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UNCERTAINTY APPRAISAL IN FIRST CAREER EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION SEEKING

by

Chang shik Choi

A Dissertation Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Communication

at

The University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

May 2017

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ABSTRACT

UNCERTAINTY APPRAISAL IN FIRST CAREER EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION SEEKING

by

Chang shik Choi

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2017
Under the Supervision of Professor C. Erik Timmerman, Ph.D.

Securing talented employees is one of the most critical requirements for organizational growth. At the same time, job seekers' primary concern is getting a position that is in line with their career goals. Particularly, for job seekers who are looking to begin their career after graduation, it is essential to step off on the right foot. To fulfill the needs of organization and job applicant, job advertisements play a significant role. The current study examines the use and perceptions of hiring information by job seekers. The job search and organizational entry processes necessarily produce a certain degree of uncertainty, and job advertisements are one of the key contributors in that process. According to uncertainty management theory, uncertainty results in optimistic or pessimistic emotion about the source of uncertainty, and the elicited emotions influence additional information seeking behavior. Likewise, uncertainty in job search processes may impact job seekers' efforts in seeking additional information. Thus, the present investigation examines the impact of uncertainty, which originates from job advertisements, on job seekers' subsequent uncertainty appraisal and information seeking. In addition, the study investigates influences of three factors, such as proactive personality, person-organization (P-O) fit, and job search stress, on job seekers' appraisals of uncertainty. A web-based experiment was

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conducted using three different hypothetical job advertisements that varied in degree of uncertainty they were designed to induce. Data were collected from a sample of university students (*N* = 396) to evaluate the degree to which the advertisement impacted their job-related information searching and perceptions. The results revealed that uncertainty appraisals predict job seekers' subsequent information seeking intention in that optimistic views about uncertainty negatively associate with the intention to seek information. In addition, job seekers with optimistic views are more likely to seek positive information about the hiring organization. Proactive personality, subjective P-O fit, and job search stress were also identified as significant factors that influence job seekers' appraisals of uncertainty. In sum, the current study found that job seekers' uncertainty appraisals influenced by triadic reciprocal relationships of personal factor, behavioral cognitions, and environmental factors, and the uncertainty appraisals relate back to further information seeking.

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To

my parents,

my wife,

and especially my daughter

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Uncertainty Appraisal in First Career Employment Information Seeking

A recent survey revealed that 71% of millennial generation employees in the U.S. are not committed to their workplace, and 6 out of 10 millennials reported that they would move to different companies if the opportunity arose (Rigoni & Nelson, 2016). Despite a widespread belief that millennials are job-hoppers due to their increasing workplace disengagement and turnover, voices that advocate for qualities brought to organizations by young employees have also suggested otherwise. For instance, a news report criticized this prejudice against young employees and argued that millennials' turnover rate is not different from that of Baby Boomers (Zimmerman, 2016). An investigation of recent college graduates also reported nearly 70% of respondents identified that they wanted to stay with their first job at least three years if hired, and that more than 51% are willing to sacrifice their personal time for extra work (Smith, LaVelle, Lyons, & Silverstone, 2016). One possible reason behind this disjunction between perceptions of this generation of college graduates and the college graduates' actual experiences may be in the lack or incongruity of information individuals of college-age typically have about jobs and organizations.

More than 74% of young college graduates identified that they want to be hired by organizations that demonstrate social responsibility with positive and engaging workplace atmospheres, even if this means that they would receive lower payment (Smith et al., 2016). However, the chance to acquire information about a firm's internal culture or climate is limited because of a traditional belief that job advertisements should be filled with extrinsic information, which refers to material aspects of work, such as the job overview, fringe benefits, career development, requirements, preferred skills, and duties (Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993). Moreover, providing sufficient extrinsic information has been believed to be effective in

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eliciting positive images of the company from job applicants (Feldman, Bearden, & Hardesty, 2006; Yüce, & Highhouse, 1998). Consequently, providing intrinsic information, that which deals more with the experiences that new employees will feel internally (e.g., psychological satisfaction, challenge, pleasure of work, and intellectual stimulation), has been relatively neglected. In addition, informing potential employees about organizational altruistic values, which refer to a company's commitment and contribution to society, has been overlooked (De Cooman & Pepermans, 2012; Lyons, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2006). Therefore, newly graduated job seekers necessarily experience a certain degree of uncertainty about applying positions due to the lack of intrinsic information and value-oriented information in job advertisements.

A sizeable stream of research examines the processes of job search and obtaining employment. In particular, job seekers who are looking for full-time position after a period of education have received much attention from scholars because the transition from "backpack to briefcase" (Bialac & Wallington, 1985, p. 66) has significant impacts on an individual's career success (Boswell, Zimmerman, & Swider, 2012). Studies on newly-graduated job seekers have specifically focused on effectiveness of job searching behaviors (e.g., Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001; Saks 2006). In addition, job seekers' personal and situational factors have also been discussed frequently in terms of job searching intensity and its outcomes (Amato, Baldner, & Pierro, 2016).

Nevertheless, the influence of various types of hiring information (e.g., recruiting messages, reputations about position/organization, information from mass media) on the process of job searching has not been sufficiently discussed, even though information about job openings and characteristics of the employing organization are among the most fundamental factors that predict a new graduate's decision to apply (Gatewood et al., 1993; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart,

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1991). The first reason for this is that job seekers' motivation and self-regulation have been considered as primary determinants of job search behaviors and outcomes, and information about a position and organization has been depicted as supplemental information rather than the main focus (Kanfer et al., 2001). In other words, the degrees to which job seekers are motivated to acquire information is believed to be related with the number of hiring interviews and job offers. The second reason is because research addressing information about hiring is typically considered solely from organizational perspectives (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). Organizational information providers' (i.e., employers) concerns, such as how to provide, what to provide, and when to provide information, have been the main focus of research instead of information receivers' (i.e., job seekers) needs (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005).

Therefore, the current study examines the use and perceptions of hiring information from job seekers' perspectives and, specifically job seekers' perceptions and reactions to the uncertainty associated with qualities of hiring information. For job seekers, insufficient or incongruent information about applying for positions and companies necessarily elicits a certain degree of uncertainty. Researchers have also confirmed that the process of job searching and organizational entry produces a great deal of uncertainty (e.g., Mignerey, Rubin, & Gordon, 1995).

According to uncertainty management theory (UMT; Brashers, 2001), uncertainty provokes two different types of emotion. First, pessimistic emotions arise when uncertainty is viewed as a danger or threat; optimistic emotions arise when uncertainty is regarded as hopeful or beneficial. What this means is that uncertainty can be seen as either a good or bad thing, depending upon the perspective an individual has about how the uncertainty allows them to interpret their experiences. Furthermore, these views of uncertainty influence individuals'

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information seeking behavior differently (Brashers, Neidig, Hass, Dobbs, Cardillo, & Russell, 2000). For example, individuals who have pessimistic views toward uncertainty (e.g., danger, threat) will more likely seek additional information to decrease uncertainty and try to find other options. In contrast, individuals who have optimistic views (e.g., benefit, hope) toward uncertainty will more likely avoid additional information to maintain the degree of uncertainty. In short, UMT suggests that individuals' information seeking behavior is largely determined by their appraisal of uncertainty.

In the context of a job search, job seekers may have different attitudes about the lack of information about an advertised position and/or the organization that is offering the job. Some job seekers who encounter high levels of pessimism toward uncertainty may strive for additional information, while other job seekers who have high levels of optimism may be hesitant to actively acquire new information. Thus, the other focus of the current study is the influence of personal and situational factors on job seekers' appraisal of uncertainty and subsequent information seeking. As discussed previously, job seekers' knowledge about hiring positions and organizations' intrinsic and extrinsic aspects may impact their decision for applying as well as their post-employment job satisfaction and performance. Therefore, investigating uncertainty and its impact on job seekers may provide useful understandings.

This study must have several implications. Most of all, suggesting UMT as a framework may expand research about job search and hiring processes. Many previous studies have approached hiring information from the perspectives of organization, therefore studies on the impact of hiring messages on job searching outcomes often suggested inconsistent findings. For example, Allen, Van Scotter, and Otondo (2004) found that providing detailed hiring information positively relates with intention to apply; however, a study on hiring information specificity

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indicated that information quality is effective in increasing positive images of an organization but does not relate with the number of applications submitted. However, the current study focuses on the uncertainty experienced by job seekers about the information that is read about a position for which an organization is hiring. Thus, instead of examining how an organization might better construct a position description to properly describe a position, this study examines how applicants interpret the information that an organization provides. Approaching employment information from a recipient's (i.e., job seeker's) perspective may provide an opportunity to use communication-based theory and research to better understand the skills held by new job seekers when interpreting position information. In addition, UMT has not been employed for examining job searching processes and its practices while several studies discussed information seeking in terms of uncertainty reduction (e.g., Kramer, 1994; Morrison, 1993). When considering that UMT has been applied to various contexts and provided valuable findings (Berger, 2005), findings of the current study may suggest UMT as an additional viable framework for analyzing the job search context.

Job seekers and employers also may derive benefits from the findings of the current study. By understanding the influence of uncertainty upon applicants' subsequent information seeking, job seekers can establish better job searching strategies. In other words, awareness of uncertainty appraisal may change job seekers' attitudes about uncertainty and help them direct attention to acquiring critical information for their career. When considering the importance of securing talented employees in organizational development (Van Hoye, 2013), employers may improve their hiring practices based on the findings of this study. Specifically, comprehending the influence of hiring information on potential employees' uncertainty may enable employers to

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provide tailored information that fits the demand of job seekers. Furthermore, increasing retention of new employees may be possible.

For these aims, this research starts from the synthesis of previous literature concerning the theory of uncertainty management and its applications. Then, discussion of factors that may influence job seekers' uncertainty appraisals follow, followed by hypotheses that connect key study variables. After detailed descriptions of the research method for a preliminary test and the main test, results, summary of findings, and discussions of implications and limitations are provided.

Uncertainty Management in Job Seeking

Uncertainty occurs when an individual determines that necessary information is insufficient or absent. A lack of information leads individuals to have doubts about their ability to predict or understand the outcomes of a situation or behavior (Gudykunst, 2006). Uncertainty reduction theory (URT) suggests that individuals actively look for information to reduce discomfort due to such doubts (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). According to URT, the levels of uncertainty positively relates with the degree to which an individual will exert effort to seek information. In other words, URT indicates that individuals are motivated to reduce uncertainty to predict anticipated situations or understand their past behaviors or experiences. Although initially suggested as a framework to examine recurring patterns of interpersonal encounters and interactions, URT has been employed to examine individuals' information seeking in various contexts, such as medical care, intercultural encounters, and organizational communication (Berger, 2005).

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For job seekers, especially those who are looking for their first career-oriented, full-time position, uncertainty is an inevitable part of the job search experience. From the perspective of URT, job seekers' uncertainty about career goals, jobs, (e.g., job opening, tasks and duties, job characteristics) and organizations (e.g., labor market, work environments, workplace atmosphere) needs to be reduced through active information seeking (Allen et al., 2007). Organizational scholars who examine effective recruiting processes have suggested that employers should provide sufficient information about hiring positions and the organization should seek to reduce job seekers' uncertainty while increasing organizational attraction (e.g., Barber, 1998). Providing sufficient information about hiring positions and the organization plays a crucial role in attracting competent job seekers and decreasing their uncertainty because job searching has been recognized as a self-motivated and self-regulated active information seeking behavior (Kanfer & Kanfer, 1991; Wanberg, Zhu, & Van Hooft, 2010).

However, continued research on uncertainty in the organizational context yields some results that do not correspond with the axioms of URT. For example, Kramer's (1995) longitudinal study about transferees reported that a moderate degree of open communication was more effective in decreasing job stress and role ambiguity than a higher degree of open communication. In another study on airline pilots, Kramer (2004) found that the provision of sufficient information about an airline company's merger and acquisition was effective for decreasing uncertainty, but pilots' job satisfaction also decreased. Regarding these inconsistent findings, Kramer (2009) argues that the initial tenets of URT oversimplify individuals' reactions to uncertainty and are insufficient for explaining the process of responding to uncertainty occurring in situations beyond initial interactions. Similar findings also have been reported by research on interpersonal relationships and health contexts. For example, Planalp and Honeycutt

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(1985) found that uncertainty increased when individuals acquired unexpected or inconsistent information about their relational partners. Their finding indicates that additional information may intensify the degree of uncertainty. In addition, a focus group study on individuals with chronic illness (Brashers et al., 2000) found that information seeking enabled some people to reduce their uncertainty by providing better treatment alternatives but also increased uncertainty for other people due to a blurring of the distinctions among alternatives. Brashers and colleagues argue that managing uncertainty by avoiding new information and maintaining current knowledge status (i.e., hope for survival) can be a viable alternative because individuals have different goals of information seeking. In sum, findings that are inconsistent with the original conceptualization of URT reflect the limitation of URT in explaining the complexity of individuals' reaction to uncertainty.

Although URT suggests seeking information is the most effective means for reducing discomfort due to uncertainty, UMT advances that individuals have different ways of responding to uncertainty (Brashers, 2001). The most important distinction between URT and UMT is that URT presumes uncertainty is interlocked with information seeking, but UMT separates these two concepts (Afifi & Matsunaga, 2008). Phrased differently, URT postulates more information can be equated with less uncertainty; however, UMT claims the amount of information does not necessarily relate with the degrees of uncertainty. Rather, Brashers argued that individuals' perceptions of uncertainty play an important role in whether they will attempt to acquire or avoid information. For example, individuals who frame uncertainty as a threat or danger may encounter negative emotional responses toward uncertainty and engage in information seeking to decrease the perceived risk. On the contrary, viewing uncertainty as a means for maintaining hope or in other beneficial ways may help individuals experience optimistic emotions toward

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uncertainty and prevent them from pursuing additional information. In short, UMT suggests that individuals engage in either seeking or avoiding information in accordance with their appraisals of uncertainty. In this sense, uncertainty about hiring positions and organizations may trigger either pessimistic or optimistic emotional responses for job seekers.

Communication technology has changed the job search process over the past a couple of decades, and the internet has become an essential tool for disseminating and acquiring employment information (Boswell et al., 2012). The prevalence of the internet has enabled job seekers to have access to information about desired positions or organizations through various channels, such as company web sites, news outlets, and social network services. At the same time, job seekers are allowed to access a wide range of information ranging from gossip of current and former employees to indices of managerial effectiveness. With the expansion of communication channels for sharing information about organizations, companies have less control over the circulation of internal information and for managing favorable impressions about them (Fombrun, 1996). As the direct control of organizations over external communication gradually weakens, the chances that job seekers may be exposed to negative information increases, even though such information has a devastating impact on attracting potential employees (Kanar, Collins, & Bell, 2010). For instance, job seekers may form a negative impression about a company due to negative word of mouth via social media or websites (e.g., glassdoor.com) and filter the company out from the list of desired employers.

Nevertheless, not all information about preferred positions and organizations is available for job seekers. Because organizations are well-informed about the effects of reputation upon attracting competent job candidates and loyal customers (Fombrun, 1996), they employ publicity and advertising tactics to create and maintain a favorable image or conceal negative information

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about them (Collins & Stevens, 2002). In addition, companies often provide incomplete information about hiring positions, despite job advertisements' critical role in forming an initial image toward organizations (Chapman et al., 2005; Dineen, Ling, Ash, & DelVecchino, 2007). For example, organizations that cannot offer competitive monetary rewards (e.g., salary, benefits) to their employees tend to conceal such information or provide ambiguous descriptions because of the significant impact on the perceptions of potential job candidates and existing employees' sense of attraction to their employer (Khan, Awang, & Ghouri, 2013; Peccei, Bewley, Gospel, & Willman, 2005; Yüce & Highhouse, 1998). Even recruiting practitioners advise job seekers not to be frustrated with the absence of such information because it is usually acknowledged that financially-related topics are reserved for interviews and entry negotiation tables (Hurley, Long, & Bayles, 2005). Thus, job seekers may experience uncertainty due to absent or insufficient information, despite the presence of abundant information channels for organizations to share this type of data.

Moreover, the credibility of job advertisement may contribute to the uncertainty of job seekers. Job seekers' perception of credibility in recruitment communication has been discussed as one of the important cognitive responses because of its positive relationship to job searching behaviors (Allen et al., 2004). Although some studies found that the amount of information in job advertisements positively relates to job seekers' attraction toward hiring positions and organizations (Feldman et al., 2006; Yüce, & Highhouse, 1998), other studies suggested somewhat opposite findings. For example, Allen and colleagues reported that the amount of information does not have a direct impact on the credibility of information. Rather, they argue that job seekers' existing knowledge about organizations and the quality of information (e.g., helpful, easy, attractive) have more influence over job seekers' perception of information

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credibility. Furthermore, Acarlar and Bilgiç (2013) found that information credibility positively associates with organizational attraction. In sum, although both the amount of information and credibility of information in a job advertisement can positively relate to organizational attraction, they do not necessarily relate to each other. In other words, job seekers may experience uncertainty regardless of the amount of information because of the lack of information credibility. According to UMT, information credibility affects individuals' uncertainty; however, the direction of effect is not always consistent (Brashers, 2001; Brashers et al., 2000). For example, information from credible sources can decrease uncertainty but also may increase uncertainty if the information is minimal, or too difficult to understand. In addition, less credible information may decrease uncertainty if the information is in line with one's existing belief for expectation (Brashers, Goldsmith, & Hsieh, 2002). Therefore, job seekers' uncertainty about hiring positions and organizations relies on the perception of information credibility in addition to the availability of information.

Job Seekers' Appraisals of Uncertainty

When individuals lack the information needed to make a decision among alternatives, uncertainty occurs (Brashers, 2001). In health contexts, for example, individuals seek information when they are diagnosed with an illness, need to make a decision about treatment, and want to predict the prognosis of the illness. When acquired information is not sufficient for understanding their current status and making decisions, or discrepant from their existing knowledge, the individuals may experience uncertainty (Brashers et al., 2002). Likewise, job seekers may engage in information seeking to acquire information about hiring positions and organizations, specifically when they are exposed to a job advertisement, need to make a decision about submitting an application, and surmise the outcome of their application. If a job

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seeker's existing knowledge or newly acquired information is not sufficient or inconsistent with his or her expectations for these processes, the job seeker may experience uncertainty. For example, a college graduate who is looking for his or her first career position after graduation may experience uncertainty when a job advertisement does not provide sufficient intrinsic and extrinsic information, such as work environments, career development opportunities, salary and benefits, and other details of organization. According to UMT, the college graduate will engage in additional information seeking if the experienced uncertainty were framed as a risk or an obstruction. On the contrary, the job seeker may decide to apply for the hiring position without further information seeking if the uncertainty were perceived as an opportunity or in some other nonthreatening way. For instance, the job seeker may hastily ignore such uncertainty because they already hold a favorable image of the organization. In short, the evaluation of uncertainty influences job seekers' reactions to the uncertainty, and examining factors that affect their appraisal of uncertainty may provide further understanding of information seeking behaviors in job search processes.

A large body of research addresses the factors that influence job seeking behavior. According to social cognitive theory (SCT), individuals' behaviors and attitudes are affected by a reciprocal triadic relationship among personal factors, behavioral cognitions, and environmental events (Bandura, 1986). Studies addressing the job search and organizational socialization have also focused on these three aspects (Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). Broadly, influencing factors that have been examined in terms of job searching can be categorized as personal characteristics (e.g., self-motivation, personal traits, self-efficacy), cognitions of self and others (e.g., person-job fit, P-O fit), and environmental conditions (e.g., labor market, job searching stress, social

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support). In the following sections, how these factors engage in the processes of job searching and may affect individuals' appraisals of uncertainty during the processes are discussed.

Personal Traits and Job Searching Behaviors

From the perspectives of motivation and self-regulation theories, job searching behaviors are often conceptualized as self-regulated processes (Kanfer et al., 2001). Although external environments, such as situational factors, social support, and demands in the labor market, may affect an individual's job searching behaviors, a self-regulation perspective premises that job searching is basically a series of purposive patterns of action to achieve employment and career goals. Therefore, job searching is largely recognized as self-organized and self-managed behaviors within the perspective, and a job seeker's pattern of thinking and behaviors has been viewed as having a critical impact on this self-regulatory process. In this sense, personal traits have received much attention among other determinants of job searching behaviors and new organization entrants' information seeking (Baay, van Aken, Lippe, & Ridder, 2014; Tidwell & Sias, 2005).

A meta-analysis by Kanfer and colleagues (2001) examined previous studies on the intensity and outcomes of job searching behavior in relation to personal traits. Through the analyses of results from several personality measurements (e.g., the Big Five global personality taxonomy, NEO personality inventory), they found that conscientiousness and extroversion have substantial relationships with job searching behaviors. Conscientiousness represents the tendency to be organized, diligent, and perseverant, while extroversion is characterized as being sociable, assertive, active, and energetic (Boudreau, Boswell, Judge, & Bretz, 2001; Côté, Saks, & Zikic, 2006). However, subsequent studies on these personal traits in relationship to job searching behaviors yield inconsistent findings. For example, Boudreau and colleagues found

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that extroversion is a significant predictor of work satisfaction and organizational success after employment but does not significantly relate to job search behavior. Follow-up studies on the influence of conscientiousness also failed to find a significant relationship with job search behaviors (e.g., Brown, Cober, Kane, & Levy, 2006; Côté et al., 2006). Instead, researchers have suggested proactiveness as a factor that overarches extroversion and conscientiousness (Georgiou, Nikolaou, Tomprou, & Rafailidou, 2012). For example, Brown and colleagues found that conscientiousness is not a significant antecedent of job searching; rather, proactiveness has the most significant impact on job search self-efficacy while positively interacting with consciousness and self-esteem.

According to Crant (2000), proactive behavior consists of "taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones; it involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting to present conditions." (p. 436). For example, individuals who actively engage in information seeking through active communication to improve performance and achieve career goals have proactive personalities. In addition, proactiveness is depicted as a decisive and energetic disposition (Bateman & Crant, 1993). When considering that job searching is referred to self-motivated, self-directed, and self-regulated behavior, the strength of proactiveness can be a meaningful predictor for examining information seeking behaviors in relationship to uncertainty. For instance, a study on proactivity in organizational settings reported that individuals with higher degrees of proactive personality are more likely to engage in uncertainty avoidance behaviors and have a long-term orientation (Carson, Baker, & Lanier, 2014). Thus, proactive individuals tend to feel threatened by insufficient information or ambiguous situations, and such cognitions lead them to resist uncertainty by seeking additional information and employing other coping strategies, such as establishing preparation plans,

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defining tasks and duties, and clarifying responsibilities. When job seekers with proactive personality encounter uncertainty while searching for jobs, they may frame the uncertainty as a threat to achieving position and completing career goals and try to avoid it through subsequent information seeking.

Assessment of P-O Fit

The traditional conception of organizational 'fit' refers to person-job fit (P-J fit) which represents the degree of correspondence between job or position requirements and an individuals' job related skills, knowledge, and abilities (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). However, organizational practitioners and relevant scholars have also suggested an extended conception of fitness which is referred as P-O fit. In contrast to P-J fit, P-O fit focuses on the congruency of an individual's values, beliefs, and personality with an organization's goal, norm, and culture (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991). For example, Kristof (1996) defined P-O fit as an individual's subjective belief about their perceived compatibility with an organization. Judge, Higgins, and Cable (2000) also suggested that the correspondence of a person's attributes and an organization's attributes determines P-O fit. Furthermore, many additional factors, such as needs, interests, monetary rewards, and organizational structure, have been discussed as the subsidiary criteria of P-O fit (Cable & Judge, 1997).

P-O fit has been found to have a positive relationship with organizational outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, productivity, and organizational attractiveness (Jutras & Mathieu, 2016; Pfieffelmann, Wagner, & Libkuman, 2010). Moreover, P-O fit is negatively related to employees' turnover intention (McCulloch & Turban, 2007). Due to these positive impacts of P-O fit on organizational outcomes, much research has been conducted on incumbents and new organization entrants' perceptions of their organization. Accordingly,

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scholars have also paid attention to the relationship between job seekers' assessment of P-O fit and job searching behavior. For example, Wei, Chang, Lin, and Liang (2016) found that P-O fit amplifies job seekers' intention to apply when the image of the hiring organization is favorable. Saks and Ashforth (1997a) also suggested that job seekers develop P-O fit through the evaluation of various aspects of organizational characteristics, and the assessment of their P-O fit has a significant impact on the acceptance of hiring offers. In sum, P-O fit has been recognized as an important predictor of employees' performance as well as job seekers' job search and outcome (Cable & Judge, 1996; Carless, 2005).

Research on P-O fit has suggested three somewhat different approaches. The first approach is actual P-O fit which refers to the degree of congruence between an individual's and an organization's respective evaluations of fitness. In other words, actual P-O fit compares an individual's self-evaluation of his or her attributes and an organization's self-evaluation of attributes. Perceived P-O fit, on the other hand, refers to the degree of similarity between an individual's evaluation of self and the individual's evaluation of organization. That is to say, similarity between a job seeker's attributes and the job seeker's perceived attributes of organization represent the degree of perceived P-O fit. The last is subjective P-O fit, and this approach is the most widely used, due to its higher potential for predicting outcomes (Pfieffelmann et al., 2010). Subjective P-O refers to an individual's direct and holistic judgement of P-O fit. In short, this approach focuses on an employee's global feeling of fitness about an organization's image instead of evaluation or comparison for each attribute (Cable & Judge, 1997; Judge et al., 2000).

When considering the fact that job seekers have limited chances to observe and experience an applying organization's attributes (Collins & Stevens, 2002), subjective P-O fit is

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a viable approach for job seekers. Phrased another way, job seekers' initial assessment of P-O fit toward an organization is more likely to rely on global evaluation of information from secondary sources (e.g., media, reputation from peers and acquaintances, products; Cable & Turban, 2003; Wei et al, 2016) rather than first-hand experience (e.g., direct contact with persons from applying organization; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Thus, subjective P-O fit may provide more understanding about job searching and its outcomes than the other two approaches. However, the fact that a job seeker's initial assessment of P-O fit is more likely to be influenced by information from secondary sources suggests an important implication. Secondary sources may not provide enough or desired information about interesting organizations to job seekers (Chapman et al., 2005; Dineen et al., 2007). Therefore, job seekers may not have a chance to resolve doubts and ambiguity while acquiring information and assessing P-O fit. Moreover, reassessing initial P-O fit requires even more information from secondary sources or first-hand experiences (Rynes et al., 1991). Thus, limited information quantity and availability necessarily raise a certain degree of uncertainty, and there may be two different approaches job seekers may take toward uncertainty while assessing initial P-O fit.

First, higher levels of subjective P-O fit may make job seekers try not to acquire additional information about an interested organization regardless of the degree of uncertainty. According to social identity theory (Turner, 1975), individuals socially evaluate their own group favorably to differentiate themselves from other groups, and the process of evaluation is motivated by an inherent need for positive self-esteem and self-enhancement. Furthermore, Hogg and Terry (2000) suggest that the social identification process reduces subjective uncertainty. By categorizing oneself as a member of a group, individuals may have a frame of reference that renders certainty about how to behave and understand the social environment.

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When a job seeker has a strong favorability toward an organization and believes the organization is a perfect fit to their needs, the job seeker may differentiate the organization from other companies to maintain a favorable image, even if competitive monetary compensation is not expected (Cable & Judge, 1994). Moreover, the job seeker may reject additional information about the favorable organization from secondary sources to keep identifying himself or herself with the organization and maintain self-esteem and self-enhancement. Or, at least according to selective exposure theory (Frey, 1986), job seekers may show a preference for positive information about the organization over negative information. Because such categorization and identification processes can happen even without immediate interaction and direct communication (Scott, 2007), high subjective P-O fit may make job seekers ignore or denounce contradicting information to maintain favorable images of the interested organization.

Second, job seekers who perceive the level of subjective P-O fit as low will look for more information to decrease uncertainty. The attraction-selection-attrition model (Schneider, 1987) argues that individuals actively seek organizations that have similar goals and characteristics with themselves to achieve their career goals. Specifically, job seekers depend heavily on fit criteria to select and eliminate organizations from their desired organization list, and information acts a critical role in assessing fit criteria (Cable & Judge, 1996). Without sufficient intrinsic information, such as organizational culture, goals, and values, some job seekers may experience difficulties in assessing whether applying organizations are the right place to pursue their career goals. Thus, job seekers who evaluate subjective P-O fit as low may perceive such uncertainty due to the lack of information as a potential threat to their career and are more likely to engage in additional information seeking to decrease uncertainty regardless of whether available information is affirmative.

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Job Search Stress and Information Seeking

Job searching necessarily involves individuals' investment of time, effort, and other resources for nonguaranteed outcomes (Creed, King, Hood, & McKenzie, 2009; Lim, Chen, Aw, & Tan, 2016). Therefore, anxiety or failure to secure a job that meets job seekers' career goals and material expectation may result in various negative consequences, among them, decreased physical and mental health. This poor physical and psychological well-being relates back to job search activities negatively (Crossley & Stanton, 2005). The process of job searching accompanies a certain degree of physical and psychological stress. Research has suggested that job search behaviors and its intensity are affected by stable and transient factors (Beal, Weiss, Barros, & McDernnid, 2005), and stress which occurs during the job searching process is one of the most salient transient factors (da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014). However, research has also suggested that various factors directly or indirectly contribute to job search stress (Boswell et al., 2012). In the following sections, several antecedents of job searching stress and the consequences of job searching stress are discussed.

Antecedents of job search stress. Kanfer and colleagues (2001) suggested social support and perceived financial needs are two critical stressors in job searching through an extensive examination on the antecedents of employment. Social support is generally defined as perceived instrumental and emotional support from others that enable individuals to cope with stressful events (Kessler, Price, & Wortman, 1985), and the influences of social support have also received much attention in the situation of unemployment and job searching. For example, Gowan, Riordan, and Gatewood (1999) found that social support has a critical role in coping with job loss and unemployment. In addition, Wanberg, Watt, and Rumsey (1996) suggested that social support decreases job search stress while increasing job search self-efficacy by

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convincing job seekers that their job search effort is worthwhile. Social support includes emotional support and informational support; the former is known as effective in increasing self-efficacy and keeping job search motivation, and the latter is found to have a short-term effect on job searching activities (Kanfer et al., 2001; Russell, Holmstrom, & Clare, 2015). While social support relates with job searching positively, lack of social support has a detrimental effect on job seekers, specifically when job seekers experience rejections from applied organizations and face uncertainty about their career (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005).

Financial pressure is another source of stress while job searching. Many studies have examined the influence of financial difficulties on displaced workers' job searching behavior, and among the studies, McKee-Ryan and colleagues (2005) found that financial constraints are the most critical pressure for the unemployed individuals. Losing a source of stable income works as a severe stressor for individuals who seek reemployment, and such economic hardship even makes displaced workers lower their expectation to cope with imminent financial crises. Although circumstances may be somewhat different from displaced workers, financial pressure is also a critical stressor for job seekers who are looking for a job after graduation. Saks and Ashforth (1999) found that financial needs are also one of the significant predictors of job searching behaviors and intensity, and financial pressure significantly influences the degree of perceived job searching stress.

Time pressure is also frequently discussed in terms of job searching stress. As stated, job searching entails the expenditures of various resources, and job seekers are likely to experience lack of resources as the period of job searching is either prolonged or compressed. Thus, time pressure not only accompanies the depletion of resources but also the incremental growth of fatigue and stress (Lim et al., 2016). For job seekers who look for their career after college

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education, their graduation date acts as a unique constraint (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Different from job seekers who are displaced or look for different career paths, graduating job seekers tend to match their educational progress with career employment (Barber, 1998). Therefore, they are more likely to set the timeline of full-time employment in advance to minimize the unemployment period and uncertainty about their career. Although having an action plan for employment in advance may give a sense of security to job seekers, they may experience gradual growth of stress as time gets closer to the deadline (i.e., graduation; Boswell et al., 2012). Although research has produced something of a consensus that time is a significant stressor for job seekers (Saks & Ashforth, 2000), positive effects of time pressure have also been reported. For example, a study on job searching efficacy found that time pressure negatively relates with uncertainty in the processes of job searching (Lopez-Kidwell, Grosser, Dineen, & Borgatti, 2013). In other words, as job seekers learn effective ways of seeking information and preparing required materials of employment (e.g., know-where about hiring advertisement, how to write a resume and cover letter, etc.), the degree of uncertainty in the process of job searching decreases. However, positive impact of time pressure have not been observed in terms of information uncertainty.

Lastly, rejection during the job search process has also been discussed as a stressor. Social cognitive theory suggests that the signal of success reinforces an individual's belief that he or she is on the right track and leads the person to increase effort, while a negative signal makes individuals lose motivation and decreases effort (Bandura, 1986). Similarly, job seekers may experience success (e.g., invited to a job interview) or failure (e.g., no contact or denial message from employer) while searching for their career. Success in job searching may act as a positive signal and give a sense of accomplishment to job seekers. In contrast, job seekers who

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experience failure may understand the frustration as a negative signal about their lack of job searching effort. Positive signals in job searching relate to subsequent job searching behaviors positively in terms of job search efficacy and intensity, while a negative signal decreases self-esteem and job search efficacy through increasing stress (da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014).

In sum, research findings suggest that job search stress is a multifaceted construct and also a somewhat complicated concept to explain clearly, due to various internal and external conditions of individual job seekers. However, it seems clear that the process of job searching necessarily involves a certain degree of stress, and the degree of stress has a significant repercussion on the job search. In other words, job searching and job searching stress have a reciprocal relationship. Although positive impacts of stress have also been reported (e.g., Lopez-Kidwell et al., 2013), job searching stress is regarded as having a detrimental impact on job seekers in general. The following section discusses more about negative influences of job searching stress.

Outcomes of job search stress. Crossley and Stanton (2005) suggested that job search stress has negative impacts on job seekers' various psychological aspects, and one of the most frequently discussed aspects is job search self-efficacy. Job search self-efficacy is "the belief that one can engage in behaviors that will lead to successfully finding a job" (Crossley & Stanton, 2005, p. 550). Therefore, job search stress decreases job seekers' confidence in job searching and increases skepticism that their job search effort with achieve career goals. Saks and Ashforth (2000) also contended that decreased job search self-efficacy may cause the modifications of job searching strategies and activities. Moreover, job seekers with lower job search self-efficacy may experience increased emotional and behavioral responses, such as avoidance, helplessness, and withdrawal (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phollips, 1994). In

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addition, job seekers' self-esteem decreases as job searching self-efficacy decreases (Kanfer et al., 2001).

While job search stress has a detrimental influence on various aspects of job seekers' self-evaluations, interesting findings have also been reported. For example, Wanberg, Zhu, Kanfer, and Zhang (2012) found that job search intensity decreases as job seekers' psychological stress increases. In contrast, Saks and Ashforth (2000) show that job seekers who failed to be employed by graduation day reported an upsurge of stress as well as job search intensity. Further, job search stress has a positive effect on generating the number of job offers (Boswell et al., 2012). In short, scholars have not reached a consensus about the influence of job stress on job searching intensity and its outcomes yet. Thus, it seems that there are several other factors that influence the relationship between job stress and job searching behavior.

Rationale and Hypotheses

Through the examination of previous research and the theory of uncertainty management, the current study predicts that various characteristics of job seekers and the environment may affect the appraisals of uncertainty and subsequent information seeking. As discussed, a certain degree of uncertainty is inevitable in job search processes, due to limited access to necessary information (Allen et al., 2007; Chapman et al., 2005; Dineen et al., 2007). Uncertainty that occurs while acquiring hiring information can be perceived as a potential threat or a harmless opportunity by job seekers, and UMT suggests that the appraisals of uncertainty can influence how individuals' conduct follow up information seeking (Brashers, 2001; Brashers et al., 2002). Because information acquisition in job search processes has a significant impact on achieving employment and influences job seekers' job performance and work satisfaction after

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employment (Boswell et al., 2012; Cable & Judge, 1996), examining the influence of uncertainty appraisal on information seeking has critical implications.

As discussed, job seekers who are looking for their career after graduation may experience uncertainty when exposed to a hiring advertisement that does not fully describe intrinsic and extrinsic information about the hiring position and the organization. According to UMT, job seekers may engage in subsequent information seeking if such uncertainty is appraised as a potential threat for achieving employment and their career. On the contrary, job seekers who evaluate such uncertainty as nonthreatening may not engage in additional information seeking. Moreover, in terms of selective exposure theory (Frey, 1986), it is also possible to postulate that job seekers who appraise uncertainty as optimistic may show preference to positive information about the hiring organization over negative information in subsequent information seeking to maintain their positive appraisal toward the organization. Thus, the current study suggests two hypotheses as follows:

H1. Job seekers who have pessimistic views toward uncertainty are more likely to seek information about a position or company to which they are applying than will job seekers who have optimistic views.

H2. Job seekers who have optimistic views toward uncertainty are more likely to seek positive information about a position or company to which they are applying than they are to seek negative information.

Next, the current study suggests that personality is a key factor that may influence a job seeker's appraisal of uncertainty about a job advertisement. Particularly, individuals with a proactive personality tend to be decisive and energetic, and they seek information actively to

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challenge the status quo (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant, 2000). A study about the impact of personality on organizational performance also reported that employees with a proactive personality are more likely to engage in uncertainty avoidance activities (Carson et al., 2014). Therefore, job seekers with proactive personality may appraise uncertainty that occurred while acquiring hiring information as a threat in achieving employment and try to avoid it through subsequent information seeking. Thus, the third hypothesis of the current study predicts:

H3. Among job seekers, there is a positive relationship between proactiveness of personality and pessimistic views toward uncertainty.

Subjective P-O fit refers to an individual's overall judgement of congruency between oneself and the organization (Cable & Judge, 1997; Judge et al., 2000). P-O fit has been known as having positive impacts on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the retention rate of employees (Jutras & Mathieu, 2016; McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Pfieffelmann et al., 2010), and job seekers are more likely to accept job offers from organizations with higher P-O fit evaluation (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Although higher degrees of subjective P-O fit seem positive for job seekers and employees, it also may adversely influence the job search process. Social identity theory (Turner, 1975) contends that individuals differentiate their group from other groups to maintain positive self-esteem, and this process reduces one's uncertainty about social relationships and status (Cable & judge, 1994; Hogg & Terry, 2000). Therefore, job seekers who evaluate their subjective P-O fit with a hiring organization as high are more likely to appraise uncertainty from the hiring information as nonthreatening to more strongly identify themselves with the hiring organization. Thus, the fourth hypothesis predicts:

H4. Among job seekers, there is a positive relationship between strength of perceptions of P-O fit and strength of optimistic views toward uncertainty about a job search.

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Job search requires various resources, such as time, labor, and financial expenditures, and making persistent effort for non-guaranteed success necessarily conveys physical and psychological stress (Creed et al., 2009; Crossley & Stanton, 2005; Lim et al., 2016). Consequently, many studies have reported negative impacts of stress on job searching behaviors and outcomes (e.g., Beal et al., 2005; da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014). Among various factors of job searching stress, social support (Kessler et al., 1985; Russell et al, 2015), financial pressure (Saks & Ashforth, 1999), and time pressure (Boswell et al., 2012; Saks & Ashforth, 2002) have been frequently discussed because of their significant impacts on the outcomes of job searching. Job seekers who experience higher levels of stress in job search processes are more likely to rush for securing a position to save resources (McKee-Ryan, et al., 2005), and their gained experience during job search processes may make them ignore uncertainty from hiring information (Lopez-Kidwell et al., 2013). Based on these inferences, the researcher derived the following hypotheses:

H5. Among job seekers, there is a positive relationship between levels of job search stress and optimistic views toward uncertainty about a job search.

Job searching and its outcomes are affected by various behavioral and psychological qualities and characteristics. The current study specifically focuses on three aspects, such as proactive personality, subjective P-O fit, and job searching stress in accordance with SCT. These three aspects correspond with SCT's triadic reciprocal relationship (Bandura, 1986) and have also been foci of many employment related examinations. When considering that an individual's appraisal toward uncertainty is influenced by multiple factors (Brashers, 2001), job seekers' uncertainty toward hiring information may also be simultaneously affected by several factors. Thus, the researcher tries to examine the interactions of these three factors and seeks its

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combined effects on the appraisals of uncertainty. Investigating the interaction effect of proactive personality, subjective P-O fit, and the degree of job searching stress is expected to provide more understanding and implications about uncertainty appraisals in job searching and information seeking processes.

H6. Job seekers' appraisal of uncertainty is influenced by the interactions of proactive personality, P-O fit, and job searching stress.

H6a. The interaction of proactive personality and subjective P-O fit influences job seekers' uncertainty appraisal.

H6b. The interaction of proactive personality and job search stress influences job seekers' uncertainty appraisal.

H6c. The interaction of subjective P-O fit and job search stress influences job seekers' uncertainty appraisal.

Preliminary Test

The degree of uncertainty that job advertisements can elicit vary for multiple reasons. Even though an identical job advertisement may be received by all job seekers, some may experience different degrees of uncertainty because of their different knowledge levels about the position and/or industry. Job seekers' different expectations about types of information (e.g., intrinsic or extrinsic) also contribute to the different perceptions of uncertainty. Moreover, quality and quantity of information in job advertisements also makes job seekers feel different degrees of uncertainty. Therefore, there should be some examination of a range of uncertainty levels in order to provide more generalizable results and implications. At the same time, types of

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positions and organizations in job advertisements must be controlled to allow valid comparisons of uncertainty appraisal and subsequent information seeking behaviors.

To meet these two conditions, the preliminary study sought to evaluate perceptions of differently-worded job advertisements that invite job seekers for an identical position and organization but are different in terms of quality and quantity of information. This preliminary test is needed to select suitable treatments (i.e., job advertisements) and confirm that they elicit different degrees of uncertainty. In addition to the confirmation of the treatment manipulation, three types of hypothetical news headlines also need to be determined to test the relationship between uncertainty appraisal and information preference (H2). In sum, the purpose of the preliminary test is twofold. The first aim is to check whether the treatments of the main experiment elicit different degrees of uncertainty (i.e., high, moderate, and low levels of uncertainty). The second is to select ten news headlines for the main experiment (i.e., four positive news items, two neutral, four negative).

Participants

Participants in the preliminary test were invited from communication courses at a large public university in the Midwestern U.S. In total, 170 students participated. Among participants, 100 were female (58.8%) and 70 were male (41.2%). Their ages ranged between 19 and 40 years old, with mean of 22.78 (SD = 3.78). In terms of ethnicity/race, 71.8% of participants (n = 122) reported as 'White', 12.9% (n = 22) as 'Asian', 7.1% (n = 12) as 'Black or African American', and 5.9% (n = 10) as 'Hispanic or Latino'.

Manipulations

Job advertisements. Five hypothetical job advertisements were prepared for the preliminary test. All five advertisements invited potential job candidates to an identical

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position/company but differed in that the amount of information that they included (e.g., description of hiring company, position, qualifications, responsibilities, and compensation related information) as well as the quality of information (e.g., clear descriptions versus ambiguous descriptions).

For example, job advertisement #1 contained detailed descriptions of the hiring company/position and 22 position responsibility and qualification statements. Each statement in this advertisement describes tasks/duties specifically (e.g., "Creating and delivering impactful communications using channels such as websites, videos, events, newsletters, social media, presentations, surveys, and conferences"). This advertisement also included a detailed description of financial compensation and other relevant information, which were all included to induce participants to experience the lowest level of uncertainty across the five advertisements. Job advertisement #2 included identical descriptions of company, position, and financial compensation with job advertisement #1, but the number of responsibility and qualification statements was reduced to 12. Thus, job advertisement #1 and job advertisement #2 are different only in terms of the number of position responsibility and qualification statements.

Job advertisement #3 was designed to make participants experience a moderate level of uncertainty. This advertisement included a description of hiring position without a description of organization. This advertisement contained 12 responsibility and qualification statements which were identical with job advertisement #2. This advertisement also included a description of financial compensation and other relevant information but omitted details (e.g., "Salary/compensation/benefits depend on qualifications"). Job advertisement #4 included an identical position description and financial compensation description as job advertisement #3, but the statements of position responsibilities and qualifications provided limited information

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about tasks and duties so that, if effective, participants would experience some degree of ambiguity and uncertainty about the position (e.g., “Handling a variety of communication issues.”, “Good working knowledge.”). In sum, job advertisement #3 lacked some description when compared to job advertisement #2, and the responsibility and qualification statements of job advertisement #4 were less clear when compared to the job advertisement #3.

Job advertisement #5 aimed to elicit the highest level of uncertainty among the five advertisements in the study. Thus, it provided only the name of hiring company and the title of position without any description about either the company or the position. In addition, identical qualification and requirement statements of job advertisement #4, which are written with vague language, were included. This job advertisement also ended with a brief statement of financial compensation, but it lacked substantive information (see Appendix A for the five job advertisements for the preliminary test).

News headlines. To select ten news article headlines (four positive, four negative, and two neutral news headlines) for the main experiment, 20 hypothetical news article headlines were prepared for the preliminary test. Because each news headline must be relevant to the company of the hypothetical job advertisements and also must be seen as realistic, 20 actual news headlines were taken from several business or economy news websites (e.g., Forbes, Financial Times, etc.) and modified to fit to the context of the experiment. Among the 20 news headlines, 16 headlines conveyed either positive or negative aspects of the hiring company (eight headlines each), and four headlines were believed (by the researcher) to be neutral (see Appendix B for all news headlines).

Procedure and Measurements

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To check whether the five hypothetical job advertisements elicited different degrees of uncertainty, one of five job advertisements was randomly given to participants in the first stage of the preliminary test. After reading an assigned job advertisement, participants were asked to report their degree of uncertainty using the four items of State, Effect, and Response Uncertainty scale (Ashill & Jobber, 2010; α = .80), and each item was answered on a 7-point Likert type scale, ranging from "1 = *Strongly agree*" and "7 = *Strongly disagree*" (for details, see Appendix C).

After responding to the uncertainty check items, participants were directed to the news headline evaluation stage. One item was employed to ask the global perceptions of each hypothetical news headline (e.g., "I think this news article probably talks about ____ aspect of the company.") with a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from "1 = *Extremely positive*" and "5 = *Extremely negative*". Participants were provided 20 modified hypothetical news headlines one by one and requested to indicate their perception on each headline.

Results

Job advertisement. Results indicated that job advertisement #1 was the lowest in terms of uncertainty (m = 2.76, SD = .87). In contrast, the uncertainty level of job advertisement #5 was the highest (m = 3.39, SD = 1.19). Job advertisement #2 (m = 2.83, SD = 1.16), job advertisement #3 (m = 2.87, SD = .82), and job advertisement #4 (m = 3.27, SD = 1.04) elicited moderate levels of uncertainty. A one-way ANOVA analysis also indicated that the five job advertisements were statistically different in terms of perceived uncertainty, $F(4, 165) = 2.67$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$. In sum, the five hypothetical job advertisements were effective in eliciting different degrees of uncertainty from participants.

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News headlines. Responses on each news headline were averaged, and the top four headlines and the bottom four headlines (positive and negative headlines) along with the two neutral headlines were selected for the main experiment. For example, participants evaluated a news headline "Spokesman Communication Consulting Group makes $2M donation to Salvation Army" as the most positive one (*m* = 1.43, *SD* = .79) among the 20 headlines, and responses indicated that "CEO of Spokesman Communication Consulting Group accused by IRS of unpaid taxes" was the most negative one (*m* = 4.41, *SD* = 1.08). "Spokesman Communication Consulting Group is interested in customers' social media" was evaluated as a neutral news headline (*m* = 2.51, *SD* = .73; see Table 1 for the evaluations of each news headline).

Summary

Results from the preliminary test confirmed that amount of information (e.g., descriptions of position and organization, numbers of responsibility and qualification statement) and quality of information (e.g., specific statements versus vague statements about responsibility and qualification) elicited different degrees of uncertainty from job seekers. Job advertisement #1 contained detailed descriptions about the position and company with 22 responsibility and qualification statements that are written clearly, and results indicated that this advertisement induced the least uncertainty among the five job advertisements. In contrast, job advertisement #5 did not include descriptions of the position and hiring company and contained only 12 responsibility and qualification statements that were written vaguely. As intended, the job advertisement #5 elicited the highest degree of uncertainty among the five job advertisements. Job advertisement #3 that contained a description only about the hiring position (descriptions of hiring company and financial compensation were not included) and 12 clearly written responsibility and qualification statements took the third place among the five job advertisements

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in terms of uncertainty. Based on the results, job advertisement #1, #3, and #5 were selected as treatments for the main experiment.

Regarding news headlines, headlines that conveyed the hiring company's news about increment of profit, demonstration of social responsibility, and implement of socially desirable policy were evaluated as highly positive information, but headlines about bad organizational culture, management loss, and unethical management were perceived as highly negative information. Selected news headlines also show that job seekers have interests in acquiring information of hiring organization's extrinsic aspects (e.g., indices of management) as well as intrinsic aspects (e.g., organization's internal culture).

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were recruited from communication courses at a large public university in the Midwestern United States. Upon approval by the University's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix D), course directors and instructors, invitation emails were sent to potential participants. In total, 496 students participated in the study and were given extra credit points in return for participation. Among the 496 responses, 14 were incomplete and removed from analysis. In addition, responses from 14 participants indicated that they did not read the job advertisement carefully and were excluded from analyses for more valid results.[1] Last, responses from participants who have either worked or are currently working full-time and in a position that is in line with their career paths were ruled out because the current study aims to examine uncertainty of job seekers who are looking for their first careers after graduation and its influences on subsequent information seeking.[2] Therefore, only responses from college students who are either currently seeking or will seek positions to advance their career were used for the

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study, regardless of their school year. Consequently, 396 responses were used for analyses. Among the participants, 64.9% (n = 257) were female, while 35.1% (n = 139) were male. Participants' age ranged between 19 and 48 (m = 22.58, SD = 4.48). Regarding ethnicity/race, 68.7% of participants (n = 272) reported as 'White', 10.9% (n = 43) as 'Asian', 9.6% (n = 38) as 'Hispanic or Latino', 8.6% (n = 34) as 'Black or African American'.

Procedure

The current study examines the influences of several factors on job seekers' uncertainty appraisal and the impact of uncertainty appraisal on subsequent employment-related information seeking. To accomplish this aim, a hypothetical online experiment was conducted using Qualtrics software, Version 2017 of Qualtrics (Provo, UT, USA). The experiment consisted of three stages: personal trait and orientation survey stage, treatment stage, and information seeking intention survey stage. In the first stage, participants were asked to respond to two instruments that measure their proactive personality and job search stress. Upon the completion of the first set of questionnaires, participants were directed to the treatment stage.

At the beginning of the treatment stage, participants were randomly exposed to one of three job advertisements that were selected in the preliminary study. All three job advertisements invite potential candidates for an identical position in an identical company, but the quality and quantity of information in the advertisements were was different, in order to elicit varied degrees of uncertainty. After having a sufficient time to read the given job advertisement, participants were asked to respond whether they read the provided job advertisement carefully or not. Responses from participants who identified they did not pay enough attention to the job advertisement were excluded from data set.

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In the third stage of the experiment, participants were asked to report their perceived degree of overall uncertainty and the appraisal of uncertainty toward the given job advertisement. After reporting their perceptions and appraisals, ten news headlines that are related to the hiring company were provided in random order. Among the ten news headlines, eight headlines portrayed either positive or negative information about the hiring company (four positive and four negative) and two headlines reflected neither positive nor negative aspects of the hiring company. Participants were asked to select three news articles that they wanted to read regardless the order of preference. After selecting preferred news article titles, participants were directed to a set of questions that measured their additional information seeking intention with regard to the hiring position.

Measurements

Degree of uncertainty. To measure the degree of uncertainty toward hiring information, the State, Effect, and Response Uncertainty scale (Ashill & Jobber, 2010) was used. Among the three dimensions of this scale (i.e., state, effect, and response), four items of state uncertainty were employed for the current study. Originally, this measurement aims to estimate the degree of uncertainty in terms of managerial information, thus items were modified to fit the context of job searching. An example item from this measurement is, "Do you feel you have the information you need in order to make a decision about applying for the position?", and each item was answered on a 7-point Likert type scale, ranging from "1 = *Strongly agree*" and "7 = *Strongly disagree*". Higher values represent higher degrees of uncertainty (α = .84; for details, see Appendix C).

Appraisal of uncertainty. Job seekers' appraisal of uncertainty was measured using items from the Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (ICU; Buhr & Dugas, 2002). Originally, this

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scale was designed to assess general attitudes toward two aspects of uncertainty: as a negative self-referent and as a disturbance or hindrance. The latter aspect is directly relevant to the appraisal of uncertainty in the current study, but the original items did not fit the job seeking context. Therefore, keywords from the 12 disturbances or hindrances were selected, and participants were asked to report their agreement with the 12 keywords. For example, the original item is "It frustrates me not having all the information I need.", and this item is modified as "Frustrating" for the current study. Responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = *Strongly agree*" to "7 = *Strongly disagree*". Lower values indicate more pessimistic appraisals of uncertainty and higher values indicate more optimistic views toward uncertainty. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to check possible additional factors in the items after data collection, and the primary factor's 6 items that have factor loading values .60 or above were used for analyses (α = .89; for details, see Appendix E).

Proactive personality. The self-report measure of proactive personality (Bateman & Crant, 1993) was employed to examine the relationship between job seekers' proactiveness and appraisals of uncertainty. Seventeen items, including "I am always looking for better ways to do things.", "I enjoy facing and overcoming obstacles to my ideas.", and "If I see something I don't like, I fix it.", were provided, and participants were asked to indicate their agreement with these items on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = *Strongly disagree*" and "7 = *Strongly agree*". After EFA, responses to five items that had factor loading values lower than .60 were excluded from analysis. Therefore, responses to 12 items were used in the study. Higher values indicated stronger degrees of proactive personality (α = .87; See Appendix F for details).

P-O fit. To measure job seekers' global evaluation of P-O fit toward the position in the job advertisement, the Perceived Subjective P-O Fit Measurement (Piasentin & Chapman, 2007)

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was employed. Three items of this measurement were applicable to the job seeking context, with minor modifications, thus participants were asked to indicate their agreement with these three items (e.g., "I will fit in well with other people who work for this company.") using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = *Strongly disagree*" and "7 = *Strongly agree*". Higher values indicate stronger degrees of perception of P-O fit (α = .81; for details, see Appendix G).

Job search stress. Job search stress was measured in terms of two ways: job search stress and global stress. For the first aspect of stress, two types of stress measurements (e.g., explorational stress, decisional stress) were borrowed from CES (Stumpf et al., 1983). Three items of explorational stress measured the degree of experienced stress while seeking jobs (e.g., "Exploring specific jobs"), and four items of decisional stress estimated stress level in selecting future jobs and organizations (e.g., "I feel stress about deciding what I want to do."). Participants were asked to indicate their perceptions on the items on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = *Strongly disagree*" and "7 = *Strongly agree*". Higher values indicate greater degrees of job search stress (α = .91; See Appendix H for details).

Additional information seeking intention. To measure the strength of job seeker's intention to do additional information seeking, the current study employed the measurement of uncertainty preference (Carcioppolo, Yang, & Yang, 2016). This measurement was originally developed to investigate cancer-related information seeking intention in terms of four dimensions (e.g., avoid to maintain uncertainty, avoid insufficient information, seek to increase uncertainty, and seek to reduce uncertainty). For the current study, 12 relevant items of the measurement were modified to fit to the context of job information seeking. An example question is, "I would like to avoid finding more information about the position because additional information may make me anxious." Each item was answered on a 5-point Likert type

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scale, ranging from "1 = *Strongly agree*" and "5 = *Strongly disagree*". Higher values represent stronger degrees of additional information seeking intention (α = .88; for details, see Appendix I).

Information preference. To investigate job seekers' preferred information type (e.g., positive or negative) after reading a job advertisement, three types of news headlines were provided. Among ten news headlines that were provided to participants, four headlines portrayed positive aspects of the hiring company (e.g., "Spokesman Consulting makes $2M donation to Salvation Army.") while another four headlines depicted negative aspects of the hiring company (e.g., "CEO of Spokesman Consulting accused by IRS of unpaid taxes."). Two other headlines were evaluated as neither positive nor negative in the preliminary test were also included (e.g., "Spokesman Consulting is searching new place for headquarters."). These ten news headlines were provided in random order to prevent possible satisficing responses, and participants were asked to select three headlines that they wanted to read among ten headlines. Selected headlines of each participant were coded to calculate the direction of preference (e.g., positive, neutral, and negative news headline were coded as "+1", "0", and "-1" respectively). For example, if a participant selected two positive news headlines and one negative news headline, the direction of preference would be "1", and this preference direction indicates that the participant is more likely to select positive news when seeking additional information about the hiring company.

Manipulation check. As stated, three hypothetical job advertisements in the experiment were selected through a preliminary test. Although the three job advertisements were found to be effective in eliciting different degrees of uncertainty in the preliminary test, it is required to confirm whether the job advertisements were also effective in the main experiment. Participants'

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responses on degree of uncertainty measurement were compared in terms of job advertisement types using a one-way ANOVA. The result indicated that the three job advertisements elicited different levels of uncertainty, $F(2, 393) = 35.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$. Job advertisement #3 elicited the highest degree of uncertainty among the three job advertisements ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.19$), and job advertisement #2 ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.14$) and job advertisement #1 ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.11$) followed.

Results

Hypothesis Tests

The first hypothesis predicted that job seekers who have pessimistic views about uncertainty are more likely to engage in additional information seeking than job seekers who have optimistic views. To predict subsequent information seeking intention ($m = 3.74$, $SD = .72$) based on uncertainty appraisal ($m = 3.40$, $SD = 1.11$), a linear regression analysis was conducted, and a significant regression equation was found, $R^2 = .10$, $\beta = -.32$, $F(1, 394) = 43.75$, $p < .001$. In short, job seekers who appraised uncertainty with pessimism were more likely to seek for additional information than job seekers with optimistic views. Therefore, the first hypothesis was supported.

The second hypothesis predicted that job seekers who appraise uncertainty optimistically would be more likely to seek positive information than job seekers who evaluate uncertainty pessimistically. A linear regression indicated that uncertainty appraisal ($m = 3.40$, $SD = 1.11$) accounts for variation in job seekers' information preference ($m = -.01$, $SD = 1.90$), $R^2 = .01$, $\beta = .13$, $F(1, 394) = 6.21$, $p < .05$. In other words, job seekers who appraise uncertainty optimistically prefer positive information about the hiring organization while negative

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information is preferred by job seekers who evaluate uncertainty pessimistically. The second hypothesis was supported.

The third hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between proactive personality and pessimistic views toward uncertainty. To test this hypothesis, a linear regression was used. The result reported that proactive personality (m = 5.30, SD = .72) significantly predicts uncertainty appraisal (m = 3.40, SD = 1.11), R^2 = .03, β = -.18, F(1, 394) = 13.36, p < .001. Therefore, the third hypothesis was supported. In other words, job seekers who have proactive personality are more likely to assess uncertainty pessimistically.

The fourth hypothesis posited a positive relationship between subjective P-O fit and optimistic views toward uncertainty. Results from a linear regression revealed that job seekers' subjective P-O fit (m = 4.66, SD = 1.09) was inversely related to optimistic views about uncertainty (m = 3.40, SD = 1.11), R^2 = .05, β = -.22, F(1, 394) = 20.08, p < .001. Counter to the hypothesis, the results indicate that job seekers who evaluate P-O fit positively tend to appraise uncertainty pessimistically. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicted a positive relationship between the degree of job search stress and optimistic appraisals toward uncertainty. To test this hypothesis, a linear regression analysis was conducted, and the result indicated that job search stress predicts (m = 5.20, SD = 1.26) uncertainty appraisal (m = 3.40, SD = 1.11), R^2 = .05, β = .24, F(1, 394) = 23.57, p < .001. Job seekers who experience higher levels of stress in the job search process are more likely to perceive uncertainty optimistically. Thus, these data support the fifth hypothesis.

As the last hypothesis (H6), the current study predicted interaction effects between personal factors (e.g., proactive personality), behavioral cognition (e.g., subjective P-O fit), and environmental effect (e.g., job search stress) on uncertainty appraisals toward job advertisement.

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First, the interaction effect of proactive personality and P-O fit on uncertainty appraisal (H6a) was tested by a simultaneous multiple regression model. To prevent multicollinearity, centered predictors and an interaction term were entered in the model (Aiken & West, 1991). The result indicated that the overall model was not significant, R^2_{change} = .002, $F(3, 392) = 9.51$, $p > .05$, although both proactive personality (b = -.20, SE_b = .08, β = -.13, p = .001, 95% CI [-.28, .03]) and P-O fit (b = -.20, SE_b = .05, β = -.20, p = .001, 95% CI [-.30, -.10]) were associated with the appraisal of uncertainty. Consequently, the interaction effect of these two variables was not significant (b = .07, SE_b = .07, β = .05, $p > .05$, 95% CI [-.09, .19]). Further, interaction effects of these two variables in terms of the three different job advertisements (e.g., high, moderate, and low uncertainty advertisement) was tested. Among the three conditions, a significant interaction was found only for the high uncertainty condition (i.e., job advertisement #3), R^2_{change} = .03, $F(3, 136) = 2.36$, $p < .05$, b = .24, SE_b = .12, β = .17, $p > .05$, 95% CI [-.07, .41]. To put this simply, when job seekers are exposed to job advertisement with high uncertainty, an interaction between proactive personality and subjective P-O fit is associated with optimistic appraisals of uncertainty.

To test Hypothesis 6b, the presence of interaction between proactive personality and job search stress was tested using a simultaneous multiple regression model. The results indicated that the overall model was not significant, R^2_{change} = .002, $F(3, 392) = 12.35$, $p > .05$. Proactive personality (b = -.26, SE_b = .08, β = -.16, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.32, -.00]) and job search stress (b = .19, SE_b = .04, β = .22, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.14, .30]) were associated with the appraisal of uncertainty, but an interaction effect was present, b = .04, SE_b = .05, β = .04, $p > .05$, 95% CI [-.06, .14]. Additionally, the interaction effect of proactive personality and job search stress with regard to the three different job advertisements was examined. The results from simultaneous

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regression analyses indicated presence of a significant interaction effect when uncertainty of job advertisement was high (i.e., job advertisement #3), R^2_{change} = .04, F(3, 136) = 3.10, p < .05, b = -.28, SE_b = .11, β = -.22, p < .05, 95% CI [-.44, -.00]. In other words, when a job advertisement with high uncertainty is given, an interaction between proactive personality and job search stress induces more pessimistic appraisals of uncertainty from job seekers. However, there was no interaction effect in the other two conditions (i.e., moderate uncertainty and low uncertainty advertisement).

As the last sub-hypothesis, analysis examined interaction of subjective P-O fit and job search stress (H6c). A simultaneous regression model indicated that overall model was not significant, R^2_{change} = .01, F(3, 392) = 17.21, p > .05, even though both P-O fit (b = -.25, SE_b = .05, β = -.25, p < .001, 95% CI [-.35, -.15]) and job search stress (b = .22, SE_b = .04, β = .25, p < .001, 95% CI [.17, .33]) predict uncertainty appraisal respectively. The interaction effect between these two variables was not significant, b = -.04, SE_b = .03, β = -.06, p > .05, 95% CI [-.12, -.00]. Additional simultaneous regression model tests were conducted to evaluate the interaction effect of the two variables in terms of three uncertainty conditions. The overall regression model was significant for the moderate uncertainty job advertisement (i.e., job advertisement #2) was given, R^2_{change} = .04, F(3, 121) = 9.85, p < .05, and the two variables showed a significant interaction effect, b = -.14, SE_b = .06, β = -.21, p < .05, 95% CI [-.33, -.09]. In short, an interaction between subjective P-O fit and job search stress is associated with job seekers pessimistic appraisals of uncertainty when the job advertisement induced a moderate degree of uncertainty.

In sum, proactive personality interacted with subjective P-O fit and job search stress only when participants perceived high uncertainty. Also, Subjective P-O fit and job search stress

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interacted only when job advertisement was perceived as being moderately uncertain. However, a significant interaction effect was not present for the job advertisement with low uncertainty given (see Table 2 for the results of all interaction tests). Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was partially supported.

Additional Tests

To further assess the pattern of relationships reported previously, it was necessary to examine whether degree of uncertainty is associated with uncertainty appraisal. To test the relationship between the two variables, a simple regression analysis was conducted and indicated that the degree of uncertainty has a significant relationship with uncertainty appraisal, $R^2 = .22$, $\beta = .47$, $F(1, 394) = 109.61$, $p < .001$. In other words, as uncertainty increases, job seekers are more likely to appraise uncertainty optimistically.

Consistent with the first hypothesis, the data indicated a negative relationship between uncertainty appraisal and information seeking intention, examining the relationship between degree of uncertainty and information seeking intention may confirm the relationship among the degree of uncertainty, uncertainty appraisal, and information seeking intention. The results from a regression analysis indicated that the degree of uncertainty predicts information seeking intention, $R^2 = .03$, $\beta = -.16$, $F(1, 394) = 10.05$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the moderation effect of uncertainty appraisal between the degree of uncertainty and information seeking intention was suspected, but an analysis on hierarchical regression model indicated that moderation effect of uncertainty appraisal was not significant, $b = .03$, $SE_b = .02$, $\beta = .05$, $p > .05$, 95% CI [.01, .09].

In addition, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with proactive personality, subjective P-O fit, and job search stress to examine the impact of these factors on uncertainty appraisal. The overall model with all three factors included was significant, $R^2_{adjusted} = .12$, $F(3,$

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392) = 18.78, $p < .001$. Proactive personality ($b = -.18$, $SE_b = .08$, $\beta = -.12$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-.28, -.04]) and subjective P-O fit ($b = -.21$, $SE_b = .05$, $\beta = -.21$, $p < .05$, 95% CI [-.31, -.11]) had significant negative regression coefficients, and job search stress showed a significant positive regression coefficient, $b = .22$, $SE_b = .04$, $\beta = .25$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [.17, .33]. In sum, these three factors account for approximately 12% of entire variance and have significant impacts on uncertainty appraisal respectively (see Table 3 for regression test results of all three uncertainty conditions; see Figure 1 for *r* coefficients among the variables of the current study).

Discussion

The primary focus of the current study was to examine the influence of uncertainty appraisals on subsequent employment related information seeking for job seekers who are looking for their career as they approach college graduation. As discussed, uncertainty in a job search process is inevitable for job seekers due to the absence or insufficiency of information (Mignerey et al., 1995). Although the provision of sufficient information about the hiring organization and position appears to have a positive association with organizational attractiveness as well as decreasing job seeker's uncertainty (Barber, 1998), oftentimes job advertisements lack the necessary information for which many job seekers search. In particular, providing intrinsic information about the organization, such as the internal culture, workplace atmosphere, and work satisfaction, via job advertisements has been neglected because of traditional beliefs that extrinsic information (e.g., tasks/duties, requirements, and financial rewards) are more essential for attracting potential job candidates (Feldman et al., 2006; Gatewood et al., 1993; Yüce, & Highhouse, 1998). However, college graduates also appear to know more about intrinsic aspects and altruistic values of the hiring organization (Smith et al., 2016), and this mismatch of information demand and supply necessarily evokes a certain degree

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of uncertainty. Therefore, active information seeking is critical for job seekers in decreasing uncertainty and finding jobs that are in line with their career goals.

Nevertheless, not all job seekers actively engage in active information seeking to clarify uncertainty that they encountered while seeking their careers. Regarding subsequent information seeking that enables job seekers to acquire additional knowledge about positions and hiring organizations, the self-motivation perspective suggests that motivation and self-regulation are two major determinants of job search behaviors and outcomes (Kanfer et al., 2001). Furthermore, UMT suggests that individuals react to uncertainty on the basis of their appraisals of uncertainty (Brashers, 2001). According to UMT, individuals who appraise uncertainty as a potential threat or danger actively engage in information seeking while individuals who have an optimistic view of uncertainty are more likely to avoid seeking further information. Therefore, the concept of uncertainty appraisal is a framework that may explain the link between uncertainty and motivation for information seeking in the job search context.

In addition, the current study focuses on three aspects, such as personal characteristics, self-cognition, and environment conditions, which have been discussed as having relationships with job search and organizational socialization process (Bandura, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). Specifically, the researcher postulates that proactive personality, subjective P-O fit, and job search stress are the three factors that influence job seekers' uncertainty appraisal and their subsequent information seeking because each factor has been proven to have relationships with job searching behaviors and outcomes (Brown et al., 2006; Cable & Judge, 1996; Carless, 2005; Georgiou et al., 2012), and this assumption was corroborated by the results.

Interpretations of Findings and Conclusion

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A primary finding from this study is that job seekers' appraisal of uncertainty predicts the intention to seek subsequent information. Those job seekers who have pessimistic views about uncertainty from job advertisements are more likely to seek information than job seekers who appraise the uncertainty optimistically. This finding corresponds with UMT (Brashers, 2001; Brashers et al., 2002) in that individuals engage in information seeking if perceived uncertainty is appraised as a potential threat or danger. Insufficient information about the hiring organization or position on job advertisements necessarily elicits a certain degree of uncertainty from job seekers, and they will seek additional information if the uncertainty is framed as a potential barrier in applying for and acquiring the position. On the contrary, job seekers who do not appraise uncertainty from job advertisement as a potential obstruction in being hired are less likely to engage in subsequent information seeking.

For example, a job seeker may experience uncertainty due to absence of information, such as financial compensation, workplace atmosphere, and descriptions about the hiring company's intrinsic values. This may lead the job seeker to be concerned about his or her organizational adaptation. Consequently, the job seeker might perceive the experienced uncertainty as a potential threat to achieving career goals and will seek further information to make sure the company and position fit his or her expectation. In contrast, a job seeker who perceives the absence of intrinsic information in a job advertisement for granted may evaluate uncertainty in some nonthreatening way, or even as just an opportunity to get a job. Subsequently, the job seeker may not feel the need to seek additional information about the hiring company and position. Clearly, UMT is a viable framework for predicting job seekers' information seeking intention on the basis of uncertainty appraisal. UMT has been employed to examine information seeking in various contexts, such as healthcare, interpersonal, and

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intercultural encounters (Afifi & Matsunaga, 2008). Organization scholars have also applied the framework of UMT to examine incumbents and transferee's information seeking and its impact on their performance and work satisfaction (e.g., Kramer, 2004; 2009). In addition to these areas, UMT may be used to conduct further investigations of job seeker's information seeking and recruiting processes on the basis of the current study's findings.

Regarding the information preference of job seekers, the current study postulated that job seekers who appraise uncertainty optimistically are more likely to seek positive information about the hiring organization. In line with that expectation, the results showed that uncertainty appraisal predicts job seekers' information preference. In other words, optimistic appraisals of uncertainty leaded job seekers to seek positive information about the hiring organization that might maintain their optimistic views toward uncertainty. In contrast, job seekers who appraised uncertainty pessimistically were more likely to select information that contained negative descriptors of the hiring organization. This finding coincides with the selective exposure theory (Fray, 1986) that suggests individuals tend to select information that corresponds with their current beliefs. Job seekers who appraise uncertainty in an optimistic way might hesitate to know about negative aspects of the hiring company because such information is not in line with their view about uncertainty, and further it may undermine their perception of the hiring company. In contrast, job seekers who appraise uncertainty in a pessimistic way might prefer to have information about negative aspects of the hiring company because acquiring such information may enable them to avoid potential risks of being employed by the company.

However, more intensive investigation may be required to confirm the information preference of job seekers for a couple of reasons. First, news headline selections (e.g., four positive news headlines, four negative news headlines, and two neutral news headlines) in the

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current study might lack some degree of ecological isomorphism. In reality, job seekers may not be able to find news that corresponds with their perceptions. For instance, many organizations employ public relationship management tactics to maintain positive images of themselves (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Fombrum, 1996), and this practice may prevent job seekers from locating negative information about the hiring company. Therefore, the ability to learn negative aspects of the hiring company may be limited. In addition, channels to acquire information about the hiring company are not limited to online news. Prevalence of communication technology enables job seekers to access information via various channels (Boswell et al., 2012), such as face-to-face, newspapers, and TV news, social media (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), job search sites (e.g., glassdoor.com, etc.), and corporate assessment sites (e.g., Forbes, etc.). Thus, information channel preference also needs to be considered for more realistic findings about information selection. Second, participants were asked to select only three news headlines in the experiment. Such a condition was effective in detecting the direction of information preference (i.e., positive vs negative), which was one of the goals of the experiment. More implications might be possible if the order of selection was considered or selecting more headlines was asked (e.g., let participants select as many as they want). Nevertheless, the implication of this finding is significant. Leaning too much toward acquiring one specific side of information may reinforce biased perception on the hiring organization, and this tendency may lead job seekers to overlook substantial aspects of the company. Thus, seeking balanced information may be the most beneficial for job seekers.

Based on the SCT which argues reciprocal triadic relationships among personal factors, behavioral cognitions, and environmental events (Bandura, 1986), this study also examined the influence of three relevant aspects, such as proactive personality, subjective P-O fit, and job

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search stress on uncertainty appraisal about job advertisement. First, it was found that a proactive personality positively relates with pessimistic appraisal of uncertainty. Proactive personality has been found to be a significant factor that predicts job search self-efficacy and subsequent job search behaviors (Brown et al., 2006; Georgiou et al, 2012). In addition, individuals with proactive personalities are more likely to have a long-term view and actively engage in uncertainty avoidance (Carson et al., 2014). Therefore, job seekers with higher degrees of proactive personality might perceive uncertainty from given job advertisements as potential threats to acquiring the position and form pessimistic views about the uncertainty. When associating this finding with the relationship between uncertainty appraisals and information seeking, it indicates that job seekers with higher degrees of proactive personality are more likely to seek further information about the position and organization to avoid uncertainty and prevent potential threats in the processes of employment.

As an environmental factor, the influence of job search stress on uncertainty appraisal was investigated. Studies have found negative impacts of job search stress on several aspects, such as job search self-efficacy, outcomes of job search, and job seekers' physical and psychological well-being (e.g., Crossley & Stanton, 2005; Kanfer et al., 2001). Specifically for job seekers who pursue careers after graduation, time and financial pressure act as significant factors of stress (Barber, 1998; Saks & Ashforth, 2002). In addition, negative signals in the job search process (e.g., not invited to job interview, no contact from employer) give job seekers more stress, and this experience of failure negatively relates back to job search behaviors (da Motta Veiga & Turban, 2014). Therefore, it was assumed that higher levels of job search stress make job seekers impatient for getting a position that enables them to relieve pressure from time and financial constraints (McKee-Ryan, et al., 2005), and such impatience makes them appraise

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uncertainty optimistically. The results were consistent with this assumption in that the degree of job search stress positively associates with optimistic views about uncertainty. In other words, the more job seekers have job search stress, the more optimistic appraisals of uncertainty are likely to appear.

This finding may provide a useful understanding about the relationship between job search stress and information avoidance. Barber and colleagues (1994) found that job seekers with lower degrees of job search efficacy due to job search stress are more likely to show information avoidance, withdrawal from opportunity, and helplessness. However, clear explanations have not been suggested with regard to the relationship between job search stress and information avoidance. The findings of the current study, that job search stress makes job seekers have optimistic appraisals about uncertainty and optimistic views predict intention of subsequent information seeking, provide a link between job search stress and information avoidance. Moreover, the finding that job seekers with optimistic views about uncertainty tend to select information that is in line with their views also explains avoidance of information that does not correspond with their belief.

Although the current study was successful in predicting the impacts of proactive personality and job search stress on uncertainty appraisal, an unexpected finding was also found from the relationship between subjective P-O fit and uncertainty appraisal. Different from the researcher's expectation, subjective P-O fit was inversely associated with optimistic appraisal of uncertainty. In other words, higher perceptions of P-O fit made job seekers appraise uncertainty more pessimistically. Based on the social identity theory (Turner, 1957), it was postulated that job seekers with higher degrees of subjective P-O fit with hiring organizations are more likely to

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identify themselves with the hiring organization and perceive uncertainty as nonthreatening, but the result was opposite.

Some explanations may be possible for this finding. First, according to the below-average effect (Kruger, 1999), individuals tend to believe their abilities are below average to some degree. Specifically when self-esteem or self-efficacy is low, this tendency is strengthened. Furthermore, Kruger argues that people evaluate their abilities as above average when their and competitors' skills are insufficiently assessed, but they are more likely to recognize their abilities as below average when their and competitors abilities are scrutinized. Therefore, job seekers who thoroughly compared their ability and the position's requirements might perceive the lack of information (i.e., uncertainty) as a potential threat to acquiring the position because their higher perceptions of P-O fit might originate from the lack of information. This interpretation also explains a positive relationship between subjective P-O fit and information seeking intention (see Figure 1 for correlation). In addition, the interaction effect of subjective P-O fit and job search stress in the condition of moderate uncertainty (H6c) corresponds with this finding. Job search stress decreases job search self-efficacy, and lower job search self-efficacy leads job seekers to evaluate themselves as more 'below average'. But the higher degrees of subjective P-O fit may make them suspicious of information on job advertisements and appraise uncertainty pessimistically. Risk-aversion (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984) is also another possible concept that explains this interaction. Job searches necessarily involve the risks of losing resources (Creed et al., 2009; Lim et al., 2016). Therefore, job seekers who experience higher degrees of job search stress tend to avoid possible risks by assuring their qualifications particularly when subjective P-O fit is high.

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Second, this finding also might be explained by regret theory (Bell, 1982; Loomes & Sugden, 1982) and cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). Job seekers tend to be aware of repercussions when they make a wrong judgement about a career, thus they might be motivated to view uncertainty pessimistically and engage in uncertainty avoidance to reduce anticipatory regret. In addition, if a job seeker has a belief that he or she is the perfect fit for the position, yet the job seeker has worries about negative consequences of not getting the job, inconsistencies between belief and possible outcomes cause dissonance. Consequently, the job seeker becomes pessimistic about uncertainty so that the dissonance is resolved through additional information seeking.

As stated, this study examined impacts of three factors on uncertainty appraisal. All three factors (i.e., proactive personality, subjective P-O fit, and job search stress) were associated with uncertainty appraisal, and uncertainty appraisal also is related with subsequent information seeking intention. When considering that the quality and quantity of employment information has significant positive relationships with both organizational attractiveness and job search outcomes (Allen et al., 2004; Kanar et al., 2010; Khan et al., 2013; Peccei et al., 2005), confirming the impacts of the three factors on uncertainty appraisal and subsequent information seeking is valuable. However, findings about interactions between these factors were limited to certain conditions. For example, proactiveness interacted with subjective P-O fit and job search stress and showed significant effect on uncertainty appraisal when a job advertisement with high uncertainty was given. Nevertheless, the interactions did not account for a large portion of the variance. This indicates that the interactions of these three factors are complex, and other factors may also come into play in the process of job seekers' uncertainty appraisal. Therefore, further

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research is necessary to find factors that influence uncertainty appraisal and information seeking of job seekers.

Practical Implications

This study has several practical implications. First of all, through understanding the influence of uncertainty and its appraisal on employment information seeking, job seekers may establish more effective strategies for job searching. Specifically, job seekers who are less proactive and experience some degree of job search stress need to be aware of the importance of information seeking because having sufficient job-related information is critical for the acquisition of a career as well as organizational adaptation (Kanar et al., 2010). In addition, it is recommended to avoid developing a biased information seeking preference. This study found that job seekers who appraise uncertainty optimistically are more likely to select positive information about the hiring company. However, such biased preferences may prevent job seekers from detecting incongruences between job seekers and the company. In short, job seekers may benefit from engaging in active information seeking even though insufficient information in job advertisements may not seem like a major concern.

Second, employers may increase chances of securing talented and committed employees by paying more attention to their job advertisements. As discussed, providing sufficient extrinsic information (e.g., requirements, preferred skills, duties, financial compensation, etc.) is believed to be a virtue of job advertisements. Because many employment studies concentrate on examining the effect of extrinsic information on organizational attractiveness (Feldman et al., 2006; Yüce, & Highhouse, 1998), investigations upon the influence of intrinsic information (e.g., organizational culture, altruistic values, work satisfaction, etc.) have been somewhat overlooked and less weighted by employers (De Cooman & Pepermans, 2012; Lyons et al., 2006).

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However, a recent survey reported that young college graduates put more emphasis on the intrinsic aspects of organizations and absence of intrinsic information significantly contributes to their perception on uncertainty (Smith et al., 2016). Therefore, providing sufficient information about both extrinsic and intrinsic aspects of hiring organizations may reduce uncertainty that job seekers experience and also decrease the possibility of application without sufficient information.

Scholarship Implications

Uncertainty and its management have been studied by many scholars in various situations, including healthcare, interpersonal, intercultural, and organizational contexts. In particular, organization scholars have investigated uncertainty in terms of organizational change (e.g., merge and acquisition; Kramer, 2004), transfers (Kramer, 1995), and newcomers (Morrison, 1993). However, the focus of uncertainty in organizational contexts has concentrated on incumbent employees, thus research on job seekers and their perception about uncertainty has not been well-developed. By examining job seekers' uncertainty and appraisals of it, the current study responded to the call for research as well as expanded the domain of research to the job search and hiring processes.

In addition, approaching job advertisements from the perspective of recipients (i.e., job seekers) might be another implication of the current study. Previous studies about the effectiveness of employment messages have suggested somewhat inconsistent findings. For example, effectiveness in eliciting a positive image via job advertisements did not induce an increase in job applications (e.g., Allen et al., 2004). This inconsistency seems to originate from research that often takes the perspective of employers instead of job seekers. More accurate investigations about the relationship between hiring messages and its outcomes require incorporation of both employers' and job seekers' perspectives. In this respect, this study shed

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light on how job advertisements are understood and impact job seekers subsequent information seeking intentions.

Third, various factors that impact job seekers' information seeking and job search outcomes have been investigated but are somewhat insufficient in explaining how the factors associate with information seeking (e.g., Barber et al., 1994). By suggesting uncertainty appraisal as a framework for examining relationships between three factors (i.e., proactive personality, subjective P-O fit, and job search stress) and subsequent information seeking intention, this study might provide a link for further research. Although the three factors might not account for much of the relationship between uncertainty appraisal and information seeking, it seems uncertainty appraisal is a viable tool for examining the impact of other factors on job search processes.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study is not without limitations. First, this study employed a web-based experiment with hypothetical scenarios to examine job seekers' uncertainty appraisal. Even though experiments using hypothetical scenarios are known as effective for controlling potentially confounding variables, accessing hidden domains of individuals, and comparing outcomes across various conditions, unrealistic responses and potential issues with external validity also have been suggested to be drawbacks of this method (Aviram, 2012). As discussed, a lack of ecological isomorphism might negatively impact the external validity of this study. Although treatments in the current study were devised to be as realistic as possible, they might not be perceived as real job advertisements and news headlines by participants. Moreover, various personal and situational factors that might be somewhat different from job seeker to job seeker were not sufficiently reflected by the research design. For example, existing knowledge about

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the hiring position or industry and individual job-related skills might impact the appraisal of uncertainty. In addition, job market and employment trends were not considered in this study though they might be critical for evaluating job advertisements. Therefore, replicating the current study with actual job applicants (e.g., job applicants who actually applied for a position or an organization) may provide more implications. Also, trajectory examinations of job search may also be useful for understanding impacts of various factors on actual job search outcomes.

Second, some measurements of the current study might have somewhat limited validity. For example, the original measurement of uncertainty preference (Carcioppolo, Yang, & Yang, 2016) did not directly correspond with the focus of the study, thus the researcher had to modify the items of the measurement to fit to the context of job information seeking. In addition, CES (Stumpf et al., 1983) was employed to estimate the degree of job search stress, but the measurement was developed more than 30 years ago and some items had to be modified to prevent potential effects of measurement decay. Although EFA and reliability tests were conducted and the results of the tests endorsed internal validity and reliability for all the measurements, lack of dedicated measurements for the job search context might limit the findings of the current study. Therefore, developing and validating uncertainty-related measurements may provide viable tools for future studies on job search and information seeking.

Third, the treatments developed for this study were job advertisements that invite job seekers to consider an identical position across all conditions (i.e., communication consultant). Using job advertisement of identical position as treatments involves some advantages (e.g., relatively easy manipulation and comparison) but also possesses disadvantages. For example, job seekers encounter various job advertisements across various positions in general. Thus, a job seeker's appraisals of uncertainty may differ from position to position or organization to

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organization due to different expectations. For more in-depth understanding of the dynamics of uncertainty appraisal and subsequent information seeking, impacts of various positions and organizations also need to be examined.

Lastly, the data for the current study were collected from volunteer participants. Volunteered participants are more likely to have an interest in the topic of the survey and tend to show higher degrees of commitment on surveys than non-volunteer participants (Bougher, 2010). Also volunteered participation is discussed as one of the threats to external validity (Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer, & Tourangeau, 2009). Thus, the results of the current study might be different if a non-volunteer samples was used.

Conclusion

This study found several valuable findings with regard to job seekers' uncertainty appraisals and subsequent information seeking. The results revealed that the three factors, such as proactive personality, subjective P-O fit, and job search stress, are significantly associated with job seekers' uncertainty appraisal in a positive or a negative way, and uncertainty appraisal relates back to job seekers' subsequent information seeking. For instance, job seekers who optimistically appraised uncertainty from job advertisement tend not to engage in subsequent information seeking. In addition, they are more likely to select information that portrays positive aspects of the hiring organization. In contrast, job seekers who have pessimistic views about uncertainty are more likely to seek further information about the position and organization and prefer to know about negative aspects of the company. On the basis of these findings, the researcher hopes future studies expand the area of study about job seekers and employment.

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Table 1

News Headline Evaluation in Preliminary Test (1 =”Very positive” 5 = “Very negative”)

Headline	*m*	*SD*
Spokesman Consulting makes $2M donation to Salvation Army*	1.43	0.79
Spokesman Consulting pilots new anti-bullying program *	1.54	0.7
Spokesman Consulting’s profit and revenue improves*	1.64	0.75
Spokesman Consulting is outperforming rivals*	1.71	0.81
Spokesman Consulting continues expansion in Midwestern states	1.83	0.76
Spokesman Consulting hires new executive focused on company culture	1.89	0.7
Spokesman Consulting unveils new core competence business strategy	1.94	0.78
Spokesman Consulting acquires local competitor for $7M	2.06	0.86
Spokesman Consulting’s new employee insurance plan to promote preventative practices	2.07	0.74
Spokesman Consulting is interested in customers’ social media**	2.51	0.73
Spokesman Consulting is searching new place for headquarters**	2.68	0.74
After audit, Spokesman Consulting promises better financial practices	2.75	1.17
Spokesman Consulting posts double-digit growth but warns on cost pressures	2.82	0.83
Spokesman Consulting sales continue to fall but pace of decline slows	3.46	0.9
Spokesman Consulting is facing an expansion problem	3.76	0.78
Spokesman Consulting to end pension contribution for active employees	3.91	1.18
Investment and acquisition costs push Spokesman Consulting into loss***	4.02	1
Bad organizational culture for Spokesman Consulting employees***	4.07	1.14
Workers tell Spokesman Consulting horror stories***	4.17	1.08
CEO of Spokesman Consulting accused by IRS of unpaid taxes***	4.41	1.08

Note. Asterisks indicate selected headlines for the main experiment (*: positive news headline, **: neutral news headline, ***: negative news headline).

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Table 2

Interaction Test Results (DV: Uncertainty Appraisal)

	b	SE_b	β	Sig.
Proactive personality & subjective P-O fit				
All conditions	.07	.07	.05	.354
High Uncertainty	.24	.12	.17	.048*
Moderate Uncertainty	.06	.12	.04	.656
Low uncertainty	-.05	.12	-.04	.683
Proactive personality & Job search stress				
All conditions	.04	.05	.04	.402
High Uncertainty	-.28	.11	-.22	.015*
Moderate Uncertainty	.16	.08	.18	.059
Low uncertainty	.00	.08	.00	.968
Job search stress & subjective P-O fit				
All conditions	-.04	.03	-.06	.221
High Uncertainty	-.10	.07	-.12	.169
Moderate Uncertainty	-.14	.06	-.21	.020*
Low uncertainty	.03	.05	.05	.522

*. Significant at the 0.05 level.

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Table 3

Standardized Regression Coefficients Predicting Uncertainty Appraisal

	b	SE_b	β	Sig.
Proactive personality				
All conditions	-.18	.08	-.12	.001**
High Uncertainty	.03	.13	.02	.846
Moderate Uncertainty	-.33	.13	-.22	.011*
Low uncertainty	.22	.14	-.14	.111
Subjective P-O fit				
All conditions	-.21	.05	-.21	.018*
High Uncertainty	-.14	.09	-.15	.093
Moderate Uncertainty	-.28	.09	-.27	.002**
Low uncertainty	-.23	.09	-.23	.008**
Job search stress				
All conditions	.22	.04	.25	.001**
High Uncertainty	.13	.08	.14	.093
Moderate Uncertainty	.26	.07	.31	.001**
Low uncertainty	.22	.07	.25	.004**

*. Significant at the 0.05 level.

**. Significant at the 0.01 level.

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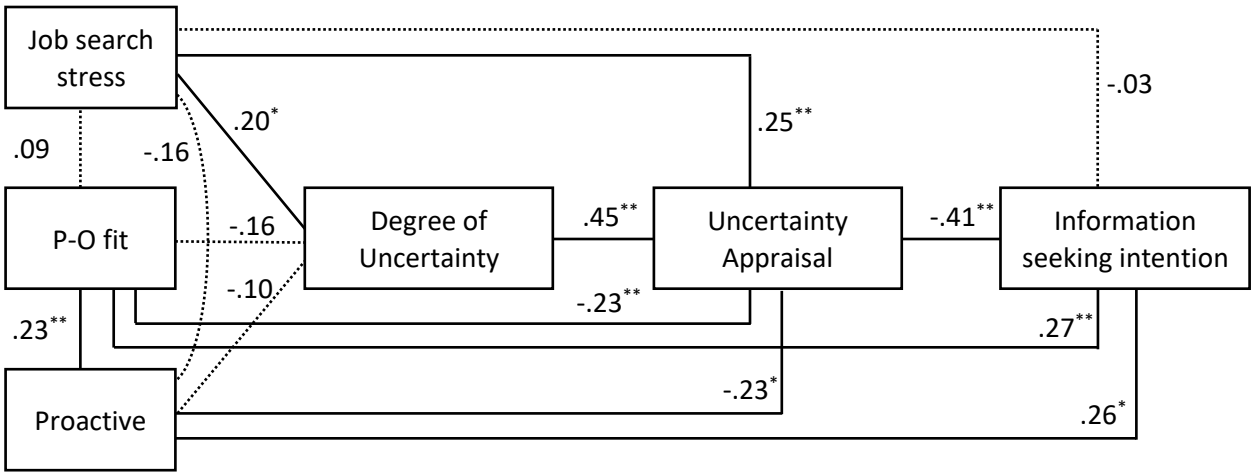

Figure 1. Pearson's *r* coefficients among variables.

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

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

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Footnotes

[1] One item was included to check whether participants were attentive to the information in the position description (e.g., "I read all the details of the job advertisement.") with 5-point Likert type scale, ranging from "1 = *Strongly agree*" and "5 = *Strongly disagree*". Responses from participants who selected "Strongly disagree" and "Disagree" on this item were excluded from this study (n = 14).

[2] Two items were provided to ask about participants' job experience. The first item asked about their full-time employment experience (e.g., "Have you ever had a full-time position or are you currently hired as a full-time employee?"). Participants who indicated they had or currently have a full-time position were directed to the second question that asked whether they think the full-time position is (or was) in line with their career path. In total 239 participants reported that they had (n = 166) or currently have a full-time position (n = 73), and 72 participants among 166 indicated that the job they had (or currently have) is in line with their career path.

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Appendix A

Job Advertisements for Preliminary Test

Job Advertisement #1 for Preliminary Test

About Spokesman Communication Consulting Group:

We Are:

- A rapidly expanding marketing and sales firm
- A fun place to work, where individuality is encouraged and hard work is rewarded.
- A company where pay is never capped and advancement is based on merit.
- A professional environment providing hands-on training to every member of our team.
- A company that provides personal mentorship and development to every team member.
- A place where you can grow personally, professionally, and socially.

Job Description:

Entry level Business Communications Consultant needed for one of Fortune 500 Companies. This role is great for someone who wants to work in a fast-paced environment where your communication ability is essential to enhancing the reputation of the company.

Roles/Responsibilities

- Planning, writing, editing, coordinating and publishing a variety of complex and sensitive communications.
- Analyzes information regarding public opinion and recommends organizational position to management.
- Develop website strategy including look and content.
- Serves as designated spokesperson on a variety of issues.
- Provide guidance to clients.
- Developing and recommending internal communications strategies and plans.
- Stakeholder analysis and management.
- Creating and delivering impactful communications using channels such as websites, videos, events, newsletters, social media, presentations, surveys, and conferences
- Advising clients on research needs or employee survey methods.
- Working with creative/IT colleagues on creative/technical elements of projects.
- Designing and implementing evaluation strategies.

Qualifications

- Comfortable speaking publicly, creating presentations, and thinking on your feet.
- Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite.
- One or more years of communication experience preferred.
- Experience with internal communications/change management is required
- Ability and experience in quickly understanding complex issues, campaigns and organizations and providing appropriate advice.
- A good working knowledge of new media technologies.

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- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Strong client handling and creative thinking skills including the ability to work confidently across multiple projects, accounts and clients.
- Strong commercial awareness.
- Degree level qualification.
- An approachable personality with an exceptional work ethic.

To be successful in this role, you will be highly organized and capable of working to tight deadlines while maintaining quality. This position welcomes the opportunity for someone to gain recognition, have personal development and accomplish your career goals. If you want to join a professional team of intelligent and talented people, apply today!

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group is a financially strong, growth orientated, entrepreneurial company that offers excellent compensation, perks and benefits including comprehensive health insurance, cash bonus, dental, LTD, 401(k) match and other great benefits. For more information on our company please visit our website at www.Spokesman.com

We are an equal employment opportunity employer and will consider all qualified candidates without regard to disability or protected veteran status.

Job Advertisement #2 for Preliminary Test

About Spokesman Communication Consulting Group:

We Are:

- A rapidly expanding marketing and sales firm
- A fun place to work, where individuality is encouraged and hard work is rewarded.
- A company where pay is never capped and advancement is based on merit.
- A professional environment providing hands-on training to every member of our team.
- A company that provides personal mentorship and development to every team member.
- A place where you can grow personally, professionally, and socially.

Job Description:

Entry level Business Communications Consultant needed for one of Fortune 500 Companies. This role is great for someone who wants to work in a fast-paced environment where your communication ability is essential to enhancing the reputation of the company.

Roles/Responsibilities

- Planning, writing, editing, coordinating and publishing a variety of complex and sensitive communications.
- Develop website strategy including look and content.
- Provide guidance to clients.
- Stakeholder analysis and management.
- Advising clients on research needs or employee survey methods.
- Designing and implementing evaluation strategies.

Qualifications

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- Comfortable speaking publicly, creating presentations, and thinking on your feet.
- One or more years of communication experience preferred.
- Ability and experience in quickly understanding complex issues, campaigns and organizations and providing appropriate advice.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Strong commercial awareness.
- An approachable personality with an exceptional work ethic.

To be successful in this role, you will be highly organized and capable of working to tight deadlines while maintaining quality. This position welcomes the opportunity for someone to gain recognition, have personal development and accomplish your career goals. If you want to join a professional team of intelligent and talented people, apply today!

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group is a financially strong, growth orientated, entrepreneurial company that offers excellent compensation, perks and benefits including comprehensive health insurance, cash bonus, dental, LTD, 401(k) match and other great benefits. For more information on our company please visit our website at www.Spokesman.com

We are an equal employment opportunity employer and will consider all qualified candidates without regard to disability or protected veteran status.

Job Advertisement #3 for Preliminary Test

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group:

Job Description:

Entry level Business Communications Consultant needed for one of Fortune 500 Companies. This role is great for someone who wants to work in a fast-paced environment where your communication ability is essential to enhancing the reputation of the company.

Roles/Responsibilities

- Planning, writing, editing, coordinating and publishing a variety of complex and sensitive communications.
- Develop website strategy including look and content.
- Provide guidance to clients.
- Stakeholder analysis and management.
- Advising clients on research needs or employee survey methods.
- Designing and implementing evaluation strategies.

Qualifications

- Comfortable speaking publicly, creating presentations, and thinking on your feet.
- One or more years of communication experience preferred.
- Ability and experience in quickly understanding complex issues, campaigns and organizations and providing appropriate advice.
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Strong commercial awareness.
- An approachable personality with an exceptional work ethic.

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To be successful in this role, you will be highly organized and capable of working to tight deadlines while maintaining quality. This position welcomes the opportunity for someone to gain recognition, have personal development and accomplish your career goals. If you want to join a professional team of intelligent and talented people, apply today!

Salary/compensation/benefits depend on qualifications.

Job Advertisement #4 for Preliminary Test

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group:

Job Description:

Entry level Business Communications Consultant needed for one of Fortune 500 Companies. This role is great for someone who wants to work in a fast-paced environment.

Roles/Responsibilities

- Handling a variety of communication issues.
- Serves as a spokesperson on a variety of issues.
- Provide guidance to clients.
- Developing and recommending communications strategies.
- Creating and delivering impactful communications
- Advising clients.

Qualifications

- Proficient technology skills.
- Experience with various types of communication.
- Several years of communication experience preferred.
- Good ability in understanding complex issues.
- Good working knowledge.
- Good personality.

To be successful in this role, you will be highly organized and capable of working to tight deadlines while maintaining quality. If you want to join a professional team of intelligent and talented people, apply today!

Salary/compensation/benefits depend on qualifications.

Job Advertisement #5 for Preliminary Test

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group:

Job Description:

Entry level Business Communications Consultant.

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Roles/Responsibilities

- Handling a variety of communication issues.
- Serves as a spokesperson on a variety of issues.
- Provide guidance to clients.
- Developing and recommending communications strategies.
- Creating and delivering impactful communications
- Advising clients.

Qualifications

- Proficient technology skills.
- Experience with various types of communication.
- Several years of communication experience preferred.
- Good ability in understanding complex issues.
- Good working knowledge.
- Good personality.

Salary/compensation/benefits depend on qualifications.

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Appendix B

News Headline Candidates for Preliminary Test

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group unveils new core competence business strategy.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group's profit and revenue improves.

CEO of Spokesman Communication Consulting Group accused by IRS of unpaid taxes.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group makes $2M donation to Salvation Army.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group pilots new anti-bullying program.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group is outperforming rivals.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group acquires local competitor for $7M.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group is facing an expansion problem.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group's new employee insurance plan to promote preventative practices.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group posts double-digit growth but warns on cost pressures.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group hires new executive focused on company culture.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group is searching new place for headquarters.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group is interested in customers' social media.

After audit, Spokesman Communication Consulting Group promises better financial practices.

Workers tell Spokesman Communication Consulting Group horror stories.

Bad organizational culture for Spokesman Communication Consulting Group employees.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group continues expansion in Midwestern states.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group sales continue to fall but pace of decline slows.

Investment and acquisition costs push Spokesman Communication Consulting Group into loss.

Spokesman Communication Consulting Group to end pension contribution for active employees.

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Appendix C

Measurement for Degree of Uncertainty

Original scale: State, Effect, and Response Uncertainty scale (Ashill & Jobber, 2010)

Q1. I have the information I need in order to make an applying decision for the hiring position.

Q2. I believe the hiring information is adequate for my applying decision making.

Q3. For me, it is difficult to make a decision of applying with the given information.

Q4. For me, it is difficult to predict the outcomes of applying with the given information.

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Appendix D

Letter of IRB Approval

UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN
UWMILWAUKEE

Department of University Safety & Assurances

Melody Harries
IRB Administrator
Institutional Review Board
Engelmann 270
P. O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201-0413
(414) 229-3182 *phone*
(414) 229-6729 *fax*

http://www.irb.uwm.edu
harries@uwm.edu

New Study - Notice of IRB Exempt Status

Date: December 12, 2016

To: Erik Timmerman, PhD
Dept: Communication

CC: Chang Shik Choi

IRB#: 17.148
Title: Uncertainty Appraisal in First Career Employment Information Seeking

After review of your research protocol by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board, your protocol has been granted Exempt Status under Category 2 as governed by 45 CFR 46.101(b).

This protocol has been approved as exempt for three years and IRB approval will expire on December 11, 2019. If you plan to continue any research related activities (e.g., enrollment of subjects, study interventions, data analysis, etc.) past the date of IRB expiration, please respond to the IRB's status request that will be sent by email approximately two weeks before the expiration date. If the study is closed or completed before the IRB expiration date, you may notify the IRB by sending an email to irbinfo@uwm.edu with the study number and the status, so we can keep our study records accurate.

Any proposed changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the IRB before implementation, unless the change is specifically necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. The principal investigator is responsible for adhering to the policies and guidelines set forth by the UWM IRB, maintaining proper documentation of study records and promptly reporting to the IRB any adverse events which require reporting. The principal investigator is also responsible for ensuring that all study staff receive appropriate training in the ethical guidelines of conducting human subjects research.

As Principal Investigator, it is also your responsibility to adhere to UWM and UW System Policies, and any applicable state and federal laws governing activities which are independent of IRB review/approval (e.g., FERPA, Radiation Safety, UWM Data Security, UW System policy on Prizes, Awards and Gifts, state gambling laws, etc.). When conducting research at institutions outside of UWM, be sure to obtain permission and/or approval as required by their policies.

Contact the IRB office if you have any further questions. Thank you for your cooperation, and best wishes for a successful project.

Respectfully,

Melody Harries
IRB Administrator

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Appendix E

Measurement for Appraisal of Uncertainty

Original scale: The Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (Buhr & Dugas, 2002)

Anchor question: After reading the job advertisement, I feel...

Q1. Uneasy.

Q2. Unpredictable.

Q3. Frustrating.

Q4. Insufficient.

Q5. Spoiling.

Q6. Intolerable.

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Appendix F

Measurement for Proactive Personality

Original scale: Proactive Personality Scale (Bateman & Crant, 1993)

Q1. Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.

Q2. I enjoy facing and overcoming obstacles to my ideas.

Q3. Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.

Q4. If I see something I don't like, I fix it.

Q5. No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.

Q6. I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.

Q7. I excel at identifying opportunities.

Q8. I am always looking for better ways to do things.

Q9. If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.

Q10. I love to challenge the status quo.

Q11. When I have a problem, I tackle it head-on.

Q12. If I see someone in trouble, I help out in any way I can.

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Appendix G

Measurement for P-O fit

Original scale: Perceived subjective P-O fit measurement (Piasentin & Chapman, 2007)

Q1. I will fit in well with other people who work for this company.

Q2. This organization is a good fit for me in terms of what I look for in an employer

Q3. I think other people would say that I fit into this organization

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Appendix H

Measurement for Job Search Stress

Original scale: Career Exploration Survey (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983)

Explorational stress

Q1. I feel stress about exploring specific jobs.

Q2. I feel stress about having interviews with specific companies.

Q3. I feel stress about looking for a job.

Decisional stress

Q4. I feel stress about deciding what I want to do for a career.

Q5. I feel stress about deciding on an occupation.

Q6. I feel stress about deciding on a specific job.

Q7. I feel stress about deciding on a specific organization.

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Appendix I

Measurement for Additional Information Seeking Intention

Original scale: Uncertainty Preference Measurement (Carcioppolo, Yang, & Yang, 2016)

Avoid to maintain uncertainty

Q1. I would avoid finding more information about the position because it can be depressing.

Q2. I would avoid finding more information about the position because it may make me anxious.

Q3. I would avoid finding more information about the position because it can make me nervous about my ability to get a job.

Avoid insufficient information

Q4. I would avoid finding more information about the position because there is a lot of misinformation out there.

Q5. I would avoid finding more information about the hiring position because information in the job advertisement may be different from what they really expect/offer.

Q6. I would avoid finding more information about the position because I'm not sure whether I can find useful information.

Seek to increase uncertainty

Q7. I would seek more information about the position because I want to get other's opinion about the position.

Q8. I would seek more information about the position because it can give me hope about getting the position.

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Q9. I would seek more information about the position because it can help me check my ability and qualification.

Seek to reduce uncertainty

Q10. I would seek more information about the position because it can prepare me to be a successful candidate.

Q11. I would seek more information about the position because it makes me feel equipped.

Q12. I would seek more information about the position because it makes me less fearful about employment.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

CHANG SHIK CHOI

Education

Doctor of Philosophy, 2017 May
Department of Communication
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI, USA
Emphasis: Organizational communication, Research methods

Master of Arts, 2008 Aug
Department of Communication
Pusan National University, Pusan, Republic of Korea
Emphasis: Journalism

Bachelor of Arts, 2000 Feb
Department of Communication
Pusan National University, Pusan, Republic of Korea
Emphasis: Mass communication

Publication

Journals

Choi, C., & Kim, S. (Manuscript submitted for review). Uncompromised reliability of response from smartphones.

Park, J., Hwang, S., & Choi, C. (2011). How to educate advertising field human resources during the era of multimedia and the convergence of broadcasting and telecommunication. *Journal of Journalism Study, 15*,113-145.

Choi, C., Jung, Y., & Chae, B. (2009). A study of the government-sourced reports in local TV news. *Journal of Media Economics & Culture, 7,* 117-148.

Choi, C., & Chae, B. (2008). The formation and development of article titles in the beginning period of Korean newspapers. *Korean Journal of Communication & Information, 43,* 209-246.

Book entry

Timmerman, C. E., & Choi, C. (2017). Meeting technology. In C. R. Scott & L. K. Lewis (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Organizational Communication*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

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Presentations

Choi, C. (2016, November). *Integrative or distributive? Effects of competitiveness and position characteristics on communication strategy selection in group employment interviews*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association 2016 Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

Choi, C., & Kim, S. (2016, November). *A comparison of response reliability: Internal consistency between PC and smartphone*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association 2016 Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

Choi, C. (2016, April). *The effect of perceived individualism and collectivism and task interdependency on work process satisfaction*. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association 2016 Conference, Grand Rapids, MI.

Choi, C., & Draeger, R. A., Jr. (2016, April). *Determinants of online course evaluation survey participation: An exploratory study*. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association 2016 Conference, Grand Rapids, MI.

Choi, C. (2015, November). *Communication apprehension and imagined interactions in romantic relationships*. Paper presented at the National Communication Association 2015 Annual Conference, Las Vegas, NV.

Choi, C. (2015, April). *Work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work-life balance of contingent workers: In relationship to willingness to communicate*. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association 2015 Conference, Madison, WI.

Choi, C., Ahn, S., & Zhao, T. (2015, April). *The effects of intercultural communication competence and knowledge about the counterpart's culture on adaptive message use in intercultural negotiation*. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association 2015 Conference, Madison, WI.

Ahn, S., & Choi, C. (2014, April). *Compliance-gaining strategies used by Asian American adult children and parents in the wedding planning process*. Paper presented at the Trans-Asia Graduate Student Conference, Madison, WI.

Kim, S., Allen, M., Cole, A., Cramer, E. C., Becker, K. A., Choi, C., Dilbeck, K. E., Gross, C. M., Hawkins, J. L. M., Jayroe, T. J., Kim, M., Mullane, R. R., Priddis, D. M., Smith, K., Victor, A. K., Willes, K. L., & Zmyslinski-Seelig, A. N. (2013, November). *Testing the evidence effect of Additive Cues Model (ACM).* Paper presented at the 99th annual convention of the National Communication Association, Communication and Social Cognition Division, Washington, DC.

Choi, C., Jung, Y., & Kim, J. (2008, July). *A comparative study of mobile communication services: An expectancy-value approach to voice, SMS and visual calls*. Paper presented at the 17th Asian Media Information and Communication Conference, Manila, Philippine.

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Choi, C. (2007, January). *The formation and development of article titles in the beginning period of Korean newspapers*. Paper presented at 5th Korean Society for Journalism & Communication Annual Graduate Conference, Seoul, Korea.

Awards

Best research thesis, Award given by the president of Pusan National University, 2009. Research title: A Study of Political Aspects of Juvenile Newspaper

Best conference research thesis, Award given by Korean Society for Journalism & Communication studies, 2007. Research title: The formation and development of article titles in the beginning period of Korean newspapers.

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