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Journal of Career Development 2009; 35; 228
DOI: 10.1177/0894845308327271

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://jcd.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/35/3/228
Successful Reemployment Through Resiliency Development

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The proposed model in this article seeks to extend the job search literature by considering resiliency as a predictor of job search behavior and reemployment outcomes. In addition, because past research in this area has not expressly considered job search skills, they are included in this model as an additional predictor along with their interaction with resiliency. The importance of resiliency for job seekers is discussed with particular emphasis on young adults, minorities, and relocating spouses/partners. Because resiliency is a state-like variable, suggestions are offered to promote the development of resiliency in job seekers. It is hoped that the theoretical framework proposed in this article and the specific recommendations for resiliency development can positively affect job seekers pursuing reemployment.

Keywords: resiliency; job search; reemployment; job search skills; unemployment

In 1855, a 16-year-old John D. Rockefeller decided to pursue employment in the city of Cleveland (Chernow, 1998). As a fairly new arrival from the countryside, he had no contacts so he made a list of businesses from the city directory. Day after day, he applied to the companies on his list, facing constant rejection for 6 weeks until, at last, he was hired. Chernow states “... Rockefeller was the sort of stubborn person who only grew more determined with rejection” (p. 45). As in Rockefeller’s story, both practitioners

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(e.g., Bolles, 2007) and academics (e.g., Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 2000) acknowledge that successful reemployment is oftentimes preceded by rejection and/or failure. Yet, despite the adversity he faced, Rockefeller demonstrated persistence and determination. Was it resiliency that helped him to persevere at his job search until he was hired?

Defined as the ability to “bounce back” from adversity (Luthans, 2002), resiliency may be particularly apt for job searches conducted in today’s environment in which the past few decades have witnessed tremendous economic and societal changes (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996). Over a decade ago, Waterman, Waterman, and Collard (1994) stated that the traditional psychological contract of job security in exchange for performance and loyalty would diminish. Given that individuals today report changing jobs frequently (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005), it is expected that many will experience unemployment at least once and perhaps multiple times throughout their lives. A study of resiliency could increase our understanding of why certain individuals overcome setbacks to become successfully reemployed. Despite the call to investigate different variables that may predict persistence in a job search (Wanberg, Glomb, Song, & Sorenson, 2005), few studies have examined resiliency as a variable that may provide an increased understanding of the reemployment process.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to extend previous research in the job search literature by proposing a model that examines the influence of resiliency on the job search process and on reemployment. First, we will discuss the importance of resiliency for job seekers and why we believe it is especially applicable to certain populations of job seekers, that is, young adults, minorities, and relocating spouses/partners. Second, we will review theoretical perspectives of resiliency. Third, we will propose a model that extends work done by researchers such as Kanfer, Wanberg, and Kantrowitz (2001) and Saks (2005) to include resiliency, job search skills, and their interaction as predictors of reemployment. Because researchers such as Vinokur and Schul (2002) suggest that the quality of job search behaviors be addressed, we will discuss the importance of job search skills in our model. Finally, we will discuss how resiliency can be effectively developed in job seekers to positively affect their job search behaviors and reemployment outcomes.

Need for Study of Resiliency

In the past, individuals often held lifetime employment at one organization; however, firms today cannot guarantee such employment stability
As a result, individuals will experience increased mobility among employers (e.g., Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Waterman et al., 1994) and job searches will become much more commonplace. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2005), individuals reported changing jobs (i.e., work with a particular employer) an average of 10.2 times between the ages of 18 and 38. Additionally, Waterman et al. (1994) suggest that employees should become more resilient regarding their careers by learning to recognize changing business needs and to seek employment elsewhere when necessary. All this implies that individuals will be changing jobs more often and, therefore, may experience an increased number of periods of unemployment.

Those individuals who switch jobs more frequently and are unemployed more often may encounter increased amounts of rejection during job searches. A survey conducted by Kursmark (2007) provides examples of the types of rejection that job seekers may encounter. Almost two thirds of individuals recently engaged in job searches reported receiving responses to job applications only 10% of the time (Kursmark, 2007). For these survey respondents, many employers acknowledged only a small percentage of the job applications that were submitted in response to newspaper ads or to company Web sites. In addition, of those respondents who obtained job interviews, 28% indicated that no follow-up was initiated by the company after the interview (Kursmark, 2007). Some job seekers may be told directly that they are not suitable for a particular job (Yate, 2006); however, rejection is often experienced by job seekers who never know whether their application was read and considered (Bolles, 2007). Resiliency, the ability to achieve a good outcome despite adversity (Masten, 2001), may assist in an understanding of why job seekers are able to overcome rejection to persist in their job searches until becoming reemployed.

Societal and demographic trends also highlight the need for the importance of resiliency in job searches. First, one societal change observed in industrialized countries is the trend toward getting married and having children at later ages (Arnett, 2004). Arnett (2004) considers this the development of a new period of life that is between adolescence and adulthood and he terms it “emerging adulthood.” During this developmental phase, Arnett (2004) postulates that emerging adults are engaged in identity explorations through their occupational choices. In his research, emerging adults expressed the desire to obtain employment not just for economic reasons but also to help them discover their skills and talents while providing
meaning in their lives. Because emerging adults are exploring different possibilities in their work lives, this period of time is also characterized by instability as “... they bounce from one job to another...” (Arnett, 2004, p. 151).

Without employment stability (Waterman et al., 1994), emerging adults must be prepared to conduct at least several job searches during their career. Because they desire jobs that will not only provide a paycheck but also express their identity (Arnett, 2004), emerging adults may experience an increasing amount of unemployment as they engage in more extensive job searches. In addition, Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) posit that emerging adults may not have the accurate information necessary to pursue successful career paths. Without this information, they are likely to have unrealistic expectations about their future careers which may affect their job searches. Given these challenges, resiliency may be a key construct that assists emerging adults in coping with potential setbacks during a job search until they secure employment that is meaningful to them.

Second, the demographic trends for the U.S. population and workforce are undergoing dramatic shifts. The percentage of ethnic groups such as Asian Americans and Hispanic Americans has increased rapidly since 1990 and is projected to continue to grow at a fast pace (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Given the current rates of growth, the U.S. Census Bureau (2005) estimates that ethnic and racial minorities will comprise greater than 50% of the total U.S. population within the next 25 years. In addition, a report from the U.S. Census Bureau (2005) suggests that minorities and women are expected to comprise fully 70% of new entrants into the workforce by 2008. However, despite their increased presence in the workplace, studies show that minorities experience greater difficulties becoming reemployed (e.g., Vino-kur, Schul, Vuori, & Price, 2000). According to Lambert, Eby, and Reeves (2006), research suggests that racial minorities may be socially isolated from members of the majority group. Kanfer et al. (2001) reported a greater likelihood that the length of time to reemployment would be longer for minorities. In addition, cultural factors may hinder ethnic and racial minorities as they engage in job search behaviors. For example, Latham and Budworth (2006) suggest that Native North Americans may perform poorly in job interviews because they engage in fewer impression management-type behaviors than middle-class Whites do. These authors also state that racial discrimination may limit employment opportunities for Native North Americans. The study conducted with Native North Americans demonstrates
that minorities face additional challenges during job searches. Resiliency, then, may be applicable to minorities trying to overcome the various forms of unintentional or intentional discrimination that they may experience in the reemployment process.

Third, another societal trend is that of increased mobility. In fact, as stated by Diener and Seligman (2004), “Mobility is now a hallmark of American society” (p. 20). Relocation for work-related reasons is increasingly used as a human resource strategy that can benefit an organization as well as its employees (e.g., Eby & Russell, 2000; Konopaske, Robie, & Ivancevich, 2005). These authors suggest that employees who relocate for a firm gain the opportunity to develop skills and competencies. However, the impact of a relocation on the spouses/partners (i.e., relocating partners) of employees must also be considered (Eby, 2001). Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) reported that almost 29% of 1,647 survey respondents indicated that they had made a career transition because “My spouse moved to another geographical location and I followed” (p. 112). When an employee is offered the opportunity for career advancement via relocation, the relocating partner may have concerns regarding the opportunity to continue to pursue his or her career after a move to a new geographic area (Fleig-Palmer, Murrin, Palmer, & Rathert, 2003). Research has shown that relocation can be damaging to the relocating partner’s career. Eby (2001) reported that after a move, relocating partners tended to obtain jobs that offered less in terms of pay, benefits, and opportunities for advancement. Additionally, organizations are more likely to offer relocation assistance for logistical needs (e.g., moving costs) rather than employment assistance to relocating partners conducting a job search in a new area (e.g., Eby & Allen, 1998; Konopaske et al., 2005). Resiliency may be particularly useful for relocating partners seeking reemployment in their career field because they must conduct a job search in a new geographic location with limited support and the potential for reduced pay and benefits.

The knowledge that rejection is present during the job search process (e.g., Bolles, 2007; Yate, 2006) along with an awareness of the impact of societal and demographic trends on job seekers suggests that a focus on resiliency is timely and practical. To engage in the job search behaviors necessary for becoming reemployed, resiliency appears to be suitable for job seekers and particularly those (i.e., emergent adults, minorities, and relocating partners) we have highlighted here who may be particularly vulnerable to additional challenges during the job search process. The next section will explore the theoretical underpinnings of resiliency.
Resiliency

Interested in children who thrived despite exposure to extremely adverse conditions, psychologists and psychiatrists began to study resiliency several decades ago (Masten, 2001). Researchers today consider resiliency a common adaptational response to adverse events (Bonanno, 2004; Masten, 2001) and applicable to the positive development of individuals in organizational settings (Luthans, Luthans, & Luthans, 2004; Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006). Therefore, resiliency appears to be particularly pertinent to the process of searching for a job and pursuing reemployment. As defined by Masten (2001), “Resilience refers to a class of phenomena characterized by good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development” (p. 228). Bonanno (2004) suggests that resiliency is comprised of multiple pathways including hardiness, self-enhancement, and positive emotion which can help to promote high functioning in individuals confronted by adversity. According to Coutu (2002), resilient individuals accept reality and possess adaptive mechanisms, which allow them to improvise and respond to unexpected situations. These authors suggest that an individual cannot develop resilience without demonstrable risk that exists currently or in the past. In addition, there is the implication that having resilience results in desirable outcomes such as development (Masten, 2001) or generative experiences (Bonanno, 2004).

Based on this work and that of other researchers, Luthans (2002) has extended these theories to organizational settings, positing that researchers should investigate those positive capabilities that can be developed so as to improve performance. Luthans and colleagues emphasize that this developmental aspect is critical to differentiating state-like variables such as resiliency (Luthans et al., 2004, 2006) from the more dispositional variables such as core self-evaluations (e.g., Wanberg et al., 2005). Luthans (2002) expanded the definition of resiliency to focus on not only recovering from setbacks but also the need to bounce back from positive but potentially overwhelming events such as a job offer with a high level of responsibility. This is similar to Reivich and Schatte’s (2002) assertion that resiliency helps individuals to face adversity and to seek new experiences, challenges, and opportunities by establishing connections with others. While acknowledging that adversity must be present in order for resiliency to be developed, these researchers also posit that resiliency can promote a productive response. Moreover, they highlight an important aspect of resiliency, that is, after an adverse event or even a positive but potentially overwhelming event, an
individual may not just return to previous levels of functioning but may go beyond to achieve even greater outcomes.

In their research, Luthans and colleagues (e.g., Luthans et al., 2004) propose the consideration of other positive psychological constructs such as self-efficacy and optimism. Research has demonstrated that both of these variables have relationships with job search behaviors and employment outcomes. Defined as “... a job seeker’s confidence in his or her ability to successfully perform a variety of job search activities” (Saks, 2005, p. 404), job search self-efficacy has been shown in a meta-analysis to have a significant, positive relationship with number of job offers and employment status and a significant, negative relationship with duration of job search (Kanfer et al., 2001). In a study conducted by Saks (2006), job search self-efficacy was a significant predictor of job interviews, offers, and employment status. As regards optimism, it was found to have a weak relationship with job search behavior and was positively related to job search duration (Kanfer et al., 2001).

Our focus on resiliency versus other positive psychological constructs such as self-efficacy or optimism is based on several reasons. First, the link-age between job search self-efficacy, job search behaviors, and employment outcomes has been studied since Kanfer and Hulin (1985) and is a fairly robust finding in the job search literature (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001). The contribution of our proposed model is to suggest that the development of resiliency within job seekers might offer an additional benefit beyond that demonstrated by the study of self-efficacy. Second, studies examining relationships between optimism and job search variables have revealed weak or inconsistent results (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001); therefore, we do not consider optimism in our model. Third, we view resiliency as being conceptually distinct from other variables because it encompasses both contextual factors as well as risk factors (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Resiliency researchers have emphasized protective factors that are based on individual characteristics as well as environmental factors (e.g., Masten, 2001). The study of resiliency, therefore, can assist in providing important insight into the job search and reemployment process because it guides researchers to consider many facets of the job seeker’s environment (e.g., failure and rejection) and not simply his or her internal states. Fourth, because resiliency can change over time and is influenced by environmental factors, it is considered to be state-like and able to be developed in individuals (Luthans, 2002). Waite and Richardson (2004) have empirically supported the effectiveness of training interventions in the development of resiliency within the workplace. We
extend their work to propose the consideration of resiliency in our model because we believe it can be developed in individuals to enhance their job search and employment outcomes.

The Proposed Model

Masten (2001) suggests that one major approach to the design of resiliency studies is to assess the linkages between predictors and positive outcomes that could affect interventions. Of the main variables addressed in longitudinal models in resiliency research (Masten, 2001), we focus on four. First, the risk or adverse situation is identified. Second, risk-activated protective factors or assets are considered. Third is the process that individuals undergo, and fourth is the positive criterion or desirable outcome. Masten (2001) suggests that this type of model is helpful for identifying the relationships that could prove beneficial in designing interventions that enhance resiliency development.

In Figure 1, we extend research done by Kanfer et al. (2001) and Saks (2005) by adapting their models of job search and integrating these with the variable-focused model used in resiliency research and adapted from Masten (2001). In our proposed model, the identified risk is unemployment. A meta-analytic study of unemployment research suggests that mental health is negatively affected by unemployment (McKee-Ryan, Song, Wanberg, & Kinicki, 2005). Diener and Seligman (2004) cite research that demonstrated that persons who are unemployed have lower levels of well-being and that depression increased the longer the duration of unemployment.

Attention to the negative aspects of unemployment is understandable given the discouragement and rejection that is often faced when seeking reemployment. The meta-analytic study by McKee-Ryan et al. (2005) confirms that more negative rather than positive variables, as they relate to well-being, have been studied in the unemployment literature. However, Kanfer and Hulin (1985) point out that the focus on the negative responses to unemployment does not help us identify the variables that might facilitate reemployment. More recent research has begun to explore positive variables that may influence or predict job search behavior and potential employment outcomes. As stated previously, many researchers have shown that a relationship exists between self-efficacy and job search outcomes (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001). In addition, Van Hooft, Born, Taris, Van der Flier, and Blonk (2004) conducted a study in the Netherlands that examined predictors of job search
Figure 1
A Resiliency-Based Model of Reemployment

Risk
Resiliency
Job search skills
Unemployment
Job search behavior
- Behaviors
- Intensity
- Effort
Job search outcomes
- Interviews
- Offers
Reemployment
Positive criterion
Risk-activated protective factors
Process
behavior. Their findings suggest that for unemployed persons, a positive instrumental job search attitude (e.g., viewing a job search as beneficial) may predict job search intention. A better understanding of the positive variables that can assist in reemployment efforts may be especially beneficial for job seekers.

Unemployment then, as an identifiable risk, could activate positive variables as protective factors. Both Kanfer et al. (2001) and Saks (2005) suggest in their models that antecedents of job search behaviors include personality constructs. We choose to focus on resiliency in the proposed model. As stated previously, demographic and societal changes are affecting job seekers. As a result of the loss of employment stability, researchers such as Tien, Lin, and Chen (2005) suggest employment uncertainty may be lessened by the development of positive psychological attitudes such as resiliency. In addition, because rejection is common during job searches, it has been proposed in this article that the development of resiliency can assist job seekers in pursuing successful reemployment despite the barriers that they may face.

Although researchers have studied the type and frequency of the job search behaviors (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2005), little research to date has expressly focused on the skill level of specific job search behaviors. Research published in the early 1990s that focused on interventions to promote reemployment contained job search skill training as a component of the interventions (e.g. Caplan, Vinokur, Price, & van Ryn, 1989; Eden & Aviram, 1993). Job search skills such as identifying job-related skills, preparing applications, writing résumés, networking, contacting potential employers, and interviewing were considered to be important (Caplan et al., 1989; Schmit, Amel, & Ryan, 1993). However, studies that incorporated job search skill training assessed either perceptions of training effectiveness or self-report measures of job search behaviors (e.g. Caplan et al., 1989; Eden & Aviram, 1993) but not the quality or effectiveness of the participants’ job search skills. The lack of a comprehensive examination of job search skills including an exploration of their role in the job search process and the development of validated measures that assess the quality and level of job seekers’ job search skills is a gap in the literature.

Recently, researchers are beginning to acknowledge that job search skills are an important component to our understanding of reemployment. Vinokur and Schul (2002) stated that a limitation of their model of reemployment was that it lacked an assessment of the quality of the job search skills being examined. Wanberg, Kanfer, and Banas (2000) acknowledge in their study that an
assessment of the frequency of job seekers’ networking activities did not indicate whether the networking behaviors were effective. In addition, Palmer, Campion, and Green (1999) state “... [interview skill] training has been studied in relatively few of the populations that could potentially benefit” (p. 342). Consequently, Latham and Budworth (2006) suggest that researchers assume that improving some set of interview behaviors will result in job search success, but this assumption is rarely tested. Because researchers such as Saks (2006) and Wanberg et al. (2000) consider skills such as networking and interviewing critical to job search success, we suggest that job search skills should be another risk-activated protective factor considered in this model. Additionally, we propose that the interaction between resiliency and job search skills should also be investigated. Vinokur and Schul (2002) implied that joint effects between predictors are rarely explored in the job search literature. In addition, Masten (2001) posits that the knowledge gained from resiliency models that examine interaction effects may assist in the development of interventions to promote resiliency.

Because a job seeker is pursuing reemployment, the process that he or she engages in involves the enactment of job search behaviors and outcomes. Kanfer et al. (2001) proposed in their model that job search behaviors were predictive of employment outcomes. However, Saks (2006) states that the relationship between job search behaviors and employment outcomes is not as direct as presumed, rather job search outcomes such as interviews and offers are intervening variables. Saks and Ashforth (2000) found that higher levels of job search behaviors and job search effort were related to an increased number of job interviews and job offers. Job search intensity has been shown to predict the number of job interviews (Saks, 2006) and job offers received (Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2006). Saks and Ashforth (2000) reported a positive correlation between job search outcomes (i.e., interviews and offers) and employment status. Therefore, we consider reemployment as a positive criterion in this model because it embodies the result of an individual’s job search.

Because linkages between job search behaviors, job search outcomes, and reemployment have been empirically established in the research literature, the following propositions will posit relationships between resiliency, job search skills, and the proximal and distal outcomes of the job search process.

**Proposition 1:** A job seeker’s resiliency will be positively related to the type and frequency of job search behaviors, the number of job search outcomes, and the likelihood of reemployment.
Proposition 2: A job seeker’s job search skill level will be positively related to the type and frequency of job search behaviors, the number of job search outcomes, and the likelihood of reemployment.

Proposition 3: The interaction between a job seeker’s resiliency and job search skill level will be positively related to job search outcomes (type and frequency of job search behaviors, the number of job search outcomes, and the likelihood of reemployment) such that this relationship will be more predictive than that of either resiliency or job search skill level and outcomes considered independently.

Possible Research Applications of the Model

To date, the propositions summarized in Figure 1 have not yet been tested. Empirical research testing this model could be conducted in a variety of ways. We believe that the proposed model is applicable to many different types of job search skills. As stated previously, some researchers have identified different types of job search skills such as writing résumés, networking, and interviewing (e.g. Caplan et al., 1989; Schmit et al., 1993). More recently, popular press authors have begun to address electronic job search skills such as effectively using online employment resources (e.g., Bolles, 2007; Yate, 2006). An experiment (cf. Latham & Budworth, 2006) incorporating a particular type of job search skill could be conducted to test the propositions stated above. We suggest that such an experiment should focus on one type of job search skill at a time in order for researchers to be able to clearly identify the potential variance associated with the job search skill of interest and thereby avoid confounding effects.

Because Saks (2006) highlights the importance of job seekers knowing how to perform well in job interviews, the following research example focuses on the skill of interviewing. Participants could be recruited from government-funded unemployment offices (cf. Wanberg et al., 2005) and informed that the purpose of the training offered would be to help them improve their interviewing skills. Four experimental groups would be established to which participants would be randomly assigned: resiliency development only, interview skill training only, resiliency development and interview skill training, and a control group.

At time 1, when participants are randomly assigned to conditions, a survey would be presented with the following measures. For resiliency, the 14-item Ego-Resiliency Scale (Block and Kremen, 1996) can be used to assess the
capacity to recover quickly from life stressors. Job search behaviors could be measured by an 11-item scale adapted from Blau (1994) by Van Hooft et al. (2004). Job search intensity would be assessed using Saks’ (2006) adaptation of Blau’s (1994) 6-item scale. Job search effort could be measured using Blau’s (1993) 4-item scale. Control variables would include demographic variables such as age, gender, and educational level because these have been shown to relate to job search behavior (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hooft et al., 2004). Participants would also be asked to participate in a brief, videotaped mock interview (cf. Latham & Budworth, 2006) to establish a baseline measure of interviewing skills. Three raters would independently assess the level of interviewing skills by rating the participants’ grooming/appearance, posture, eye contact with interviewer, ability to use examples demonstrating how they solved problems, and ability to answer negative/stressful questions (e.g., Bolles, 2007; Yate, 2006).

Based on research by Masten (2001), resiliency would be operationalized on the basis of external criteria, in this case the ability to pleasantly and positively answer interview questions or statements that are negative/stressful such as “Why aren’t you earning more at your age?” or “I don’t feel you are suitable for this job.” (Yate, 2006). Resiliency development sessions would be conducted according to recommendations by Luthans et al. (2006). For example, participants would identify the potential risks associated with negative interview questions (e.g., feelings of frustration or anger) and methods for managing the identified risks. Interview training would focus on five aspects: grooming/appearance, posture, body language, eye contact, and techniques for incorporating examples from prior employment that demonstrate problem-solving abilities (Bolles, 2007; Latham & Budworth, 2006; Yate, 2006). Immediately on completion of the training, brief mock interviews would again be conducted and independent raters would assess the participants as stated previously.

At times 2, 3, and 4 (4, 8, and 16 weeks, respectively, after the training had concluded), we would ask the participants to complete another survey (cf. Wanberg et al., 2005). Resiliency, job search behaviors, job search intensity, and job search effort would be measured using the scales mentioned previously. In addition, participants would be asked to record the number of interviews they had, the number of job offers they received, and whether they had become reemployed (e.g., Saks, 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 2000). To investigate the relationships as stated in the propositions using data collected over several time periods, we propose that hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) may be best to conduct analyses (cf. Wanberg et al., 2005). HLM can...
be used for analyzing changes in individuals that take place over time (Schonfeld & Rindskopf, 2007). These authors also state that HLM is a powerful tool because it permits the analysis of data even if a participant does not provide survey responses at each time period.

This type of experiment could be modified to address a different type of job search skill such as résumé writing. The four experimental groups would remain the same with training in résumé writing replacing interview skills training. Instead of having participants participate in a mock interview, they would submit a résumé before and after the training so raters could assess skill level. In a similar manner, the experiment could be modified to examine participants’ skill level regarding the use of online employment resources. In this instance, computers could be preprogrammed with mock Web sites that simulated job search engines (e.g., Monster.com) and organizational employment application Web sites. Participants could be assessed before and after training on their skill at using such Web sites to identify job openings and to submit applications. Conducting a series of experiments as detailed above would not only allow testing of the *propositions* set forth by the model but also permit comparisons across experiments to explore whether resiliency enhancement would be more effective with particular types of job search skills.

**Developing Resiliency in Job Seekers**

In addition to testing the validity of the proposed model, it is important to discuss specific strategies for enhancing resiliency in job seekers. We provide suggestions that address the needs of the particular groups of job seekers (i.e., young adults, minorities, and relocating spouses/partners) considered in this article. Past research has demonstrated that resiliency is a malleable and developable psychological strength (Masten, 2001; Waite & Richardson, 2004). As indicated, it is this developmental aspect, which distinguishes resiliency as a “state-like” rather than a “trait-like” psychological capacity (Luthans, 2002). Because state-like variables are not fixed, training and other interventions can be used to enhance an individual’s resiliency. Prior research has shown a positive relationship between resiliency and workplace outcomes. For example, organizations such as Hewlett-Packard are offering resiliency training to enhance the effectiveness of their workforce (Norman, Luthans, & Luthans, 2005).

Given this background and prior research, we propose that resiliency development, especially in combination with the job search skill training, can
lead to increased engagement in job search behaviors and positive reemployment outcomes. Luthans et al. (2006) have outlined a comprehensive set of strategies (adapted from Masten, 2001) for developing resiliency to improve individual performance. The following recommendations summarize these strategies and provide specific implications for resiliency development in job seekers, particularly those populations highlighted in this article (i.e., emergent adults, minorities, and relocating partners).

**Asset-Focused Strategies**

One strategy for resiliency development is to encourage the use of resources that will increase the probability of desirable outcomes. Luthans et al. (2006) have suggested that these resources may include the development of human capital (e.g., “what you know”—knowledge, education, training, skills, and expertise) and social capital (e.g., “who you know”—relationships and networks). In the case of job seekers, developing the assets of “human capital” and “social capital” would enhance their existing resources for obtaining reemployment. For example, in anticipation of transitioning from one employer to another, an emergent adult could proactively develop his or her own “human capital” by becoming knowledgeable about up-to-date résumé-writing strategies. In addition, updating a résumé is an opportunity to assess one’s expertise and marketability to a prospective employer (Bolles, 2007). This would enhance the emergent adult’s human capital assets by improving his or her ability to communicate his or her value to a potential employer. Minorities could also increase their resiliency by developing their social capital. As mentioned earlier, minorities are more likely to be isolated from majority group members (Lambert et al., 2006). Therefore, Lambert et al. (2006) suggest minorities may have smaller networks and less access to job leads. Minorities could be assisted in developing their social capital by providing opportunities to network with employers as well as other community leaders. Enhancing job seekers’ human and social capital would lead to more resilient attitudes and increased job search behaviors, and thereby increase the likelihood of reemployment.

**Risk-Focused Strategies**

There are many different types of risks that can occur during the job search and reemployment process. For example, relocating partners could perceive a sudden change in location and jobs as an opportunity for personal and
professional development; however, these circumstances could also be seen as an obstacle and overpowering stressor. Therefore, the risk-focused strategy emphasizes the importance of managing some risks while avoiding others to increase the probability that undesirable outcomes will be prevented. Based on work by Reivich and Schatte (2002), guidelines are offered that stress the importance of first identifying the risk/adverse event and then replacing self-defeating beliefs with more realistic, constructive, and accurate beliefs. Relocating partners could be trained in this systematic approach to identify the risks associated with reemployment in a new location. As an example, one perceived risk could be that a move to a smaller town means there are no available jobs. After identifying this belief, a relocating partner could examine the accuracy of it. The relocating partner could then develop a more constructive and realistic belief by identifying his or her skills and talents that can be applied in differing workplace settings, thereby expanding the types of job opportunities that could be pursued. For example, if certified as a high-school English teacher, a relocating partner could pursue employment not only at a school district but also as a tutor at a local college or as an editor at a local newspaper. Through effective management of the perceived risk, the relocating partner can become more resilient and better prepared to deal with setbacks while job searching in a new location. Overall, the resiliency of job seekers can be developed through asset-focused and risk-focused strategies to improve the likelihood of their reemployment.

Conclusion

“Resilience transforms . . . failure into success . . .” (Reivich & Schatte, 2002, p. 4). Just as Rockefeller demonstrated persistence and determination in the face of rejection, it has been proposed in this article that the development of resiliency can assist job seekers in pursuing successful reemployment despite the barriers that they may face. In particular, the model outlined in this article seeks to extend the job search literature by considering resiliency as a predictor of job search behavior and successful reemployment outcomes. We also propose in this model that a consideration of job search skills along with the interaction of job search skills and resiliency may lead to positive job search results. Specific recommendations for the development of resiliency have also been provided. It is hoped that the proposed framework outlined in this article can be used as a point of departure for future
empirical investigations and that it represents a positive approach to achieving successful reemployment outcomes.

References


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