, 2001). As noted, Brown et al. (2006) found job search self-efficacy to fully mediate relations between proactive personality and an aggregate measure of job search behaviors. Building from this finding, the proposed dissertation
will examine the mediating role of job search self-efficacy in proactive personality-job search behaviors relations for preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors: specifically, higher levels of proactivity are expected to predict higher job search self-efficacy, which, in turn, will predict greater engagement in job search behaviors.

Although Brown et al. (2006) found job search self-efficacy to fully mediate the influence of proactivity on job search behaviors, there are potential alternative mediating mechanisms that may play a similar role in transmitting the effects of proactive personality to search-related behaviors. One such alternative mediating mechanism is job seekers’ employment goals. Specifically, research on proactivity suggests that one way in which proactive personality influences behavior is through the tendency of highly proactive people to form clear, specific goals (e.g., Fay & Frese, 2001; Parker et al., 2010). Thus, I hypothesize that job search clarity (i.e., goal strength) will mediate proactive personality-job search behaviors relations: specifically, higher proactivity is expected to predict clearer search goals, which, in turn, will predict increased engagement in job search behaviors.

Hypothesis 12. Job search self-efficacy and job search clarity will partially mediate the relationship between proactive personality and students’ job search behaviors.

Political skill and students’ job search behaviors. Researchers in the area of job search behaviors have considered the role of measures of human capital—such as educational attainment, job experience, and technical knowledge—in the job search process; as noted, however, correlations for these biographical characteristics with engagement in job search behaviors typically have been modest (Saks, 2005; Kanfer et al., 2001). Research by Chia (2005) and Tay et al. (2006), however, suggests that students’
engagement in extracurricular activities is associated with job search outcomes, including greater numbers of second-round job interviews and job offers. One way that students’ engagement in extracurricular activities might increase their employment potential is through the increased opportunity to develop, practice, and use interpersonal skills. As such, the findings from Chia (2005) and Tay et al. (2006) support arguments by Hogan et al. (2013), suggesting that individual differences in interpersonal skills might play a more dominant role in the employment process than previously thought.

Although several studies have examined correlations between students’ interpersonal skills and experience (e.g., leadership experience, emotional intelligence) and job search outcomes (e.g., Chia, 2005; Tay et al., 2006), the specific job search behaviors through which interpersonal skills influence search outcomes have received little attention outside of the interview context. One way in which individual differences in students’ interpersonal skills might influence specific search behaviors is through the increased use of informal sources for identifying employment opportunities, namely, engagement in more frequent networking behaviors (Burger & Caldwell, 2000; McArdle et al., 2007; Tziner et al., 2004; van Hoye et al., 2009; Wanberg et al., 2000).

To this end, the present dissertation examines individual differences in students’ political skill—or the ability to recognize, manage, and appropriately respond to cues from the social environment (see Ferris et al., 2005)—for predicting students’ job search behaviors post-graduation. Generally speaking, people high in political skill are thought to be astute observers of others, to possess the ability to influence others using a non-aggressive communication style, and are generally thought to appear genuine and sincere in their interpersonal interactions (Ferris et al., 2007). Given this disposition, politically
skilled people are thought to be “adept in identifying and developing diverse contacts and networks of people” (Ferris et al., 2007, p. 292) and leveraging these informal networks to their advantage—such as when looking for a job. Thus, I hypothesize that students with higher levels of political skill will engage in a greater amount of networking behaviors than those who are lower in political skill.

*Hypothesis 13.* Political skill will be positively related to students’ networking behaviors.

The potential mediating mechanisms that transmit the influence of interpersonal skills, such as political skill, to specific job search behaviors are not well understood. As such, the mediating role of job search self-efficacy and job search clarity on the relations between political skill and networking behaviors will be examined in a series of exploratory analyses. No specific hypotheses are made, therein.
Chapter 3: Method

Participants

Participants in the present dissertation were graduating seniors at Rice University who were entering the job market. Nine hundred seventy-two graduating seniors were contacted via email and asked to participate in a “survey of seniors at Rice University who anticipate graduating during the 2013-2014 academic year.” Students who agreed to participate in the survey were entered into a raffle to win one of 50 $20 gift cards from their choice of three vendors: iTunes, Amazon.com, or Starbucks.

Response rate and missing data analysis. Of the initial pool of 972 students who were contacted to participate in the study, 455 students (46.8%) responded to the email request. Thirty-eight of these students indicated that they did not wish to participate in the study or exited the survey before signing the consent and were thus removed from the sample. Thirteen additional students (3.1%) did not respond to a requisite follow-up survey (described below) and therefore were excluded from the final sample. Moreover, 92 students who did not complete the job search-related measures on both the initial and follow-up surveys², and 32 students who failed to answer more than 20% of the items on key variables on the initial survey were removed from the sample.

Data for the remaining 280 students were next entered into a missing variables analysis. In total, 201 students provided full responses to all measures on both surveys; 13 additional students responded to all measures on the initial survey, but failed to complete the job search outcomes included on the follow-up survey; and, finally, 63

² Students who indicated that they intended to apply to graduate school but not for post-graduate employment participated in an alternative survey conducted along side the present dissertation. Results for this parallel study are not presented here.
additional students provided responses on the distal predictor measures (e.g., personality
traits) on the initial survey and on the job search outcome measures, but did not complete
the measures for the mediating mechanisms (i.e., job search self-efficacy and job search
clarity) on the initial survey. Results for Little’s (1988) test for missing completely at
random (MCAR) was statistically non-significant ($\chi^2 (91) = 70.62, p = .94$), indicating
that the pattern of missingness observed for the data met the assumptions of MCAR$^3$.
This finding suggests the use of full information maximum likelihood procedures (FIML)
as an appropriate method for estimating the missing data within the current sample (see
Enders, 2010; Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). Data for these remaining 280 students
were included in the final sample for hypothesis testing.

**Sample demographics.** The majority of the students in the final sample were
female (60.4%, $n = 169$), and 47.5% ($n = 133$) of participants indicated their ethnicity as
White non-Hispanic, 22.1% ($n = 62$) as Asian/Asian-American, 13.6% ($n = 38$) as
Hispanic, 5.4% ($n = 15$) as Black, and 11.4% ($n = 32$) as “Other,” including foreign
nationals and those who did not specify an ethnicity. The average age of the sample was
21.79 years ($SD = .72$). Regarding the academic distribution of participants, the majority
of students (59.6%, $n = 167$) graduated with a Bachelors of the Arts (BA): 39.6% ($n =
111$) graduated from the School of Engineering, 27.9% ($n = 78$) from the School of
Social Sciences, 17.1% ($n = 48$) from the School of Natural Sciences, 12.5% ($n = 35$)
from the School of Humanities, and 1.4% ($n = 4$) from the Schools of Architecture and
Music, each. At the time of the initial survey 25.2% ($n = 70$) of the sample indicated that

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$^3$ Results are presented at the scale level. A missing values analysis conducted at the item
level also demonstrated a statistically non-significant value for Little’s (1988) MCAR test
($\chi^2 (2569) = 2607.94, p = .29$).
they were employed at least part time (≥ 20 hours per week), and at the time of the follow-up survey 66.7% (n = 150) of the sample indicated that they had accepted an offer of employment.

**Measures**

To reduce concerns related to common method bias (e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), the current study implemented two web-based surveys (www.qualtrix.com) soliciting students’ information for study-relevant variables. Predictor variables (e.g., personality traits, job search clarity) and demographic characteristics were administered as part of an initial (Time 1) survey, and outcomes variables (e.g., students’ job search behaviors, number of job offers) were administered as part of a follow-up survey (Time 2). All measures included in the Time 2 survey were administered as a supplemental portion of the Rice University, Student Exit Survey. Table 1 details the measures administered with each survey. The order of the scales administered within each survey and presentation of the items within each scale was fully randomized across participants.

Table 1
*Measures Administered at Time 1 and Time 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th># Items</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th># Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BFAS Conscientiousness</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Job Search Intensity Scale</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFAS Neuroticism</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Job Search Effort Scale</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BFAS Extraversion</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Networking Intensity Scale</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Personality Scale</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Number of job interviews</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Skills Inventory</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Number of job offers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Self-Efficacy Scale</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Employment status</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Clarity Scale</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Abridged Job in General Scale</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total # Items** 103 **Total # Items** 35
Time 1. Five-months prior to graduating (January, 2014), participants completed measures related to their personality traits, proactivity, political skill, job search self-efficacy, and job search clarity.

Personality. Students completed measures of Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Extraversion using the Big Five Aspects Scale (BFAS; DeYoung et al., 2007), available from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP; Goldberg et al., 2006; www.ipip.ori.org). Items from the BFAS were chosen to reflect the 10 aspects of the Big Five, using 20 items per broad personality domain—10 items for each aspect of the Big Five (see Table 1). Students rated all items on a 5-point Likert scale of accuracy of self-description (1 = very inaccurate, 5 = very accurate). Example items include: “Follow a schedule” (Orderliness), “Get upset easily” (Volatility), and “Make friends easily” (Enthusiasm; see Appendix A).

Proactive personality. Students completed Siebert et al.’s (1999) 10-item version of the Proactive Personality Scale (Bateman & Crant, 1993) as a measure of trait proactivity. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). An example item includes, “I am always looking for better ways to do things” (see Appendix B).

Political skill. Students completed the 18-item Political Skill Inventory (PSI; Ferris et al., 2005) as a measure of individual differences in interpersonal skills. The PSI includes items from four related interpersonal skills, namely, networking ability (6 items), interpersonal influence (4 items), social astuteness, (5 items) and apparent sincerity (3 items), which can be combined to form an overall index of political skill. All items on the PSI were rated on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 5 =
strongly agree), and an example item includes, “I spend a lot of time developing connections with others” (networking ability; see Appendix C). As the PSI was initially developed for use in work settings, wording for items on the scale was revised to appropriately reflect the student context.

**Job search self-efficacy.** Job search self-efficacy was measured using the 10-item scale developed by Saks and Ashforth (1999). Numerous studies have demonstrated the psychometric viability of this scale for measuring students’ search-specific self-efficacy (e.g., Côté et al., 2006; Saks, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 2000; Zikic & Saks, 2009). Students rated all items on a 5-point scale of confidence in their ability to successfully complete each of the specific search activities listed (1 = not at all confident, 5 = totally confident). Example items include, “Prepare resumes that will get you job interviews” and “Plan and organize a weekly job search schedule” (see Appendix D).

**Job search clarity.** Students completed a measure of job search clarity based on the definition provided by Wanberg et al. (2002). Zikic and Saks (2009) noted that several of the items presented in Wanberg et al. (2002) are specific to the context of unemployed individuals making a career change; thus, the revised 5-item version of this scale presented by Zikic and Saks (2009) was used to measure students’ job search clarity. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Example items include, “I have a clear idea of the type of job that I want to find” (Wanberg et al., 2002) and “I do not have very clear job search objectives” (reversed; Zikic & Saks, 2009; see Appendix E).
Demographics. Students’ age, gender, and ethnicity were collected from university records. Students were also asked to report their primary academic major(s) and current employment status (working ≥ 20 hours per week) at Time 1. These demographics were collected at the end of the Time 1 survey for all participants.

Time 2. At the time of graduation (April-May, 2014), students were asked to complete a follow-up survey related to their job search behaviors. Students completed measures of job search intensity, job search effort, networking intensity, and indicators of job search success. Students who had successfully obtained employment at the time of graduation also completed a measure of their satisfaction with their current job.

Job search intensity. Students’ job search intensity was measured using a 14-item scale derived from Blau’s (1993, 1994) 12-item Job Search Behaviors Scale. Several adjustments were made to Blau’s original measure for the present dissertation. First, research has noted the absence of items on Blau’s scale relating to the use of Internet sources during the job search process (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Saks, 2006; Wanberg et al., 2000). Given increases in job seekers’ use of Internet resources for locating employment opportunities (see Cober, Brown, Levy, Keeping, & Cober, 2003), two items were added to the scale to reflect students’ use of websites and online resources to inform their search activities (see also, Brown et al., 2006). In addition, several items were altered to include the use of online resources along with more classic sources of employment advertisements (e.g., newspapers). Second, two items from Brown et al. (2006) were included in the 14-item scale reflecting job seekers’ conducting informal interviews with potential employers, and their attempts to analyze their interests.

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4 The Rice University, Office of Institutional Effectiveness provided students’ demographic information and emails prior to the Time 1 survey.
and abilities in line with potential job choices. Finally, two items from Blau’s (1993, 1994) original scale were redundant with items relating to students’ networking activities. These items were removed from the job search intensity scale to facilitate the distinction between networking behaviors and other job search activities. Collectively, the modified scale included eight items related to students’ preparatory job search behaviors and six items related to students’ active job search behaviors. Students were asked to indicate the frequency with which they have engaged in search behaviors on a 5-point scale (1 = Never, 5 = Very Frequently). Example items include, “Prepared or revised your résumé” and “Used the Internet or other computer services to locate job openings” for preparatory search behaviors, and “Filled out a job application” and “Contacted an employment agency, executive search firm or state employment service” for active search behaviors (see Appendix F).

**Job search effort.** Students completed Blau’s (1993) 4-item measure of job search effort as a measure of effort exerted during their job search. All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). An example item includes, “Focused my time and effort on job search activities” (see Appendix G).

**Networking intensity.** Students’ networking intensity was measured using the 6-item scale developed by Wanberg et al. (2000). Students were asked to indicate the frequency with which they have engaged in networking related behaviors on a 5-point scale (1 = Never, 5 = Very Frequently). Example items include, “Contacted or visited someone to get more information about a certain job or place to work” and “Talked with friends or relatives about possible job leads” (see Appendix H).
**Job search success.** To measure students’ success in the job search process, students were asked to complete three single-item measures indicating 1) the number of interviews they were offered, 2) the number of official job offers they received, and 3) their current employment status at the time of the follow-up survey.

**Job satisfaction.** Students who were employed at the time of the second survey were also asked to complete the Abridged Job in General Scale (AJIG; Russell et al., 2004) as a measure of employment quality post job-search. The AJIG is a short measure of overall job satisfaction derived from the Job in General Scale (Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989). Participants rated how descriptive each of eight adjectives or short phases (e.g., “Makes me content,” “Enjoyable”) is of their job (0 = No, 1 = Not sure, 3 = Yes; see Appendix I).

**Analysis**

All data screening and basic statistical analyses including calculation of scale reliabilities, means and standard deviations, intercorrelations between scales, and exploratory factor analyses (EFA) were conducted using IBM SPSS v.22 (2013). All additional analyses were conducted in Mplus v.7.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012).

**Evaluating model fit.** Model fit for confirmatory factor analysis models (CFA) and structural equation models (SEM) was assessed using the $\chi^2$ test of exact fit, along with measures of approximate fit including the comparative fit index (CFI), root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean squared error (SRMR), and the Akaike information criterion (AIC) index of model parsimony (see Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003). Typical rules-of-thumb (e.g., CFI > .90, RMSEA < .08, SRMR < .08) were used to inform inferences of model fit (e.g., Browne & Cudeck,
Comparisons of alternative models were conducted as appropriate (see below).

**Item parcels.** In order to reduce the ratio of parameter estimates relative to the sample size, I implemented item parceling procedures to construct the measurement models of all latent constructs (see Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002; Little, Rhemtulla, Gibson, & Schoemann, 2013; Williams & O’Boyle, 2008). Parcels were formed based on a series of initial EFAs of the data using the radial parceling technique advocated by Rogers and Schmitt (2004): All items for a given scale were submitted to a single-factor EFA using principal axis factoring. The factor loadings for all items on an individual scale were then compared, such that the two items with the smallest absolute difference in their loadings were coupled—forming a 2-item parcel. A subsequent EFA was then conducted for the remaining items on the scale, where the unassigned items and the previously constructed item couplets were entered into the analysis. This pairing continued for the unassigned items until all items were assigned to couplets. Parcels were consistently two items in size.

Radial parcels were created for the following scales: Industriousness, Orderliness, Volatility, Withdrawal, Enthusiasm, Assertiveness, proactive personality and job search self-efficacy (5 parcels, each), and the preparatory (4 parcels), active and networking (3 parcels, each) job search behaviors scales. Note, however, that the job search clarity and job search effort scales were examined at the item level, as each scale contained too few items to create a minimum of three item couplets (i.e., 5 items or fewer).

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5 Personality items were clustered at the level of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) aspects.
The parceling procedure implemented for the PSI differed from the radial parceling technique described for the previous scales (Rogers & Schmitt, 2004). An initial exploratory factor analysis of the items on the PSI using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation indicated a clear four-factor solution, consistent with that observed by Ferris and colleagues (e.g., Ferris et al., 2005). Thus, I tested a series of CFAs on the item-level data for the PSI. I first tested a single-factor CFA that specified all items on the PSI to load on a single, latent political skills factor. This model fit the data poorly ($\chi^2_{(135)} = 684.55, p < .05$, CFI = .759, RMSEA = .121 [.112, .130], SRMR = .088), given typical rules-of-thumb for acceptable model fit (e.g., CFI > .90, RMSEA < .08, SRMR < .08; Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2011). I next tested a CFA model using the four-factor solution indicated by the initial EFA of the item-level data. Items were specified to load on one, and only one, of the four sub-factors identified for the PSI (i.e., networking ability, interpersonal influence, social astuteness, and apparent sincerity; see Appendix C for item assignments). Overall, this correlated-factors model fit the data moderately well in terms of close fit ($\chi^2_{(129)} = 319.79, p < .05$, CFI = .916, RMSEA = .073 [.063, .083], SRMR = .068), and fit the data statistically significantly better than the single factor model ($\Delta \chi^2_{(6)} = 364.77, p < .05$). Finally, I tested a higher-order CFA model with a latent second-order political skill factor, giving rise to the first-order latent factors represented in the correlated-factors model. This higher-order model also demonstrated acceptable model fit ($\chi^2_{(131)} = 327.47, p < .05$, CFI = .9164, RMSEA = .073 [.063, .083], SRMR = .069), and the model did not fit the data statistically significantly worse than the correlated-factors model ($\Delta \chi^2_{(2)} = 7.68, p > .05$). As a result of these procedures, I elected to form item parcels for the PSI by averaging all
items for a particular subscale (i.e., one parcel for networking ability, interpersonal influence, social astuteness, and apparent sincerity, respectively), versus the radial parceling strategy implemented for the remaining scales.

**Measurement models.** Before conducting SEM analyses to address specific hypotheses, I examined a series of CFAs in order to identify the measurement models for all latent variables included in the dissertation. All analyses were conducted at the level of the item parcels (previously described), unless otherwise specified. I first examined a series of one-factor CFA models in isolation for the following scales: Industriousness, Orderliness, Volatility, Withdrawal, Enthusiasm, Assertiveness proactive personality, job search self-efficacy, job search clarity, job search effort, and the three categories of job search behaviors (i.e., active, preparatory, and networking). All factor variances were fixed to 1.0 to identify the models.

In several instances, an initial CFA model resulted in poor overall fit to the data. For these cases, I examined Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012) modification indices in order to identify potential sources of misspecification, where a value greater than 3.84 suggests potential improvement in overall model fit as a result of a particular modification (e.g., freeing a constrained parameter estimate). This was particularly the case for the measurement models of the personality aspects (e.g., Orderliness, Enthusiasm), where the modification indices suggested the need to model correlated residual terms for two (or more) of the parcels. This finding is not surprising, given the common need to specify such correlated residuals to achieve acceptable model fit in personality data (see Hopwood & Donnellan, 2010). One correlated residual (i.e., the

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6 Note that the CFA models for the active and networking job search behaviors scales are just identified, with three parcels each.
correlated residual with the largest Mplus modification index value; Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012) between two parcels was allowed for each of the following measurement models: Orderliness, Withdrawal, Enthusiasm, Assertiveness, and job search self-efficacy. Following the suggestions of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), all adjustments to the model specification were implemented at the level of the measurement models and retained for all subsequent higher-order CFA models and SEM models (see also, McDonald, 2010; O’Boyle & Williams, 2011). All modifications were isolated to the one-factor measurement models (i.e., correlated errors were not allowed with parcels or latent variables outside of the intended construct), and no further changes to the specification of models were made in order to avoid capitalizing on chance characteristics present in the structural models. Model fit statistics for these first-order measurement models are presented in the top portion of Table 2. These models generally demonstrated acceptable to good close fit to the data given common rules-of-thumb (e.g., Kline, 2011), and generally demonstrated good exact fit to the data ($\chi^2, p > .05$).

For the Big Five personality traits of Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Neuroticism, I examined a series of higher-order CFA models. Specifically, the respective broad personality traits were modeled as second-order personality factors, and two first-order factors were modeled for each broad trait domain, representative of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects. Factor loadings from the broad factor to the aspects within each dimension were constrained to equivalence in order to identify the higher-order model (see Brown, 2006). Model fit statistics for these second-order CFA models are presented in the bottom portion of Table 2. These models demonstrated good close fit to the data according to common rules-of-thumb (e.g., Kline, 2011); however,
the $\chi^2$ tests of exact fit were statistically significant in all cases. This finding is not uncommon in personality research, given known sensitivity of the $\chi^2$ index to minor misspecifications in the model (Hopwood & Donnellan, 2010).

Table 2

Model Fit Statistics for CFA Models Based on Item Parcels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$ (df)</th>
<th>$\chi^2$/df</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>AIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>Industriousness</td>
<td>6.20 (5)</td>
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<td>.029 [.000, .092]</td>
<td>.013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orderliness$^c$</td>
<td>5.76 (4)</td>
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<td>.040 [.000, .105]</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>2912.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volatility</td>
<td><strong>14.12</strong> (5)</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>.081 [.033, .132]</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>2903.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Withdrawal$^c$</td>
<td>7.65 (4)</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.994</td>
<td>.057 [.000, .118]</td>
<td>.013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm$^c$</td>
<td>4.85 (4)</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>.999</td>
<td>.027 [.000, .098]</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>2640.98</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assertiveness$^c$</td>
<td>8.39 (4)</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>.063 [.000, .123]</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>2800.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proactive Personality</td>
<td>8.69 (5)</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.992</td>
<td>.051 [.000, .107]</td>
<td>.020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Skill</td>
<td>5.72 (2)</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>.081 [.000, .164]</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>2043.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Search Self-Efficacy$^a$</td>
<td>4.54 (5)</td>
<td>.91 &gt;.999</td>
<td>.000 [.000, .090]</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>2447.62</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Clarity$^a$</td>
<td>8.14 (5)</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.995</td>
<td>.054 [.000, .118]</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>2861.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparatory Search$^b$</td>
<td>2.63 (2)</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.997</td>
<td>.034 [.000, .131]</td>
<td>.016</td>
<td>2751.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Search$^b$</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networking$^b$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job Search Effort$^{b,c}$</td>
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<td>.20 &gt;.999</td>
<td>.000 [.000, .125]</td>
<td>.002</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td><strong>72.86</strong> (33)</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.066 [.045, .086]</td>
<td>.061</td>
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<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td><strong>93.02</strong> (33)</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>.081 [.062, .100]</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>5759.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td><strong>64.73</strong> (32)</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td>.060 [.039, .082]</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>5370.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 280. $^a$N = 215. $^b$N = 265. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual; AIC = Akaike information criterion. $^c$Modification indices from an initial CFA suggested that model fit could be improved if the residuals for two parcels were allowed to correlate. Model fit statistics for these revised models are presented here, and modifications are carried over to the second-order personality models where applicable. $^d$ $\chi^2$ estimates in bold are statistically significant, $p < .05.$
Chapter 4: Results

Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics, internal consistency reliabilities ($\alpha$), and pairwise correlations for all relevant measures on the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys. Internal consistency reliabilities ranged from .76 (preparatory job search behaviors) to .94 (job search effort), with most exceeding a value of .80\(^7\).

To avoid redundancy, I do not interpret the observed correlations presented in Table 3 here: Rather, I describe the hypothesized relationships at the latent level in the following section. To facilitate interpretation of the models, I first describe the results for all hypotheses regarding the direct relationships between the predictor variables (e.g., personality traits, proactivity, political skill) and students’ job search behaviors. I then describe all mediation hypotheses in a subsequent section. Figure 2 presents the hypothesized path analysis for the direct and indirect effects of Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, proactive personality, and political skill on preparatory and active job search behaviors, and networking behaviors, through their effects of job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. Figure 3 presents the hypothesized path analysis for the direct and indirect effects at the level of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) Big Five Aspects. I conclude the chapter by describing a number of exploratory analyses not hypothesized in the dissertation.

\(^7\) Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and intercorrelations for the PSI subscales are not reported in Table 3 due to space limitations. Alphas were .89 for networking ability, .82 for interpersonal influence, .80 for social astuteness, and .70 for apparent sincerity, respectively.
Table 3
Scale Descriptive Statistics and Pairwise Correlations

| Scale                        | N   | Mean | SD | 1.  | 2.  | 3.  | 4.  | 5.  | 6.  | 7.  | 8.  | 9.  | 10. | 11. | 12. | 13. | 14. | 15. | 16. | 17. | 18. | 19. | 20. | 21. |
|------------------------------|-----|------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. Conscientiousness        | 280 | 3.36 | .54| .88 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 2. Industriousness          | 280 | 3.25 | .64| .85 | .85 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 3. Orderliness              | 280 | 3.47 | .64| .85 | .45 | .81 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 4. Neuroticism              | 280 | 2.69 | .65| -.23| -.36| -.02| .92 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 5. Volatility               | 280 | 2.56 | .75| -.11| -.23| .04| .90 | .90 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 6. Withdrawal               | 280 | 2.82 | .70| -.30| -.43| -.09| .89 | .61 | .87 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 7. Extraversion             | 280 | 3.43 | .58| .20 | .28 | .07| -.28| -.06| -.46| .90 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 8. Enthusiasm               | 280 | 3.49 | .68| .06 | .11| -.01| -.24| -.08| -.35| .87 | .87 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 9. Assertiveness            | 280 | 3.37 | .66| .30 | .38 | .13| -.24| -.01| -.44| .86 | .49 | .87 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 10. Proactive Personality   | 280 | 3.55 | .56| .35 | .38 | .22| -.14| -.00| -.26| .42 | .21 | .52 | .50 | .50 | .91 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 11. Political Skill         | 280 | 3.60 | .58| .20 | .29 | .05| -.28| -.16| -.35| .72 | .60 | .65 | .50 | .50 | .89 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 12. Job Search Self-Efficacy| 215 | 3.18 | .80| .35 | .43 | .16| -.25| -.10| -.37| .46 | .28 | .52 | .54 | .50 | .89 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 13. Job Search Clarity      | 216 | 3.46 | .98| .27 | .33 | .13| -.26| -.13| -.35| .32 | .21 | .35 | .49 | .32 | .58 | .89 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

**Job Search Behaviors**

14. Preparatory Search       | 267 | 3.02 | .73| .01 | .00| .01| .16 | .17 | .12 | .10 | .11 | .06| .15 | .14 | .00 | .07 | .76 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
15. Active Search            | 266 | 2.71 | .89| .10 | .09| .07| .03 | .08 | -.02| .10 | .10 | .08| .16 | .13 | .10 | .03 | .72 | .80 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
16. Networking               | 265 | 2.61 | 1.01| .11| .09| .09| -.03| .01| -.07| .18 | .15 | .15 | .17 | .24 | .14 | .07 | .62 | .61 | .89 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
17. Job Search Effort        | 265 | 3.31 | 1.19| .10| .10| .07| .08 | .12 | .01| .13 | .12 | .11| .18 | .12 | .16 | .11 | .67 | .73 | .48 | .94 |     |     |     |     |     |

**Job Search Outcomes**

18. Num. Interviews<sup>a</sup> | 207 | 2.51 | 2.38| .15 | .20| .07| .03 | .05 | .00 | .07 | -.02| .14 | .16 | .04 | .17 | .07 | .19 | .42 | .21 | .46 |     |     |     |     |     |
19. Num. Offers              | 230 | 2.27 | 1.19| .17| .18| .11| -.06| -.03| -.08| .17 | .06| .24 | .24 | .13 | .38 | .21 | .01 | .16 | .13 | .24 | .59 |     |     |     |     |
20. Time 2 Employment Status<sup>b</sup> | 225 | .67 |     | .19| .23| .09| -.23| -.18| -.22| .20 | .15 | .20 | .17 | .15 | .43 | .31 | -.04| .05 | -.02| .16 | .26 | .58 |     |     |     |
21. Job Satisfaction         | 148 | 2.62 | .55| .08| .17| .04| -.20| -.15| -.21| .26 | .23| .20 | .17 | .16 | .26 | .27 | .14 | .12 | .06 | .13 | .00 | .03 | .84 |     |

**Note.** Correlations in **bold** are significant, *p* < .05. **Alphas** are presented on the diagonal. Relations within a personality domain are part-whole correlations. <sup>a</sup>Six extreme outlying values on number of interviews received were removed from the sample. <sup>b</sup>Job offer accepted, coded: 0 = No, 1 = Yes.
Figure 2. Hypothesized direct and indirect effects for Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, political skill, and proactive personality on preparatory and active search behaviors, and networking, through the effects of job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. Dashed lines represent direct effects. Paths with similar subscripts are constrained to have equal loadings.
Figure 3. Hypothesized direct and indirect effects for DeYoung et al.'s (2007) Big Five aspects, political skill, and proactive personality on preparatory and active search behaviors, and networking, through the effects of job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. Dashed lines represent direct effects.
Confirmatory Factor Models

Before examining the hypotheses, I first tested a general CFA model in which the latent constructs for all distal personal characteristics (i.e., personality traits, proactive personality, and political skill), mediating mechanisms (i.e., job search self-efficacy and job search clarity), and job search behaviors (i.e., preparatory, active, and networking search behaviors) were allowed to correlate. All model constraints and correlated residuals specified in the measurement models were retained for this CFA model.

Results for this initial CFA indicated a non-positive definite covariance matrix, and a visual examination of the latent covariance matrix indicated that two of the latent constructs—namely, the second-order factors for Extraversion and political skill—were correlated near unity ($r > .99, p < .001$). As a result, I elected to remove political skill from further consideration in the structural models, as the majority of the hypotheses focus on the role of the broad personality factors and their constituent aspects for predicting the various job search behaviors; thus, Hypothesis 13, which predicted that students’ political skill would be related to their engagement in networking behaviors, was not examined within the context of the larger structural model. I instead examine the relations for political skill in isolation from the remaining distal predictor variables, and further explicate the relations between political skill and Extraversion in the discussion.

Following this initial CFA model, I examined two additional confirmatory models that

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Note also that the latent variables for students’ preparatory and active job search behaviors were correlated > .90 in the CFA and SEM models. Although this potentially suggests a single underlying factor, the conceptual framework for the present dissertation argues for the importance of examining these two classes of behaviors as different aspects of the job search process (see e.g., Blau, 1993, 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2002; Soelberg, 1967). To this end, I elected to maintain the separation between these variables in the model. I return to this issue in the discussion.
included the latent correlations between all key variables, excluding political skill: one model at the level of the Big Five personality factors, and a second model at the level of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects.

**The Big Five personality traits and students’ job search behaviors.** The CFA model at the level of the broad personality factors demonstrated moderate to good close fit to the data ($\chi^2 (1599) = 2626.34, p < .05, CFI = .894, RMSEA = .048 [.045, .051], SRMR = .088, AIC = 33235.86$), where the RMSEA and SRMR values were within typical standards of acceptable fit, but the CFI value was slightly below typical standards (i.e., CFI < .90; Browne & Cudeck, 1993).

Table 4 presents the standardized latent correlations between all variables in the model. Notably, the latent factors for job search self-efficacy and job search clarity were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Variable</th>
<th>1.</th>
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<th>6.</th>
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<td>2. Neuroticism</td>
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<td>3. Extraversion</td>
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<td>8. Active Search</td>
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<td>9. Networking</td>
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<td>.11</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.66</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 280. Latent correlations in bold are statistically significant, p < .05. Missing data are estimated using FIML procedures (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). $\chi^2 (1599) = 2626.34, p < .05, CFI = .894, RMSEA = .048 [.045, .051], SRMR = .088, AIC = 33235.86.$*
Hypothesis 1 stated that Conscientiousness would be positively related to students’ engagement in preparatory and active job search behaviors. Contrary to expectations, Conscientiousness was not statistically significantly related to engagement in preparatory ($r = .03, p = .73$) or active ($r = .16, p = .06$) job search behaviors in the present sample, although the relationship between Conscientiousness and active job search behaviors approached statistical significance (see Table 4). As such, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 states that Extraversion would be positively related to students’ engagement in active job search behaviors and networking behaviors. Contrary to expectations, the relationship between the latent factors for Extraversion and students’ active job search behaviors was not statistically significant, although this relationship again approached statistical significance ($r = .15, p = .08$; see Table 4). Consistent with expectations, however, Extraversion was statistically significantly related to students’ engagement in networking job search behaviors ($r = .22, p < .01$). Thus, findings for Hypothesis 2 were partially supported.

Hypothesis 3 stated that Neuroticism would be negatively related to students’ engagement in preparatory and active job search behaviors, and networking behaviors. Table 4 presents the relations observed for Neuroticism with students’ engagement in the various job search behaviors. Contrary to expectations, Neuroticism was not statistically
significantly related to students’ engagement in active \( (r = .11, p = .16) \) or networking \( (r = -.04, p = .60) \) search behaviors; thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported. Interestingly, Neuroticism was statistically significantly related to students’ preparatory search behaviors; however, this relationship was in the opposite direction of that predicted \( (r = .24, p < .01) \). This suggests that those students who are higher in Neuroticism spent more time engaging in preparatory search activities (e.g., revising résumés, using the internet to locate job openings) than those who are more emotionally stable (see Boudreau et al., 2001, for a similar finding).

Beyond the Big Five personality traits, the present dissertation also examined relationships between students’ levels of proactivity and their job search behaviors. Hypothesis 11 stated that proactive personality would be positively related to students’ engagement in preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors. Table 4 also presents the relations observed for proactive personality with students’ job search behaviors. Consistent with expectations, students higher in proactive personality reported increased engagement in both active \( (r = .17, p < .05) \) and networking \( (r = .21, p < .01) \) job search behaviors. However, proactive personality was not statistically significantly related to students’ preparatory search behaviors \( (r = .14, p = .06) \), although this relationship approached significance. Thus, Hypothesis 11 was generally supported.

Although no explicit hypotheses were made regarding the direct relationships between the mediating mechanisms and job search behaviors, Table 4 also informs these relations at the level of the broad personality factors prior to testing specific mediation hypotheses. Notably, job search self-efficacy and job search clarity were not statistically significantly related to students’ engagement in preparatory or active job search
behaviors in this model. However, job search self-efficacy did demonstrate a small, positive association with students’ networking behaviors ($r = .17, p < .05$), and the relationship between job search self-efficacy and students’ active search behaviors approached statistical significance ($r = .14, p = .09$).

DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects and students’ job search behaviors. In addition to the general CFA model described above, I examined a similar model in which all latent factors were allowed to correlate at the level of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects. This aspects-level model yielded acceptable close model fit to the data ($\chi^2 (1569) = 2439.82, p < .05$, CFI = .910, RMSEA = .045 [.041, .048], SRMR = .065, AIC = 33109.34). Moreover, this model demonstrated improved fit over and above the CFA model at the level of the broad personality factors ($\Delta \chi^2 (30) = 186.52, p < .001$) and the AIC index of model parsimony demonstrated a consistent improvement in relative fit ($\Delta$AIC = 126.52).

Table 5 presents the standardized latent correlations between all variables for the aspects-level model. Consistent with the model for the broad personality traits, job search self-efficacy and job search clarity were generally statistically significantly correlated with the distal predictor variables. In addition, the distal predictor and mediating variables were in some cases not meaningfully related to students’ engagement in job search behaviors, although there were noticeable differences in the pattern of relationships at the level of the aspects.
Table 5

*Standardized Latent Correlation Matrix for DeYoung et al.’s (2007) Personality Aspects*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Latent Variable</th>
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<tr>
<td>Industriousness</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>.15</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-.09</td>
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<td>.11</td>
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<td>.04</td>
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<td>.17</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.52</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 280. Latent correlations in **bold** are statistically significant, *p < .05. Missing data are estimated using FIML procedures (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). $\chi^2$ (1569) = 2439.82, *p < .05, CFI = .910, RMSEA = .045 [.041, .048], SRMR = .065, AIC = 33109.34.*

Hypothesis 5 stated that the Conscientiousness aspects of Industriousness and Orderliness would be positively related to students’ preparatory and active job search behaviors. Contrary to expectation, neither Industriousness ($r = .05, p = .51$) nor Orderliness ($r = -.01, p = .91$) was meaningfully related to students’ engagement in preparatory search behaviors (see Table 5). Although there was a statistically significant correlation between Industriousness and students’ active search ($r = .16, *p < .05$), the relationship between Orderliness and active search behaviors was not statistically significant ($r = .07, p = .32$). Unexpectedly, Industriousness also demonstrated a small yet statistically significant correlation with students’ engagement in networking search behaviors ($r = .14, p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 5 was partially supported for
Industriousness and students’ engagement in active search behaviors only. This finding is particularly interesting, as the second-order Conscientiousness factor previously described did not statistically significantly relate to students’ engagement in preparatory or active job search behaviors; thus highlighting the importance of examining narrower personality traits within the Big Five to uncover such relations.

Hypothesis 7a stated that the Extraversion aspect of Assertiveness would be positively related to students’ active job search behaviors. As shown in Table 5, Assertiveness was not meaningfully related to students’ engagement in active search behaviors ($r = .10, p = .15$); thus, Hypothesis 7a was not supported. Unexpectedly, however, there was a statistically significant correlation between students’ levels of Assertiveness and their engagement in networking behaviors ($r = .17, p < .01$).

Turning next to Enthusiasm, Hypothesis 7b stated that the Extraversion aspect of Enthusiasm would be positively related to students’ engagement in networking behaviors. As anticipated, there was a small, but statistically significant correlation between Enthusiasm and networking behaviors ($r = .15, p < .05$; see Table 5). In addition, the relationship between Enthusiasm and students’ active search behaviors approached significant ($r = .12, p = .08$). Thus, Hypothesis 7b was supported.

Hypothesis 9 stated that the Neuroticism aspects of Volatility and Withdrawal would be negatively related to students’ preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors. Note that although both Volatility ($r = .23, p < .01$) and Withdrawal ($r = .15, p < .05$) were statistically significantly related to students’ engagement in preparatory search behaviors, these relationships were in the reverse direction—consistent with the results for Neuroticism at the factor level (see Table 5). Moreover, Volatility again
demonstrated a small, but positive statistically significant correlation with students’ engagement in active search behaviors \((r = .15, p < .05)\), although Withdrawal was not meaningfully associated with active search \((r = .02, p = .84)\). Finally, neither Volatility \((r = .02, p = .82)\) nor Withdrawal \((r = -.09, p = .21)\) was statistically significantly correlated with students’ engagement in networking search behaviors. Thus, Hypothesis 9 was not supported.

To ensure that the alternative specification of the aspects-level model did not meaningfully influence the patterns of correlations observed for proactive personality and students’ engagement in job search behaviors at the broad factor level, I again examined the relations specified in Hypothesis 11 (see Table 5). Consistent was the findings in the broad factor model, proactive personality was statistically significantly related to students’ preparatory, active and networking, again supporting Hypothesis 11.

**Political skill and students’ job search behaviors.** As previously noted, the inclusion of both political skill and Extraversion in the latent CFA model resulted in a non-positive definite matrix. In order to examine Hypothesis 13, I therefore tested a separate CFA model isolating the relationships between political skill, the mediating mechanisms of job search self-efficacy and job search clarity, and students’ job search behaviors. This model demonstrated acceptable close fit to the data \((\chi^2 (329) = 667.83, p < .05, \text{CFI} = .925, \text{RMSEA} = .061 [.054, .067], \text{SRMR} = .067, \text{AIC} = 16091.28)\).

Table 6 presents the standardized latent correlations between all variables for the isolated political skills model. Political skill demonstrated moderate to strong relations with students’ job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. Hypothesis 13 stated that political skill would be positively related to students’ networking behaviors. Consistent
with expectations, there was a small-to-moderate association between political skill and students’ engagement in networking ($r = .26, p < .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 13 was supported. Moreover, political skill was not statistically significantly related to students’ engagement in preparatory or active search behaviors, although these relationships approached significance. Notably, the findings for political skill mirror those observed for Extraversion, further justifying the removal of political skill from the broad factor model to eliminate the potential redundancy between these constructs.

Table 6
*Standardized Latent Correlation Matrix for Political Skill and Students’ Job Search Behaviors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Variable</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>6.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Predictors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Political Skill</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mediators</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Job Search Self-Efficacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>3. Job Search Clarity</td>
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<td>.66</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Job Search Behaviors</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Preparatory Search</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Active Search</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.93</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Networking</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Job Search Effort</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $N = 280$. Latent correlations in **bold** are statistically significant, $p < .05$. Missing data are estimated using FIML procedures (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012). $\chi^2 (329) = 667.83$, $p < .05$, CFI = .925, RMSEA = .061 [.054, .067], SRMR = .067, AIC = 16091.28.

Having examined the hypothesized direct relationships between the distal individual difference characteristics and students’ engagement in preparatory, active, and networking search behaviors, I next describe the results for the mediation hypotheses linking these distal characteristics and students’ job search behaviors through the two focal mediating mechanisms: job search self-efficacy and job search clarity.
**Structural Equation Models**

Following the general CFA models, I conduct a series of SEM analyses to examine the associations between the distal individual difference characteristics of interest (i.e., personality traits, political skill) and job search behaviors as specified by the hypotheses. To facilitate computational efficiency and improve interpretability, I examined the mediated relationships between each predictor variable and the job search outcomes in isolation (i.e., one model for Conscientiousness, one for Extraversion, etc.).

Tests of mediation were examined through the direct and indirect effects of the predictors on the criteria, as indicated in the structural models (see MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007). In order for the conditions of mediation to be met, a number of associations between the variables in the model must be present (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judd & Kenny, 1981; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). First, the proposed predictor variable $X$ must be meaningfully related to the mediating variable $M$ in the model. Second, the predictor variable $X$ must demonstrate a meaningful relationship with the outcome variable $Y$. Third, the mediating variable $M$ must be statistically significantly related to the outcome variable $Y$ after controlling for the predictor variable $X$ in the model. The final condition for mediation varies depending on the method to which researchers adhere (see MacKinnon et al., 2002). According to Baron and Kenny (1986; see also, Judd & Kenny, 1981), in order for the conditions of mediation to be met, when the outcome variable $Y$ is simultaneously regressed on the predictor and mediating variables $X$ and $M$, the association between $M \rightarrow Y$ should be statistically significant, while the association between $X \rightarrow Y$ should become statistically non-significant—known as full mediation. A less stringent alternative allows the
relationship between $X \rightarrow Y$ to remain significant, but diminished in magnitude once the mediating variable has been controlled for in the model—known as partial mediation (see also, Judd & Kenny, 1981).

Although the Baron and Kenny (1986) and Judd and Kenny (1981) methods are useful for outlining the conditions necessary to establish mediation, these aforementioned steps do not directly test the joint association between the $X \rightarrow M$ and $M \rightarrow Y$ paths in the model. Thus, these methods potentially mask mediating relationships when the aforementioned paths are opposite in sign, or when the direct relationship between the predictor and outcome variable $X \rightarrow M$ does not achieve statistical significance (see MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000). In order to test mediation in the present dissertation, I applied the product of coefficients test for indirect effects advocated by MacKinnon et al. (2002; see also, Cheung & Lau, 2008; Shrout & Bolger, 2002), which tests the statistical significance of the joint product of the $X \rightarrow M$ and $M \rightarrow Y$ pathways. (Note, this method is the default for tests of indirect effects in Mplus v. 7.11, see Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012.)

To support these mediation analyses, I implemented bias-corrected bootstrapping procedures to obtain estimates of standard errors and associated confidence intervals for all path estimates (Cheung & Lau, 2008). All confidence intervals were based on 1,000 bootstrap replications of the data (i.e., random sampling with replacement). Indirect path estimates with confidence intervals that excluded zero were considered statistically significant, and partial mediation was supported if the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for all direct and indirect path estimates for a hypothesized relation excluded zero (see James, Mulaik, & Brett, 2006; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). For analyses
at the level of the personality aspects, the second-order factors for the broad personality traits were again dropped from the model to allow for an examination of the influence of the personality aspects on the mediating variables and job search behaviors directly. A summary of the model fit statistics for all mediation models is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\chi^2$ (df)</th>
<th>$\chi^2$/df</th>
<th>CFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>AIC</th>
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<td>Conscientiousness</td>
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<td>1.64</td>
<td>.935</td>
<td>.048 [.041, .054]</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>17533.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td>482.74 (262)</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>.055 [.047, .062]</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>14427.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>532.97 (263)</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>.925</td>
<td>.061 [.053, .068]</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>14840.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industriousness &amp; Orderliness</td>
<td>659.85 (384)</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>.928</td>
<td>.051 [.044, .057]</td>
<td>.084</td>
<td>17566.10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assertiveness &amp; Enthusiasm</td>
<td>461.65 (258)</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>.942</td>
<td>.053 [.045, .061]</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>14414.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volatility &amp; Withdrawal</td>
<td>509.73 (259)</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>.930</td>
<td>.059 [.051, .066]</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>14825.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proactive Personality</td>
<td>481.55 (261)</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>.931</td>
<td>.055 [.047, .063]</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>14397.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Skill</td>
<td>509.87 (238)</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>.910</td>
<td>.064 [.056, .072]</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>13918.88</td>
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</table>

Note. N = 280. CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual; AIC = Akaike information criterion. $\chi^2$ estimates in bold are statistically significant, $p < .05$. Missing data are estimated using FIML procedures (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012).

Mediation models for the Big Five personality factors. Hypothesis 4a stated that job search self-efficacy would partially mediate the relations between Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism, and students’ engagement in job search behaviors. Hypothesis 4b further stated that job search clarity would partially mediate the relations between Conscientiousness and students’ engagement in job search behaviors. In order to test the mediating relations between these three broad personality factors and students’ job search behaviors through their effects of job search self-efficacy (and in the case of Conscientiousness, also job search clarity), I constructed three SEM
models specifying the hypothesized relations for Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Extraversion, respectively.

Figure 4 presents the results of the mediation model for Conscientiousness. This model demonstrated acceptable close fit to the data ($\chi^2 (389) = 637.55, p < .05, \text{CFI} = .935, \text{RMSEA} = .048 [.041, .054], \text{SRMR} = .079, \text{AIC} = 17533.80$). Notably, Conscientiousness, job search self-efficacy, and job search clarity did not demonstrate statistically significant relations with any of the job search behaviors examined. I next examined the standardized total ($T$) and specific indirect effects ($I$) from Conscientiousness to each of the job search behaviors through job search self-efficacy and job search clarity (see Bollen, 1987, for notation). With respect to preparatory search, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = -.16 [-1.41, 1.10], p = .81$), nor job search clarity ($I = -.17 [-.52, .18], p = .33$) mediated the relationship between Conscientiousness and students’ preparatory search behaviors ($T = -.33 [-1.75, 1.09], p = .65$). Moreover, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = -.17 [-1.29, .95], p = .77$), nor job search clarity ($I = -.26 [-.61, .09], p = .15$) mediated the relationship between Conscientiousness and students’ active search behaviors ($T = -.43 [-1.70, .83], p = .50$). Finally, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = -.18 [-1.38, 1.02], p = .77$), nor job search clarity ($I = -.11 [-.45, .24], p = .54$) mediated the relationship between Conscientiousness and students’ networking behaviors ($T = -.29 [-1.65, 1.07], p = .68$). Thus, Hypotheses 4a and 4b were not supported for Conscientiousness.
Figure 4. Standardized mediation model for Conscientiousness predicting students’ job search behaviors through job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. $\chi^2$ (389) = 637.55, $p < .05$, CFI = .935, RMSEA = .048 [.041, .054], SRMR = .079, AIC = 17533.80. *$p < .05$.

Figure 5 presents the results of the mediation model for Extraversion. This model again demonstrated acceptable close fit to the data following common rules-of-thumb ($\chi^2$ (262) = 482.74, $p < .05$, CFI = .937, RMSEA = .055 [.047, .062], SRMR = .068, AIC = 14427.44). None of the direct effects from Extraversion or job search self-efficacy to the job search behaviors were statistically significant. Moreover, job search self-efficacy did not mediate the relations between Extraversion and students’ preparatory ($T = -.06 [-.23, .11], p = .49$), active ($T = .04 [-.12, .20], p = .61$), or networking ($T = .03 [-.11, .17], p = .65$) job search behaviors. Thus, Hypothesis 4a was not supported for Extraversion.

Note that total and specific indirect effects are equal when only one mediating variable is examined.
Figure 5. Standardized mediation model for Extraversion predicting students’ job search behaviors through job search self-efficacy. $\chi^2 (262) = 482.74, p < .05, \text{CFI} = .937, \text{RMSEA} = .055 [0.047, 0.062], \text{SRMR} = .068, \text{AIC} = 14427.44$. *$p < .05$.

Turning to the isolated mediation model for Neuroticism (see Figure 6), this model again demonstrated acceptable close fit to the data ($\chi^2 (263) = 532.97, p < .05, \text{CFI} = .925, \text{RMSEA} = .061 [0.053, 0.068], \text{SRMR} = .071, \text{AIC} = 14840.39$). Although the direct relationships between Neuroticism and students’ active and networking job search behaviors were not statistically significant, there was a positive association between Neuroticism and students’ engagement in preparatory search behaviors ($\beta = .25, p < .01$)—replicating the finding observed for the general CFA model.
I next examined the standardized total indirect effects for Neuroticism on students’ job search behaviors through job search self-efficacy. Once again, job search self-efficacy was not statistically significantly related to students’ job search behaviors. Consistent with the results for Conscientiousness and Extraversion, job search self-efficacy did not mediate the relations between Neuroticism and students’ engagement in preparatory ($T = -.01 [-.08, .06], p = .74$), active ($T = -.05 [-.12, .02], p = .15$), or networking ($T = -.04 [-.10, .01], p = .14$) job search behaviors. Thus, Hypothesis 4a again was not supported. Collectively, these findings suggest that job search self-efficacy and job search clarity did not meaningfully mediate the relations between

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*Figure 6.* Standardized mediation model for Neuroticism predicting students’ job search behaviors through job search self-efficacy. $\chi^2 (263) = 532.97, p < .05$, CFI = .925, RMSEA = .061 [.053, .068], SRMR = .071, AIC = 14840.39. *$p < .05$. 
Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Extraversion, and students’ engagement in job search in the present sample.

**Mediation models for DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects.** Following tests of the mediation models for the broad personality traits, I next examined the proposed mediation hypotheses at the level of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects. To test these hypotheses, I constructed a series of models for the two personality aspects within each domain—one model for Industriousness and Orderliness, one for Assertiveness and Enthusiasm, and one for Volatility and Withdrawal, respectively. Each of these models is nested within their higher-order counterpart previously described, allowing for direct comparisons of model fit across the higher-order and aspect-level models via the $\chi^2$ difference test and the AIC index (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003). Note that, consistent with the higher-order models, the associations between job search self-efficacy and job search clarity with students’ engagement in preparatory, active, and networking search behaviors were not statistically significant for all aspects-level models. To avoid redundancy, I do not describe these relationships below.

Hypothesis 6a stated that job search self-efficacy would partially mediate the relations between the Conscientiousness aspect of Industriousness and students’ job search behaviors, and Hypothesis 6b stated that job search clarity would partially mediate the relations between the Conscientiousness aspects of Industriousness and Orderliness, and students’ job search behaviors. Figure 7 presents the results for the mediation models for the effects of Industriousness and Orderliness on students’ job search behaviors through their effects on job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. This model generally demonstrated acceptable close fit to the data ($\chi^2 (384) = 659.85, p < .05,$
CFI = .928, RMSEA = .051 [.044, .057], SRMR = .084, AIC = 17566.10); however, the χ² difference test (Δχ² (5) = 22.30, p < .05) and AIC values (ΔAIC = 32.30) indicated that the higher-order Conscientiousness model demonstrated superior fit and model parsimony over the aspects-level model. Notably, although students’ job search self-efficacy (β = .56, p < .001) and job search clarity (β = .42, p < .001) both were statistically significantly related to Industriousness, neither job search self-efficacy (β = -.08, p = .33) nor job search clarity (β = -.05, p = .55) was meaningfully related to Orderliness in the model.

*Figure 7.* Standardized mediation model for Industriousness and Orderliness predicting students’ job search behaviors through job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. χ² (384) = 659.85, p < .05, CFI = .928, RMSEA = .051 [.044, .057], SRMR = .084, AIC = 17566.10. *p < .05.*
Turning to the mediation hypotheses, with respect to preparatory search, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = .01 [-.16, .18], p = .94$), nor job search clarity ($I = -.06 [-.17, .05], p = .28$) mediated the relationship between Industriousness and students’ preparatory search behaviors ($T = -.05 [-.19, .09], p = .47$). Similarly, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = .00 [-.04, .04], p = .96$), nor job search clarity ($I = .01 [-.03, .05], p = .71$) mediated the relationship between Orderliness and students’ preparatory search behaviors ($T = .01 [-.04, .05], p = .78$). Turning next to students’ engagement in active search behaviors, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = .09 [-.08, .26], p = .29$), nor job search clarity ($I = -.07 [-.17, .04], p = .20$) mediated the relationship between Industriousness and students’ active search behaviors ($T = .02 [-.12, .16], p = .74$). Once again, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = -.01 [-.07, .04], p = .61$), nor job search clarity ($I = .01 [-.03, .05], p = .69$) mediated the relationship between Orderliness and students’ active search behaviors ($T = -.01 [-.05, .04], p = .82$). Thus, Hypotheses 6a and 6b were not supported.

Hypothesis 8 stated that job search self-efficacy would partially mediate the relations between the Extraversion aspects of Assertiveness and Enthusiasm, and students’ job search behaviors. Figure 8 presents the results for the mediation model for Assertiveness and Enthusiasm on students’ engagement in job search through their effects on job search self-efficacy. This model demonstrated acceptable close fit to the data ($\chi^2 (258) = 461.65, p < .05, CFI = .942, RMSEA = .053 [.045, .061], SRMR = .058, AIC = 14414.36$), and the $\chi^2$ difference test ($\Delta \chi^2 (4) = 21.09, p < .05$) and AIC values ($\Delta AIC = 13.08$) indicated that the aspects-level model demonstrated improved fit and model parsimony over the higher-order Extraversion model. Although Assertiveness was
related to job search self-efficacy ($\beta = .61, p < .001$), the relationship between Enthusiasm and job search self-efficacy was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.05, p = .55$).

Turning to the mediation hypothesis, job search self-efficacy did not mediate the relations between Assertiveness ($T = -.02 [-.19, .16], p = .84$) or Enthusiasm ($T = .00 [-.03, .03], p = .92$) and students’ engagement in preparatory search behaviors. Similarly, job search self-efficacy did not mediate the relations between Assertiveness ($T = .07 [-.10, .24], p = .40$) or Enthusiasm ($T = -.01 [-.03, .03], p = .73$) and students’ engagement in active search behaviors. Finally, job search self-efficacy did not mediate the relations between Assertiveness ($T = .06 [-.08, .21], p = .39$) or Enthusiasm ($T = -.01 [-.03, .02], p = .71$), and students’ networking behaviors. Thus, Hypothesis 8 was not supported.

**Figure 8.** Standardized mediation model for Assertiveness and Enthusiasm predicting students’ job search behaviors through job search self-efficacy. $\chi^2 (258) = 461.65, p < .05$, CFI = .942, RMSEA = .053 [.045, .061], SRMR = .058, AIC = 14414.36. *$p < .05.$
Hypothesis 10 stated that job search self-efficacy would partially mediate the relations between the Neuroticism aspects of Volatility and Withdrawal, and students’ job search behaviors. Figure 9 presents the results for the mediation models for the effects of Volatility and Withdrawal on students’ job search behaviors through their effects on job search self-efficacy. This model again demonstrated acceptable close fit to the data based on common rules-of-thumb ($\chi^2 (259) = 509.73, p < .05$, CFI = .930, RMSEA = .059 [.051, .066], SRMR = .060, AIC = 14825.16). In addition, the $\chi^2$ difference test ($\Delta \chi^2 (4) = 23.24, p < .05$) and AIC values ($\Delta$AIC = 15.23) again indicated that the aspects-level model demonstrated improved fit and model parsimony over the higher-order Neuroticism model. With respect to the direct relationships between the aspects of Neuroticism and the proposed mediating mechanism, both Volatility ($\beta = .28, p < .01$) and Withdrawal ($\beta = -.60, p < .001$) demonstrated moderate to strong relationships with students’ job search self-efficacy, but in opposing directions.

Turning to the mediation hypothesis, job search self-efficacy did not mediate the relations between Volatility ($T = .00 [-.07, .07], p = .92$) or Withdrawal ($T = -.01 [-.15, .14], p = .92$) and students’ engagement in preparatory search behaviors. Moreover, job search self-efficacy did not mediate the relations between Volatility ($T = .04 [-.03, .11], p = .29$) or Withdrawal ($T = -.09 [-.22, .05], p = .23$) and students’ engagement in active search. Finally, job search self-efficacy did not mediate the relations between Volatility ($T = .04 [-.03, .10], p = .29$) or Withdrawal ($T = -.08 [-.20, .04], p = .22$), and students’ networking behaviors. Thus, Hypothesis 10 was not supported.
Figure 9. Standardized mediation model for Volatility and Withdrawal predicting students’ job search behaviors through job search self-efficacy. $\chi^2 (259) = 509.73, p < .05, \text{CFI} = .930, \text{RMSEA} = .059 [0.051, 0.066], \text{SRMR} = .060, \text{AIC} = 14825.16$. *$p < .05$.

Mediation model for proactive personality. Hypothesis 12 stated that job search self-efficacy and job search clarity would partially mediate the relationship between proactive personality and students’ job search behaviors. Figure 10 presents the SEM model for the relationship between proactive personality and students’ job search behaviors through its influence on job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. This model again demonstrated acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 (261) = 481.55, p < .05, \text{CFI} = .931, \text{RMSEA} = .055 [0.047, 0.063], \text{SRMR} = .072, \text{AIC} = 14397.65$). Turning to the direct effects, although proactive personality positively predicted students’ engagement in preparatory job search behaviors, proactive personality was not directly related to active
or networking search behaviors—inconsistent with the findings for the latent correlations between these constructs in the general CFA models.

Figure 10. Standardized mediation model for proactive personality predicting students’ job search behaviors through job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. $\chi^2(261) = 481.55, p < .05$, CFI = .931, RMSEA = .055 [.047, .063], SRMR = .072, AIC = 14397.65. *$p < .05.$

I next examined the standardized total and specific indirect effects from proactive personality to students’ job search behaviors through the hypothesized mediating mechanisms. For preparatory search, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = -.04 [-.24, .17], p = .74$), nor job search clarity ($I = -.12 [-.28, .04], p = .14$) mediated the relationship between proactive personality and students’ preparatory search behaviors ($T = -.16 [-.38, .07], p = .17$). Moreover, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = .10 [-.09, .29], p = .31$), nor job search clarity ($I = -.12 [-.27, .03], p = .11$) mediated the relationship between proactive personality and students’ active search behaviors ($T = -.02 [-.22, .18], p = .86$).
Finally, neither job search self-efficacy \((I = .06 [-.09, .21], p = .44)\), nor job search clarity \((I = -.02 [-.15, .11], p = .78)\) mediated the relationship between Conscientiousness and students’ networking behaviors \((T = .04 [-.14, .22], p = .66)\). Thus, Hypothesis 12 was not supported.

Collectively, the results of the hypothesis tests described above suggest a number of key findings for the present dissertation. Table 8 provides a brief summary of the study findings.

**Table 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 1.</strong> Conscientiousness will be positively related to students’ engagement in preparatory and active job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 2.</strong> Extraversion will be positively related to students’ engagement in active job search behaviors and networking behaviors.</td>
<td>Partially supported for students’ networking behaviors ((r = .22)).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 3.</strong> Neuroticism will be negatively related to students’ engagement in preparatory and active job search behaviors, and networking behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported; Neuroticism correlated positively with students’ preparatory search behaviors ((r = .24)).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 4a.</strong> Job search self-efficacy will partially mediate the relations between Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism, and students’ engagement in job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 4b.</strong> Job search clarity will partially mediate the relations between Conscientiousness and students’ engagement in job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 5.</strong> The Conscientiousness aspects of Industriousness and Orderliness will be positively related to students’ preparatory and active job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Partially supported for Industriousness and students’ active search behaviors ((r = .16)).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 6a.</strong> Job search self-efficacy will partially mediate the relations between the Conscientiousness aspect of Industriousness and students’ job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 6b.</strong> Job search clarity will partially mediate the relations between the Conscientiousness aspects of Industriousness and Orderliness, and students’ job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8 cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypotheses</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 7a.</strong> The Extraversion aspect of Assertiveness will be positively related to students’ active job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 7b.</strong> The Extraversion aspect of Enthusiasm will be positively related to students’ networking behaviors.</td>
<td>Supported ($r = .15$).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 8.</strong> Job search self-efficacy will partially mediate the relations between the Extraversion aspects of Assertiveness and Enthusiasm, and students’ job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 9.</strong> The Neuroticism aspects of Volatility and Withdrawal will be negatively related to students’ preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported; Volatility ($r = .23$) and Withdrawal ($r = .15$) positively correlated with students’ preparatory search behaviors; Volatility positively correlated with students active search behaviors ($r = .15$).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 10.</strong> Job search self-efficacy will partially mediate the relations between the Neuroticism aspects of Volatility and Withdrawal, and students’ job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 11.</strong> Proactive personality will be positively related to students’ preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Supported* ($rs = .14/.15, .17/.18, .21/.21$, respectively).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 12.</strong> Job search self-efficacy and job search clarity will partially mediate the relationship between proactive personality and students’ job search behaviors.</td>
<td>Not supported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 13.</strong> Political skill will be positively related to students’ networking behaviors.</td>
<td>Supported ($r = .26$).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *Factor-level model/aspects-level model.

### Exploratory Analyses

Following the tests of the hypotheses, I conducted a number of exploratory analyses. Specifically, I conducted an exploratory mediation analysis for the effects of political skill on students’ job search behaviors through the focal mediating mechanisms in the present dissertation: job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. In addition, at the time of the follow-up survey, I collected information related to a number of quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the job search process, including the number of interviews and job offers students received, their employment status at graduation, and, if
employed, their level of job satisfaction. I describe the correlations observed between these job search outcomes and the key variables in the dissertation below.

**Exploratory mediation model for political skill.** As noted in the introduction, the mediating mechanisms through which political skill might influence students’ engagement in job search behaviors are as of yet unclear. As such, I constructed an exploratory mediation model examining the relations between political skill and students’ preparatory, active, and networking search behaviors through its effects on both job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. Figure 11 presents the results for this analysis. This model generally demonstrated acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2 (238) = 509.87, p < .05, CFI = .910, RMSEA = .064 [.056, .072], SRMR = .088, AIC = 13918.88$). Consistent with the findings for Extraversion and for Hypothesis 13, political skill again demonstrated a strong-to-moderate statistically significant association with students’ networking behaviors ($\beta = .29, p < .01$). (Recall that the latent Extraversion and political skill factors were correlated $r > .99$.) Moreover, political skill was associated with both job search clarity ($\beta = .44, p < .01$) and job search self-efficacy ($\beta = .62, p < .01$) in a strong, positive direction.

Turning to the tests of mediation, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = -.07 [-.27, .14], p = .56$), nor job search clarity ($I = -.07 [-.18, .05], p = .26$) mediated the relationship between political skill and students’ preparatory search behaviors ($T = -.13 [-.32, .06], p = .19$). Similarly, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = .09 [-.10, .28], p = .39$), nor job search clarity ($I = -.07 [-.17, .04], p = .23$) mediated the relationship between political skill and students’ active search behaviors ($T = .03 [-.15, .20], p = .79$). Finally, neither job search self-efficacy ($I = -.01 [-.15, .14], p = .91$), nor job search clarity ($I = -
.01 [-.10, .07], \( p = .79 \) mediated the relationship between political skill and students’ networking behaviors \( (T = -.02 [-.16, .12], p = .79) \).

*Correlations with job search outcomes.* Table 3 again presents the descriptive statistics, scale intercorrelations, and internal consistency reliabilities for all variables examined in the dissertation. Note that the bottom rows of Table 3 describe the results for a number of outcomes variables subsequent to students’ job search behaviors. These include a number of job search outcomes identified by Saks and his colleagues (e.g., Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Saks, 2005, 2006) as integral to the job search process, including the number of interviews in which the students participated, the number of job offers received, and whether or not the student had accepted a job offer at the time of graduation.
(see Figure 1). In addition, one index of employment quality—job satisfaction—was collected for the subset of students who indicated that they had accepted a position following graduation. I describe the relationships between the key variables in the dissertation and these various job search outcomes at the level of the observed correlations, given the exploratory nature of these findings.

With respect to the Big Five personality traits, Conscientiousness was positively related to the number of interviews ($r = .15, p < .05$) and job offers ($r = .17, p < .05$) students received, as well as their employment status at Time 2 ($r = .19, p < .05$). Extraversion ($r = .20, p < .05$) and Neuroticism ($r = -.23, p < .05$) also demonstrated meaningful correlations with employment status at Time 2. These correlations between the Big Five and outcomes of the job search process are largely consistent with previously reported findings in the literature (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Turban et al., 2009). Moreover, among the students who were employed at the time of the follow-up survey, Extraversion ($r = .26, p < .05$) and Neuroticism ($r = -.20, p < .05$) were also correlated with students’ job satisfaction in the expected direction (see e.g., Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002).

At the level of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects, the Conscientiousness aspect of Industriousness and the Extraversion aspect of Assertiveness were meaningfully associated with number of interviews and job offers students obtained. However, Orderliness and Enthusiasm were not meaningfully associated with these job search outcomes, suggesting differential patterns of relationships at narrower levels of the personality hierarchy within the Big Five. Notably, with the exception of Orderliness, all personality aspects were related to students’ employment status at Time 2. Moreover,
among the employed subsample, Industriousness \(r = .17, p < .05\), Withdrawal \(r = -.21, p < .05\), Enthusiasm \(r = .23, p < .05\), and Assertiveness \(r = .20, p < .05\) all demonstrated small correlations with students’ satisfaction with their current jobs.

Beyond the Big Five traits and their constituent aspects, proactive personality demonstrated small, positive correlations with the number of interviews received \(r = .16, p < .05\), number of job offers \(r = .24, p < .05\), employment status \(r = .17, p < .05\), and students’ job satisfaction \(r = .17, p < .05\). These correlations underscore the findings of Brown et al. (2006) and McArdle et al. (2007), suggesting that job seekers’ dispositional level of proactivity is an important determinant of job search success. Turning next to political skill, there were small, positive associations between students’ scores on the PSI and the number of job offers received \(r = .13, p < .05\), employment status \(r = .15, p < .05\), and students’ satisfaction with their current job \(r = .16, p < .05\). It is interesting to note that political skill was not related to the number of interviews students’ received \(r = .04, p > .05\), but that political skill was associated with number of job offers. One possibility is that those who are higher in political skill may not, in fact, receive more interviews than those who are lower in skill: Rather, students high in political skill may be more adept in turning interviews into actual job offers through the behaviors exhibited during the interview itself. This finding supports the position that political skill (and more generally, interpersonal skills) may play a more dominant role in later stages of the job search process (see Chia, 2005; Tay et al., 2006).

Turning next to the mediating variables, although job search self-efficacy and job search clarity were not meaningfully related to students’ job search behaviors in the present sample, a number of interesting relations with the job search outcomes did
emerge. Notably, job search self-efficacy was meaningfully correlated with the number of interviews students’ obtained ($r = .17$, $p < .05$) and their eventual satisfaction on the job ($r = .26$, $p < .05$). Interestingly, job search self-efficacy demonstrated moderate relations with both the number of job offers students received ($r = .38$) and their employment status at Time 2 ($r = .43$, $p < .05$). Job search clarity also demonstrated small to moderate correlations with the number of job offers students received ($r = .21$, $p < .05$), employment status ($r = .31$, $p < .05$), and satisfaction with their current jobs ($r = .27$, $p < .05$). Like political skill, job search clarity was unrelated to the number of interviews students received ($r = .07$, $p > .05$), suggesting that having clear search goals might be more strongly related to selecting between job offers, than to obtaining initial interview offers (cf. Côté et al., 2006). Collectively, the findings for these two mediating mechanisms at the level of the observed correlations suggest that, although job search self-efficacy and job search clarity were not related to students’ engagement in the various job search behaviors examined in the present dissertation, there were several key associations observed between these variables and job search outcomes that are consistent with the job search literature (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2002).

Finally, there was an interesting pattern of relationships observed for students’ engagement in the various job search behaviors and the job search outcomes examined (see Table 3), where preparatory ($r = .19$, $p < .05$), active ($r = .42$, $p < .05$), and networking ($r = .21$, $p < .05$) search behaviors were all statistically significantly related to the number of interviews that students received. However, only students’ engagement in active job search behaviors was related to the number of job offers students received ($r = .16$, $p < .05$), and none of the job search behaviors were meaningfully associated with
students’ eventual employment status and satisfaction with their current jobs. This finding might potentially be explained by examining the correlations between the various job search outcomes. Specifically, the number of interviews students’ obtained was strongly correlated with the number of offers received \((r = .59, p < .05)\). Moreover, although number of interviews was related to employment status at Time 2 \((r = .26, p < .05)\), the number of job offers students received was much more strongly correlated with whether or not the student had obtained employment \((r = .58, p < .05)\). This pattern of relations from students’ engagement in job search behaviors to their eventual employment status mirrors the unfolding process of job search success (Saks, 2005; see also, Côté et al., 2006): Students’ job search behaviors demonstrated their greatest influence on the number of interviews obtained. In turn, a greater number of interviews lead to a greater number of job offers. Finally, the number of job offers students’ received was the strongest predictor of their employment success.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The ways in which job seekers identify and pursue opportunities for employment is a crucial aspect of organizational life, and college students, who are often entering the job market for the first time, must engage in a variety of job search behaviors in order to obtain employment after graduation. Research over the past decade has examined the role of individual differences in students’ job search behaviors (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Boswell et al., 2012; Côté et al. 2006; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2006), where engagement in job search behaviors is largely self-determined, and the various activities in which the job seeker engages determines the variety and number of employment opportunities from which to choose (Saks, 2005). Moreover, in a recent study, Zimmerman et al. (2012) found that individual difference characteristics (specifically, personality traits) might simultaneously have positive and negative influences on the job search process depending on the mediating mechanisms examined.

Building from this research, the present dissertation examined the role of a number of individual difference characteristics in the job search process, namely, the Big Five personality traits of Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism, individual differences in proactivity, and students’ interpersonal skills. These distal individual differences were hypothesized to influence students’ engagement in preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors through their effects on job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. Furthermore, the present dissertation examined the role of a number of narrower personality aspects in the job search process, offering an alternative, yet complimentary explanation for the findings of Zimmerman et al. (2012).
Broad Traits, Narrow Aspects, and Students’ Job Search Behaviors

Findings for broad personality traits of Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism were mixed. Extraversion demonstrated a small, positive correlation with students’ engagement in networking; however, Extraversion was unrelated to students’ active search behaviors. Contrary to expectations, Conscientiousness was unrelated to students’ engagement in the various job search behaviors examined. Interestingly, Neuroticism demonstrated a small, yet positive association with preparatory search behaviors, but was not statistically significantly related to students’ active or networking search behaviors. With respect to the mediation hypotheses, none of the hypothesized relationships from the Big Five personality traits to students’ job search behaviors through their effects on job search self-efficacy and job search clarity were supported. These findings likely result from the failure to find meaningful associations between these two mechanisms and students’ job search behaviors in the current sample.

As noted, the job search literature has primarily focused on the role of broad traits (i.e., the Big Five) in the job search process (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Zimmerman et al., 2012). However, some researchers have argued that the Big Five may not fully capture the role of personality in organizational phenomenon (e.g., job search), and that narrower traits within the Big Five might provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of personality at work (e.g., Hough, 1992; Hough & Oswald, 2005; Oswald & Hough, 2010; Oswald et al., 2013). Thus, the present dissertation was novel in its examination of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects in the job search process, where alternative aspects within the same broad trait were expected to demonstrate different patterns of relationships with students’ preparatory, active, and networking job search behaviors.
With respect to the hypothesized relations for the personality aspects, the Conscientiousness aspect of Industriousness was meaningfully correlated with students’ active search behaviors, and the Extraversion facet of Assertiveness was statistically significantly related to students’ engagement in networking. Surprisingly, the Neuroticism aspects of Volatility and Withdrawal were both positively associated with students’ preparatory search behaviors. Consistent with the findings at the level of the Big Five traits, none of the hypothesized mediated relationships through job search self-efficacy and job search clarity were supported.

Although the majority of the hypotheses for the personality aspects did not conform to initial expectations, there were a number of interesting findings supporting the need to examine narrow personality traits. This is particularly evident when considering the relations observed between DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects and students’ job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. For instance, although the Conscientiousness aspect of Industriousness was meaningfully related to students’ job search self-efficacy and job search clarity, the aspect of Orderliness was not meaningfully related to these mediating mechanisms. This suggests that it is those behaviors that reflect students’ Industriousness—including achievement striving, competence, and self-discipline—that are primarily related to students’ confidence in their own ability to seek out employment, rather than those characteristics associated with orderliness and organization. Similarly, the Extraversion aspect of Assertiveness was meaningfully associated with students’ job search self-efficacy; however, Enthusiasm was not related to this mediating mechanism. The situation for the aspects of Neuroticism is more complex, where both Volatility and Withdrawal predicted students’ job search self-
efficacy. However, the relations between these two aspects and job search self-efficacy were in opposite directions, suggesting that although the tendency to be anxious and withdrawn may detract from students’ confidence, some level of Volatility—such as tendencies towards hostility and impulsivity—might, in fact, boost students’ job search self-efficacy. Indeed, it may be that the positive relationship between Volatility and job search self-efficacy reflects the degree to which highly volatile students are overconfident in their ability to perform a successful search. Such complex associations are missed when only broad personality traits are assessed, and future research in the job search area should continue to examine the influence of personality traits at different levels of the personality hierarchy (DeYoung et al., 2007; Judge et al., 2013).

**Beyond the Big Five: Proactive Personality and Political Skill**

The present dissertation also examined the role of two individual differences beyond the Big Five and their constituent aspects for predicting students’ job search behaviors. Recent research has implicated proactive personality as an important predictor of students’ job search self-efficacy and eventual employment success (e.g., Brown et al., 2006; Claes & De Witte, 2002; McArdle et al., 2007; Schmit et al., 1993). Results of the present study provide support for the findings of Brown et al. (2006) and McArdle et al. (2007), suggesting that individual differences in proactivity play an important role in determining job seekers’ engagement in job search behaviors. Specifically, proactive personality appears to be an important predictor of students’ engagement in active search behaviors and students’ use of networking as a strategy to identify and obtain employment. The present study extends past findings by examining the associations between proactive personality and several types of search behaviors in which job seekers
may engage, where proactive personality correlated with students’ engagement in active and networking behaviors, and less so with preparatory behaviors. Moreover, this study examined the relationship between proactive personality and job search clarity, a heretofore-untested potential mediator of the relationships between proactive personality and students’ job search behaviors. Although the mediation hypotheses for the present dissertation were not supported, the strong positive association observed between proactive personality and students’ job search clarity suggests that future research should continue to explore goal strength as a mechanism through which proactive personality influences subsequent behaviors.

Recently, several researchers have suggested that traditional predictors of employee success may not fully capture the range of individual difference characteristics of interest to potential employers, and that applicants’ interpersonal skills might be an important predictor of their future performance (e.g., Hogan et al., 2013; Lievens & Sackett, 2012). Moreover, some researchers have found that students’ interpersonal behaviors predict the likelihood that they receive offers for interviews and eventual offers of employment (e.g., Chia, 2005; Tay et al., 2006). To this end, the present dissertation examined the role of one class of interpersonal skills—namely, political skill (Ferris et al., 2005)—in the job search process.

Political skill was highly related with students’ levels of Extraversion in the present study. This finding is not entirely surprising, as both political skill and Extraversion reflect individual differences in dominance, activity, and sociability (e.g., both scales include items related to how the individual interacts with other people). Indeed, Liu, Ferris, Zinko, Perrewé, Weitz, and Xu (2007) reported an observed
correlation of .58 between composite scores on the Political Skills Inventory and a measure of Extraversion. However, the magnitude of the correlation between these two latent variables in the present study was unanticipated, suggesting that these two constructs were almost entirely redundant. An independent examination of the mediating mechanism through which Extraversion and political skill influence students’ job search behaviors revealed several similar patterns. Specifically, both Extraversion and political skill were predominantly associated with students’ networking behaviors, rather than preparatory or active search behaviors. Moreover, both Extraversion and political skill predicted students’ levels of job search self-efficacy in a strong positive direction.

Although not the focus of the dissertation, these findings help to shed light on the associations between students’ political skills and their trait levels of Extraversion. The extremely large correlation observed between the latent Extraversion and political skills factors suggests that, although political skills might be conceived as more proximal to organizationally relevant phenomena than distal ability and personality characteristics (see Ferris et al., 2007; Liu et al., 2007), it may be more trait-like in its measurement. As such, alternative operationalizations of students’ political skills, such as peer reports, behavioral observation, and/or more objective indicators (e.g., involvement in student organizations; e.g., Tay et al., 2006) might clarify the role of political skills in the job search process, apart from its relation with Extraversion. Another interesting finding from the exploratory mediation model tested for political skill was that political skill demonstrated a moderate positive relationship with students’ job search clarity. Given the similar findings for both political skill and Extraversion, this suggests that subsequent studies might consider job search clarity as a potential mediator between Extraversion
and students’ engagement in job search behavior. Future research should continue to examine the relationship between Extraversion and political skill in order to clarify their convergent and discriminant validity. Relatedly, the present dissertation examined students’ overall levels of political skill, rather than their standings on the subscales of the PSI (i.e., networking ability, interpersonal influence, social astuteness, and apparent sincerity; Ferris et al., 2005). It may be that one or more of these facets primarily drives the overlap between political skill and Extraversion (e.g., networking ability and/or social astuteness), and that a more refined examination of the political skill construct space would illuminate the source of redundancy across these constructs. Thus, future research on the relationship between political skill and Extraversion in the job search context should consider examining the facets of political skill, not only students’ overall standing on the higher-order construct.

Considerations for the Present Dissertation

Perhaps the most unexpected result of the present dissertation was the failure to find statistically significant associations between job search self-efficacy and job search clarity, and students’ engagement in preparatory, active, and networking search behaviors. However, these null findings are not without precedent. For instance, Wanberg, Watt, and Rumsey (1996) did not find a relationship between job search self-efficacy and job seekers’ engagement in overall job search behaviors in a sample of unemployed individuals (see also, Wanberg, Zhu, & van Hooft, 2010). Although the job search context likely differs between unemployed job seekers seeking reemployment and college students seeking employment after college (see Boswell et al., 2012), it is possible that a number of consistencies between these two studies might have produced similar null
results. Wanberg et al. (1996) speculated that the time period in which job search behaviors was examined may have influenced the associations observed between job search self-efficacy and job search clarity. Specifically, job seekers’ who are higher in self-efficacy—and, presumably, knowledge and ability (e.g., higher GPAs; Chia, 2006; Tay et al., 2006; Steffy et al., 1989)—might obtained employment very early in the search process and, therefore, engage in fewer job search behaviors. Such a situation might have occurred in the present sample of college students. Alternatively, some students high in job search self-efficacy may not have begun to search for employment by the time of the follow-up survey due to limited time or conflicting career goals.

Relatedly, a recent study by Liu, Wang, Liao, and Shi (2014) found that although job seekers who are high in job search self-efficacy tend to demonstrate increased job search behaviors, higher levels of employment self-efficacy—job seekers’ confidence in their ability to obtain a job vs. to successfully engage in search-related activities—might actually result in fewer search behaviors due to a smaller perceived discrepancy between their current- and desired end-state (i.e., employment). The opposing effects for job search self-efficacy and employment self-efficacy observed by Liu et al. might help to explain the null findings for self-efficacy and job search clarity in the present dissertation. Specifically, students who experienced high levels of employment self-efficacy might have engaged in fewer search behaviors, despite also having high levels of job search self-efficacy (Liu et al., 2014, reported a correlation of $r = .60$ between these constructs). Future research should attempt to better capture the job seekers’ objective and perceived

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10 Despite these possibilities, an examination of students’ responses on the job search self-efficacy scale indicated that scores varied across the entire distribution with minimal skew (-.18) and kurtosis (-.36). Distributions were similar for job search clarity and students’ preparatory, active, and networking search behaviors.
progress in their job search process (i.e., perceived goal distance) to inform the expected relations between self-efficacy, job search clarity, and various job search behaviors.

A number of alternative explanations for the null findings for job search self-efficacy and job search clarity are relevant to the present dissertation. For instance, the specific sample of students examined in the dissertation may not adequately represent the full spectrum of job seekers because of characteristics outside the purview of the study—thus there is the potential for range restriction (see Sackett & Yang, 2000). Moreover, the unique characteristics of the present sample likely limit the generalizability of the present findings. Specifically, a large portion of the present sample of students (44.4%, \( n = 124 \)) indicated that they intended to search for both job opportunities and post-graduate education at the time of the initial survey. One possibility is that these students who intended to search both for employment and for post-graduate training engaged in fewer job search behaviors, given the limited time and energy available to dedicate to these alternative career goals. As such, these students may have engaged in a greater amount of overall search behaviors across the job and academic search contexts, but fewer behaviors within either context alone. Future research with samples that cover a wider range of the job search spectrum might serve to clarify how the search process differs for those with multiple, potentially competing career goals (e.g., employment vs. post-graduate education), and would enhance the generalizability of the present findings.

Beyond sample-specific explanations, there may have been a number of instrumentation issues that influenced the findings of the present study. As noted, items regarding students’ engagement in the various job search behaviors examined were embedded in a larger institutional survey. It is possible that students became fatigued
during the survey process; thereby reducing the attention allotted to their responses to the survey items. Relatedly, the instructions for completing the job search measures on the Time 2 survey may have been deficient. For example, Saks and Ashforth (1999) suggested that limiting the specific time window considered for the job search behaviors (e.g., the three to six month period before the job seeker secured employment, or the past three to six months if not yet employed) might increase the associations between predictors of job search behaviors and the behaviors themselves; however, Saks and Ashforth do not provide empirical evidence to support this claim (see also, Blau, 1993). Future research should consider ways to improve the measurement of job search intensity in order to better capture students’ actual search behaviors.

Another major consideration for the present dissertation is the correlation observed between preparatory and active job search behaviors in the latent variable models. As noted in the introduction, there is a growing body of research that argues for the conceptual distinction between preparatory and active job search behaviors (e.g., Blau, 1993, 1994; Saks, 2005, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1999, 2002; Soelberg, 1967). Indeed, Saks’ (2005) unfolding process of job search success—the guiding framework for the present dissertation—posits that although job seekers’ are likely to alternate between preparatory and active search behaviors, the majority of preparatory behaviors should proceed active behaviors in the search process. Despite this conceptual distinction, the latent correlations observed between students’ preparatory and active search behaviors suggest that the present sample of students did not differentiate between these categories of search behaviors. Although it is possible that the correlations between students’ preparatory and active search behaviors might be inflated somewhat due to common
method bias (see Podsakoff et al., 2003), the magnitude of the correlations observed suggests that method variance, alone, does not explain the overlap between students’ responses on these scales. Moreover, the observed correlations reported in several previous studies suggest similar findings (e.g., $r = .62$, Saks & Ashforth, 1999; $r = .72$, Saks & Ash forth, 2002), although these studies generally have not been conducted at the latent level. Future research should continue to examine the factor structure of job search inventories to determine if the conceptual distinction between preparatory and active behaviors manifests in job seekers’ actual responses. If such a distinction remains desirable, then future measurement development efforts should seek to create items that more clearly distinguish these phases of the job search process.

An additional consideration for the present dissertation was the relatively modest sample size obtained for testing the mediation models. Although a large number of students were contacted to participate in the study, fewer than half (46.8%) responded to the initial request for participation. This initial response rate is partially countered by the strong follow-up rate among this group of participants (only 3.1% attrition between surveys). Of the total sample, a number of the students indicated that they intended to only seek post-secondary education, and were therefore excluded from the final sample, leaving a final sample of 280 students for hypothesis testing. Although this sample size was sufficient for the tests of the isolated structural models, I was unable to test all hypothesized mediated relationships within a single model. The omission of key variables in the isolated models potentially biases the observed findings. Future large sample studies might better illuminate the multivariate relationships involved in predicting students’ job search behaviors and eventual employment success.
A final consideration for the present dissertation is the potential for alternative mediating mechanisms not examined in the present study. For instance, Zimmerman et al. (2012) examined a number of other potentially important mediating processes relevant to employed job seekers’ searching for alternative employment opportunities, including ambition, job burnout, the level of challenge in the work environment, and employees’ perceived financial strain. Other researchers have considered the Theory of Planned Behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; e.g., Song, Wanberg, Niu, & Xie, 2006; van Hooft, Born, Taris, & van der Flier, 2004) as a complement to the self-regulatory view of job search (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001), incorporating attitudes and intentions into the job search process. The potential for alternative explanatory mechanisms is particularly relevant to the finding that students higher in Neuroticism and its constituent aspects engaged in increased preparatory search activities. Although not explicitly anticipated, this finding may have occurred due to the influence of Neuroticism on mediating variables other than those examined in the present dissertation. One possible explanation from the literature is that higher levels of Neuroticism generally lead to decreased satisfaction in the work environment (e.g., $\rho = -.29$, Judge et al., 2002). This decreased satisfaction may, in turn, lead employees to increase their engagement in the search process and subsequent turnover intentions (see e.g., Hom & Griffeth, 1991). For example, Boudreau et al. (2001) observed a positive correlation ($r = .13$) between Neuroticism and overall job search behaviors in a sample of managers seeking alternative employment. Although the mechanisms involved for students seeking employment post-graduation might differ from those involved in dissatisfied employees who are considering leaving their current job (Boswell et al., 2012), it is feasible that similar processes might occur across these job...
search contexts. Moreover, it is important to note that Neuroticism and its constituent aspects were positively related to students’ increased engagement in preparatory search behaviors, yet demonstrated statistically and practically non-significant associations with students’ active and networking search behaviors. One possibility is that the anxiety and avoidance-laden behaviors associated with higher levels of Neuroticism may, in fact, increase the amount of effort and energy students expend in the early (i.e., preparatory) phases of the search process, yet hamper progression (or may be unrelated) to the more active behaviors associated with the later phases of job search. Relations at the level of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) personality aspects are more complex, given the finding of inverse relations among Volatility and Withdrawal with job search self-efficacy. Future research should continue to explore how Neuroticism and its constituent aspects (along with other key individual differences) affect different stages of the job search process.

**Future Directions**

A number of directions for future research are implicated in the present dissertation. One example is the need for better outcome measures: Specifically, job seekers’ behaviors during the job search process should be assessed with respect to their quality, and not just quantity. In a recent conceptual paper, van Hooft, Wanberg, and van Hoye (2013) contended that although existing job search measures assess the frequency of behavioral acts (i.e., job search effort and intensity), they do not reflect the quality of these behaviors for achieving job search outcomes. van Hooft et al. define job search quality as “the extent to which a job seeker’s job search behaviors/products meet/exceed the expectations of the demanding parties [in] the labor market,” and “the extent to which the [job search] process conforms to certain standards and specifications,” including
“goal establishment, planning of the goal pursuit, goal striving, and [self evaluation and] reflection” (p. 10). Central to this definition is its focus on the external perceptions of the job seekers’ behaviors relative to their effectiveness for achieving the desired goal—obtaining employment—and the internal self-regulatory processes job seekers undergo during their pursuit of employment (see also, Liu et al., 2014). As future research in the job search area continues to grow, it is important that the measures used to capture engagement in the job search process develop along with theory. Although the present dissertation does measures some of the characteristics associated with job search quality, such as job search clarity and job search self efficacy (van Hooft et al., 2013), a richer assessment of the various processes involved during goal establishment, pursuit, striving, and reflection would contribute to the understanding of the processes job seekers undergo during their search for employment. Such an assessment might also include incorporating data from alternative sources, including student records, involvement in career related activities (e.g., career center programs), and peer reports. As such, future research should strive to develop and implement measures of job search quality in order to better understand how individual difference characteristics influence the quality of the search process and not just the frequency of job search behaviors.

Another potential direction for future research would be to examine the interactions between key variables in the present dissertation. For instance, Moynihan et al. (2003) found that the number of interviews received relative to the number of job offers extended was greater for job seekers higher in job search self-efficacy (but see, Saks, 2006). In addition, Saks (2006) found the interaction between job search self-efficacy and number of job offers to incrementally predict job seekers’ employment
status, such that those with greater numbers of job offers and higher job search self-efficacy were more likely to be gainfully employed. Like job search self-efficacy, students’ goals (i.e., job search clarity) might play a similar moderating role in the later stages of the search process. Moreover, it is possible that job search self-efficacy and job search clarity interact, such that job seekers with clearer goals and higher levels of self-efficacy demonstrate the strongest engagement in the search process. The benefits of such an interaction might similarly extend to job seekers’ securing offers during the interview process, and might also facilitate job choice processes. Conversely, job seekers who are high in self-efficacy, but do not have clear career goals might have greater difficulty in securing employment. Although these possible interactions are interesting to consider, the sample size available for the current study was insufficient for probing such interaction effects. As such, future studies with larger samples should consider examining how interactions between individual difference characteristics might influence the job search process, along side the direct relations observed for these constructs.

A related future direction would be to consider other potential moderating variables not examined in the present dissertation. Two interesting potential moderators of the job search process is the field of study in which the student majored and the field of work for which the student is seeking employment. For instance, do the predicted relations between personality traits, job search self-efficacy, and job search behaviors hold for students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields? Or is job search self-efficacy more relevant for non-STEM majors, who might have weaker situational constraints when seeking employment opportunities (i.e., more exploratory search strategies; Wanberg et al., 2002; Zikic & Saks, 2009)? Future research should
continue to examine how different student contexts (e.g., majors, need for graduate training for employment) influence students’ job search engagement and decisions.

Another direction for future research would be to consider mediating variables involved in determining students’ motivation towards obtaining employment not included in the present dissertation. As noted, Zimmerman et al. (2012) examined employed job seekers’ levels of ambition, job burnout, perceived work challenge, and financial strain as potential mediators between personality traits and job search engagement. Although the specific mediating mechanisms examined by Zimmerman et al. may not play a dominant role in the context of students seeking employment following graduation from college (often for the first time; see Boswell et al., 2012), it is likely that alternative mediating mechanisms beyond job search clarity and job search self-efficacy transmit the influence of distal individual difference characteristics to students’ engagement in search activities. Future research should continue to identify and examine potential mediating mechanisms specific to the population of college students, in order to better understand the process through which students seek out work after graduation.

A final direction for future research extending from the present dissertation is to further integrate the present findings into the unfolding process of job search success (Saks, 2005). In the present dissertation, I limited my hypotheses and primary analyses to the distal individual difference characteristics and mediating mechanisms that influence students’ engagement in job search behaviors. However, the unfolding process of job search success extends past the relationships examined, to include such aspects of job search as job seekers’ choice between employment alternatives, performance in the interview setting, and a variety of other important processes involved in how people
identify and pursue employment. A number of exploratory analyses generally supported the unfolding process of just search success with respect to the job search behaviors and outcomes. For instance, Conscientiousness was meaningfully related to the number of interviews and job offers students received, as well as their employment status at the time of the follow up survey. Extraversion and Neuroticism meaningfully predicted employment status and job satisfaction (an index of employment quality) in the expected direction (see Judge et al., 2002). Moreover, students’ job search self-efficacy and job search clarity, although not related to students’ job search behaviors in the present sample, were correlated with the various outcomes of the job search process examined. Future research should continue to integrate the various relationships examined in the present study into the broader framework of the unfolding process of job search success (Saks, 2005). One potential possibility for future work would be to examine the various predictors and components within the model using meta-analytic path analysis (e.g., Viswesvaran & Ones, 1995), extending past meta-analytic research in the job search area (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001). Such meta-analytic (and large sample) research would be beneficial for informing how individual difference characteristics influence the job search process at different stages of job seekers’ search for employment.

Conclusion

The present dissertation was undertaken to examine the role of students’ personality traits, proactivity, and interpersonal skills in the job search process. Findings supported a number of hypotheses relating Extraversion, proactive personality, and political skill to students’ engagement in job search behaviors. Contrary to expectations, Conscientiousness was not meaningfully related to students’ job search behaviors, and
Neuroticism positively predicted students’ engagement in preparatory search behaviors. The present dissertation also examined a number of narrower personality aspects within the Big Five domains of Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism. To my knowledge, this dissertation was the first to examine the role of narrow personality traits for predicting students’ job search behaviors and outcomes, and was among the first to examine the application of DeYoung et al.’s (2007) meso-level aspects in organizational settings (cf. Judge et al., 2013). The findings of the present study contribute to the growing body of literature supporting the need to examine personality traits at multiple levels of the personality hierarchy for predicting important organizational outcomes (e.g., DeYoung et al., 2007; Hough, 1992; Hough & Oswald, 2005; Judge et al., 2013; Oswald & Hough, 2010; Oswald et al., 2013), where the Conscientiousness aspect of Industriousness, the Extraversion aspect of Assertiveness, and the Neuroticism aspects of Volatility and Withdrawal demonstrated interesting and differential relationships with job search self-efficacy, job search clarity, and various job search behaviors and outcomes. Although job search self-efficacy and job search clarity did not mediate the relationships between students’ distal characteristics to engagement in job search behaviors in the present sample of graduating students, this study contributes to the job search literature by extending to range of individual difference characteristics examined, and underscores the need to examine more fully the mechanisms through which individual differences affect different stages of the job search process.
References


Jang, K. L., Livesley, W. J., Angleitner, A., Reimann, R., & Vernon, P. A. (2002). Genetic and environmental influences on the covariance of facets defining the


## Appendix A: BFAS Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Extraversion Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Industriousness</th>
<th>Volatility</th>
<th>Neuroticism</th>
<th>Extraversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Finish what I start.</td>
<td>Get easily agitated.</td>
<td>Can be stirred up easily.</td>
<td>Am hard to get know. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Get things done quickly.</td>
<td>Change my mood a lot.</td>
<td>Rarely get irritated. (R)</td>
<td>Keep others at a distance. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Always know what I am doing.</td>
<td>Am a person whose moods go up and down easily.</td>
<td>Keep my emotions under control. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely get caught up in the excitement. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Waste my time. (R)</td>
<td>Get easily agitated.</td>
<td>Rarely lose my composure. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely get caught up in the excitement. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Find it difficult to get down to work. (R)</td>
<td>Can be stirred up easily.</td>
<td>Am not easily annoyed. (R)</td>
<td>Am not a very enthusiastic person. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Mess things up. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely get irritated. (R)</td>
<td>Keep my emotions under control. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely get caught up in the excitement. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Don’t put my mind on the task at hand. (R)</td>
<td>Keep my emotions under control. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely lose my composure. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely get caught up in the excitement. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Postpone decisions. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely lose my composure. (R)</td>
<td>Am not easily annoyed. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely get caught up in the excitement. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Am easily distracted. (R)</td>
<td>Am not easily annoyed. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely get caught up in the excitement. (R)</td>
<td>Am not a very enthusiastic person. (R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Orderliness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Industriousness</th>
<th>Volatility</th>
<th>Neuroticism</th>
<th>Extraversion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Like order.</td>
<td>Am filled with doubts about things.</td>
<td>Feel threatened easily.</td>
<td>Have a strong personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Follow a schedule.</td>
<td>Worry about things.</td>
<td>See myself as a good leader.</td>
<td>Can talk others into doing things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>See that rules are observed.</td>
<td>Become overwhelmed by events.</td>
<td>Worry about things.</td>
<td>Do not have an assertive personality. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Want every detail taken care of.</td>
<td>Am afraid of many things.</td>
<td>Become overwhelmed by events.</td>
<td>Do not have an assertive personality. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Leave my belongings around. (R)</td>
<td>Seldom feel blue. (R)</td>
<td>Become overwhelmed by events.</td>
<td>Do not have an assertive personality. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Am not bothered by messy people. (R)</td>
<td>Feel comfortable with myself. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely feel depressed. (R)</td>
<td>Lack the talent for influencing people. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Am not bothered by disorder. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely feel depressed. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely feel depressed. (R)</td>
<td>Lack the talent for influencing people. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Dislike routine. (R)</td>
<td>Am not embarrassed easily. (R)</td>
<td>Rarely feel depressed. (R)</td>
<td>Lack the talent for influencing people. (R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** R = reverse coded.
## Appendix B: Proactive Personality Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>If I see something I don’t like, I fix it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others’ opposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I excel at identifying opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I am always looking for better ways to do things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C: Political Skill Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Networking Ability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I am good at building relationships with influential people at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I have developed a large network of [people] colleagues and associates at work whom I can call on for support when I really need to get things done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>At work, I know a lot of important people and am well connected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I am good at using my connections and network to make things happen at work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Interpersonal Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I am good at getting people to like me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Social Astuteness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I understand people very well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I always seem to instinctively know the right things to say or do to influence others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I pay close attention to people’s facial expressions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Apparent Sincerity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I try to show a genuine interest in other people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Item text marked with a strikethrough was removed for the purposes of the dissertation. Item text in brackets reflects insertions.
## Appendix D: Job Search Self-Efficacy Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Use social networks to obtain job leads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Prepare resumes that will get you job interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Impress interviewers during employment interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Make “cold calls” that will get you a job interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Conduct information interviews to find out about careers and jobs that you are interested in pursuing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Obtain more than one good job offer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Be successful in your job search.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Prepare a sales pitch that will attract the interest of employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Plan and organize a weekly job search schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Find out where job openings exist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E: Job Search Clarity Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I have a clear idea of the type of job that I want to find.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I need help deciding what type of work I would really enjoy. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I have a clear idea of where I want to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I do not have very clear job search objectives. (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I have a clear idea of the type of company I want to work for.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* R = reverse scored.
## Appendix F: Job Search Intensity Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Preparatory Job Search Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Read the help wanted/classified ads [online, or] in a newspaper, journal, or professional [publication] association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Prepared or revised your résumé.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Read a book or article about getting a job or changing jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Used [university resources (e.g., career counseling services)] current within company resources (e.g., colleagues) to generate potential job leads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Used the Internet or other computer services to locate job openings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Conducted information interviews to find out about careers and jobs that you are interested in pursuing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Analyzed your interests and abilities to determine the best job for you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Visited a company’s employment website.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Active Job Search Behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Listed yourself as a job applicant [online, or] in a newspaper, journal or professional [publication] association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Sent out résumés to potential employers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Filled out a job application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Had a job interview with a prospective employer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Contacted an employment agency, executive search firm or state employment service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>[Emailed or] telephoned a prospective employer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Item text marked with a strikethrough was removed for the purposes of the dissertation. Item text in brackets reflects insertions.*
## Appendix G: Job Search Effort Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Spent a lot of time looking for a job[s] alternative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Devoted much effort to looking for other jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Focused my time and effort on job search activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Gave my best effort to find a new job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Item text marked with a strikethrough was modified to reflect the student context of the dissertation. Item text in brackets reflects insertions.
## Appendix H: Networking Intensity Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Contacted people you know to ask for their advice or leads regarding your job search.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Called or visited someone just to get more information about a certain job or place to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Asked for a referral to someone who might have helpful information or advice about your career or industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Secured leads from contacts or acquaintances regarding a person to contact for information that would help you in your job search.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Talked with friends or relatives about possible job leads.(^a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Spoke with previous employers or business acquaintances about their knowing of potential job leads.(^a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* \(^a\)Items overlap with Blau’s (1993, 1994) Job Search Behaviors Scale.
# Appendix I: Abridged Job in General Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Undesirable (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Better than most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Disagreeable (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Makes me content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Enjoyable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Poor (R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* R = reverse scored.