THE JOB SEARCHING AND CAREER EXPECTATIONS OF RECENT COLLEGE

GRADUATES: AN APPLICATION OF THE EXPECTANCY VIOLATIONS THEORY OF

COMMUNICATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Current U.S. college graduates are part of the millennial generation, which is the largest and most well-educated generation of all time (PEW, 2014; Twenge, 2006) and are the future of the workforce. Moreover, recent college graduates have unique job searching and career expectations, which underlie the communication strategies used to search for jobs. While the process of job searching is inherently communicative in nature, job searching is an under studied context within communication research. Although previous research outlines the career related expectations of young job seekers, it fails to examine how recent college graduates search for jobs and communicatively respond to violated job searching expectations. This goal of this study was to determine the communicative strategies recent college graduates use to search for jobs and the role communication plays in responding to job searching expectation violations. Expectancy violations theory (Burgoon, 1978), a communicative framework, is applied in this study to understand how recent college graduates respond to violated job searching expectations.

Six research questions guided this study to determine the job searching communication strategies, job searching expectations, career expectations, and expectancy violations that occurred throughout the job search. To answer these questions, I conducted interviews with 20 participants, twice over a three-month period, to qualitatively understand and analyze the job searching processes of recent college graduates. The findings from this study demonstrate that recent college graduates use a combination of traditional job searching strategies and online social networking strategies to find, research, and apply for jobs. While participants expected the job search to be difficult, they were surprised at the amount of intensity and effort job searching required. Interpreting the results through the lens of EVT helped note that the participants with the most realistic job searching and career related expectations had greater success job searching

over a three-month period and at the time of the follow up interview, several participants had accepted full-time, post graduate jobs. Expectancy violations theory was essential in interpreting how participants network with interpersonal contacts by offering insight for why participants strategically communicate with contacts based upon their potential reward value. The reciprocation and compensation mechanisms of expectancy violations theory also provided an explanation as to why some participants increased their job searching activity in response to violated expectations and others did not. An especially interesting finding illustrates that participants preferred to receive bad news over no news at all, and even evaluated bad news as a positive expectancy violation because it reduced their uncertainty.

Collectively, expectancy violations theory (Burgoon, 1978) and anticipatory socialization research (Dubinsky, Howell, Ingram, & Bellenger, 1986) highlight how recent college graduates form their job searching and career expectations. The findings from this study also contribute to existing job searching research by examining the job searching strategies and behaviors of recent college graduates to better understand how they job search and what they expect from their future employers. Lastly, the findings from this study provide several practical application suggestions for organizations to implement in order to recruit and retain the best young job seekers in light of their current expectations and job searching strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Millennials, also known as Generation Y, Generation We, Generation Next, and the Net Generation, are young adults between the ages of 18-33 and the largest U.S. cohort following the Baby Boomers (Strauss & Howe, 2000; Tapscott, 2009). As part of the Millennial generation, recent college graduates have several defining characteristics such as higher education levels, more debt, and less conservative viewpoints than previous generations, making them a unique cohort to study (PEW, 2014). Since today's college graduates comprise one of the largest cohorts, they are of particular interest to organizations looking to hire employees to replace employees that retire. In addition to their other defining characteristics listed above, recent college graduates also have specific career related expectations that influence the communication strategies they use to search for jobs and manage their expectations, an area that is under studied in communication and career related research.

Job searching is defined as the process of looking for new work (Wanberg, Basbug, vanHooft, & Samtani, 2012) and relies upon a variety of communication strategies and skills such as impression formation and management, interpersonal communication, communication competence, uncertainty management, and sending messages via multiple channels. Traditionally, job searching research has broadly focused on unemployed people with a varied age focus, not solely on recent college graduates. Moreover, job searching research has typically examined job searching within the context of losing a job, rather than beginning a career as recent college graduates are doing (see Hanisch, 1999; Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz 2001; Latack & Dozier, 1986). This gap in the research paired with fact that recent graduates are job searching in greater numbers than previous generations (PEW, 2014) presents a new area of study within larger job searching and communication research.

Expectations play an important role in the job searching process. In this context, expectations can be defined as the processes and outcomes people anticipate, rather than desire, based on their job searching efforts. Research has indicated that young job seekers, including recent college graduates, have specific career related expectations such as schedule flexibility, opportunities for rapid advancement, and the need for a meaningful work experience (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010). However, this line of research fails to consider the communication strategies used to obtain jobs that meet the expectations of recent college graduates. Job searching research also fails to address the role communication plays in managing career expectations. Burgoon's (1993) expectancy violations theory (EVT) of communication can be applied to help understand how expectations are formed through social norms. In addition to describing how expectations are formed, EVT explains how people react to expectation violations in communication encounters, making it an ideal fit for examining how recent college graduates use communication strategies while job searching, how they communicatively manage career expectations, and how they communicatively respond to expectancy violations throughout the job search.

Grounded in EVT, the purpose of this dissertation was to examine the communication strategies, expectations, and expectancy management strategies used with regard to the job seeking process of recent college graduates. To do so, I used in-depth interviews at two different times, three months apart, to determine the communicative expectations college students preparing to graduate have about the job search and finding a job, as well as the communication strategies they use for job searching. In this study I examined how job-searching expectations were violated and how recent college graduates communicatively responded to expectancy violations. The findings contribute to communication research at large by examining the specific

communicative strategies used to job search and articulating the communicative responses to violated expectations, furthering the extension of EVT in the field of organizational communication. Ultimately, this study aimed to provide further insight into the communicative processes and management of expectations for searching and finding a job based upon the expectations of recent college graduates through a rich and detailed application and extension of EVT.

Importance of Study

Today, college graduates are considered to be a part of the most well educated cohort in American history (PEW, 2014). In addition to their academic credentials, these young adults are less attached to political and religious institutions, more racially diverse, less marriage-focused, and less trusting than previous generations (PEW, 2014). However, what really differentiates this age group from previous generations are economic hardships. A college graduate today is part of the first generation in modern history to have higher levels of student debt, poverty, and unemployment, in addition to lower levels of personal wealth and income than their predecessors (PEW, 2014). Currently, the US unemployment rate for young adults under the age of 25 is 14.5%, with approximately 1 million "missing" young workers; people who are either unemployed or not actively seeking job opportunities and are therefore not included in the unemployment rate (PEW, 2014). If the unemployment rate were to include these "missing" young adults, it would jump to 18.1%, which further demonstrates the challenge young adults and recent college graduates have finding a job (Shierholz, Davis, & Kimball, 2014). These facts illustrate the necessity for college graduates to secure employment post-graduation to reduce debt and begin to build a financially stable future.

The U.S. collegiate class of 2014 faced an unemployment rate of 8.5% upon graduating (compared to 5.5% in 2007), and an underemployment rate of 16.8% (compared with 9.6% in 2007) highlighting the dire employment situation and challenge of finding a job after graduating college (Shierholz et al., 2014). The above statistics do not account for the racial and ethnic disparities present in job searching. The unemployment rate for Hispanic and African American college graduates is nearly double that of their Caucasian peers (Jones & Schmitt, 2014). Some recent graduates report applying for more than 40 jobs in two months, and while that number may sound steep, it is still not a guarantee of employment (Selingo, 2013).

Despite graduating college during one of the hardest economic periods, recent college graduates are surprisingly optimistic about their future and employment opportunities, with 59% expecting they will make enough money to live the life they desire (PEW, 2014), reflecting their overall career expectations. However, phenomenological research indicates that college graduates have inflated and unrealistic expectations about the workplace and their role as an employee (Gardner & Lambert, 1993; Perrone & Vickers, 2003). So, in addition to searching for jobs, recent college graduates must also manage their unmet expectations, which can lead to disappointment, depression, and increased stress and uncertainty (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). The job search literature examines how people of all ages, from college students to senior citizens, search and find jobs, but surprisingly ignores the communicative context in which job searching occurs and the role of expectations within job searching. Given the size and importance of recent college graduates entering the workforce, a better understanding of their unique job searching and career related expectations and management of expectations is warranted. Specifically, expectations are important to the job searching process because they influence the types of jobs that young job seekers apply for, and influence the recruitment and

retention efforts of employers. Therefore, the findings from this study help to understand the job searching expectations of recent college graduates, the communication strategies used to job search, and how recent college graduates communicatively responded to violated expectations during their job search through a qualitative examination of their experiences.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Job Searching

The job search is an inherently communicative process of looking for new work and is a common activity in today's economy (Wanberg et al., 2012). Currently, unemployment rates are at their highest since the Great Depression which creates a competitive and challenging experience for young job seekers (International Monetary Fund & International Labor Organization, 2010). Even more challenging is that currently employed people, not just recent college graduates, also job search regularly for a number of reasons, meaning that the job market is both highly competitive and over-saturated (McKeown, 2009). Securing employment is directly related to both the job search behaviors that a job seeker performs and the amount of effort a job seeker exerts during their job search (Blau, 1993). Traditionally, job searching research has focused on the process as a coping mechanism to deal with the stressful experience of losing a job (DeFrank & Ivancevich, 1986; Leana & Feldman, 1988). More recent research, however, has begun to expand and focus on job search predictors and outcomes, including the effect communication has on job searching activity, making this a rich, and timely area of research (Doyle, 2014; Gordon, 2010; Holmstrom, Clare, & Russell, 2014; Holmstrom, Russell, & Clare, 2013; Wanberg et al., 2012).

Job searching is a difficult task that "requires the use of complex strategies, substantial self-control, and self-regulation skill" (Price & Vinokur, 1995, p. 192) and relies on a variety of communication skills and strategies. Job searching has also been defined as "the outcome of a dynamic, recursive, self-regulated process" (Kanfer et al., 2001, p. 838). Similarly, job-searching behavior refers to the specific activities that an individual engages in to acquire knowledge about employment opportunities (Bretz, Boudreau, & Judge, 1994). Job searching behaviors include

preparatory efforts such as gathering information and securing leads, as well as active behaviors like applying to jobs and interviewing (Bretz et al., 1994). Effective job searching behavior has been empirically related to the number of job offers received (Saks & Ashforth, 2000). The process of job searching requires job seekers to continuously manage their impressions through communication tactics such as cover letters and resumes, phone calls, attending events, and connecting with professional contacts.

People can job search using a number of communication channels such as websites (e.g., LinkedIn, CareerBuilder, Monster, Craigslist), recruiters, a personal network, advertisements, and word-of-mouth. Granovetter (1995) outlined three basic techniques people use to search for jobs: formal means, personal contacts, and direct application. Formal means include communications such as advertisements and employment agencies. The defining characteristic of job searching through formal means is that the job seeker uses the services of an impartial intermediary to find prospective employers. In contrast, job searching through personal contacts relies on the help of an individual who is personally known by the job seeker in a context unrelated to job searching, such as a friend or family member. Through a reliance on an interpersonal network, the job seeker is better able to connect and communicate with potential employers and have the opportunity to speak directly with decision makers (Mau & Kopischke, 2001). Finally, direct application techniques describe how a job seeker may contact a potential employer directly (online, via phone, or in person), does not rely on an intermediary of any sort (personal or impartial), and has not learned of the opportunity through an interpersonal contact. The primary search strategy for recent college graduates is direct application through sending out resumes and applying to jobs through advertisements (Mau & Kopischke, 2001). Among all job seekers it is reported that at least 60% of jobs are found through networking, or personal contacts

(Doyle, 2014), however this statistic is not specific to recent college graduates. Moreover, Gordon (2010) found that approximately 46% of job seekers made a direct application to the employer before getting hired, consistent with how recent college graduates search for jobs. However, it is worth noting that new college graduates use more than one method to job search. Although sending out resumes is the primary search strategy, networking and recruiting agencies have been identified as secondary job searching strategies for college graduates (Holzer, 1987; Jansen & Westegard-Nielsen, 2005; Mau & Kopischke, 2001).

From a communicative standpoint, the process of job searching is riddled with discouragement, rejections, and setbacks, which presents challenges for job seekers (Price & Vinokur, 1995). For example, only 18% of Fortune 500 companies send emails when a position has been filled (Gordon, 2010). An additional challenge is the amount of time it takes to job search, often with little to no feedback throughout the process, increasing the uncertainty of job seekers. Between 1994 and 2008 the average job search took five weeks to complete (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). By 2011, the average job search took 6 months, with a quarter of job seekers spending up to one year job searching (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Currently, there are approximately 3.7 million people categorized as "long-term unemployed" which means they have been job searching for more than 27 weeks (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Together, the rejection or lack of feedback coupled with the time-consuming process of job searching creates challenges such as stress and increased uncertainty among job seekers that communication alone cannot overcome.

Research contributing to job searching has focused on three main areas: intensity-effort, content-direction, and temporal-persistence, with most research emphasizing the intensity-effort dimension (Wanberg et al., 2012). For example, people who spend more time and effort on job

searching find jobs faster (Wanberg, Hough, & Song, 2002; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). Several variables have been attributed to this finding such as perceived control, employment commitment, social support, age, gender, and education (Kanfer et al., 2001). Additionally, research on job searching and intensity has demonstrated that informal search methods, like networking, result in faster employment than formal methods of job searching (Granovetter, 1995). Individual differences may help understand the different communication strategies used to job search. For example, a personality and job searching meta-analysis demonstrated that extraversion and conscientiousness were positively and significantly related to job searching, such that people higher in those two personality characteristics had better job search outcomes (Kanfer et al., 2001). In a field study specific to recent college graduates conducted over a four-month time period, proactive personality was demonstrated to be an antecedent to successful job searching indicating that recent college graduates who have more proactive personalities have a shorter and more successful job search (Brown et al., 2006). Finally, it has been reported that when job seekers receive helpful and supportive messages from others relating to their job search, their intensity of job searching increases (Holmstrom et al., 2013), which may also help establish and manage expectations throughout the job search.

For recent college graduates specifically, job searching comes during a time of great transition, leading to several challenges. For example, longitudinal and qualitative research indicates that while recent college graduates can find jobs, they struggle with the cultural shift that occurs between graduating college and entering the workforce (Gardner & Lambert, 1993; Graham & McKenzie, 1995) thereby prolonging the amount of time and effort college graduates spend job searching. Sleap and Reed (2006) demonstrated that a majority (79%) of newly graduated college students felt they had little to no awareness of work culture prior to entry

which can inhibit communicative job searching behaviors such as interviewing and impression management strategies. Additionally, research indicates that new college graduates lack the experience and skills required to obtain jobs (Fallows & Steven, 2000), which may lead to unrealistic expectations and negative expectancy violations throughout the job search. Employers consistently rank communication skills as a priority for securing and retaining a job, but simultaneously argue that recent college graduates lack effective written and oral communication skills and fail to demonstrate effective communication within job applications and interviews (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2006). This fact highlights the central role that communication plays within the job searching process of recent college graduates and also demonstrates one of the challenges young job seekers must overcome in order to secure employment.

In sum, college graduates who use multiple communication methods to search for jobs have greater success in their job search and receive more interviews than new college graduates who only rely on one method of job searching (Mau & Kopischke, 2001). While research has expanded over the last several years to account for job searching as a communicative and ongoing process, this area of research, especially research about how recent college graduates search for jobs, is still growing. Knowing that today's recent college graduates are searching for jobs amidst a greater life transition, and during a challenging economic time, produces a warranted call for more detailed and descriptive research addressing the communicative process of job searching for college graduates. Additionally, although recent college graduates search for jobs using primarily formal means (Mau & Kopischke, 2001), they also combine communication and job searching strategies. Moreover, the job searching strategies of recent college graduates may change over time, as illustrated in a three month survey of new graduates which indicated

that college graduates begin their search broadly, looking for any and all potential jobs through a variety of channels, but then reduce their job searching intensity and increase their reliance on an informal network for opportunity (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994). In light of changing technologies, expectations, and the economic climate, it is important to know what communication strategies college graduates are employing as they embark upon their post-graduate job search. Understanding how recent college graduates rely upon communication during their job search contributes to the existing literature through providing a rich discussion of communicative job searching strategies and may highlight new communication methods that have not been empirically studied within job searching literature yet. Therefore, research question one is proposed to understand how recent college graduates use communication to search for jobs.

RQ1: What communication strategies and processes do recent college graduates employ in their job search?

Career Expectations

Underlying the job search process are career expectations and expectations for the process and outcome of the job search. Burgoon (1978) defines expectations as a belief that something will happen, as compared to a desire for something to happen, and argues that expectations are developed through social norms. Therefore, a career expectation is a belief that something is going to or likely to happen with regard to career related issues, such as finding a job, and may be formed in part based on the social norms established by this age cohort. Neither career expectations nor their formation or management have been formally articulated within the communication or job searching literature.

To date, only a small body of research has begun to examine the career expectations of young job seekers and recent college graduates. The career expectations of today's college graduate have been described as "supersized," unrealistic, or entitled (Adams, 2013; Godofsky, Zukin, & Van Horn, 2011; Ng et al., 2010). For example Ng and colleagues (2010) discovered that young job seekers (under age 30) have realistic expectations about their first job and salary, but unrealistic expectations about rapid advancement opportunities and a fulfilling life outside of work. Specifically, recent college graduates have been known to demand more in terms of their salary and flexibility for a work/life balance than previous generations (McDonald & Hite, 2008). These findings suggest that the expectations of college graduates now are different than those of generations past (PEW, 2014), illustrating, in part, the social norms of this age cohort. It is likely that the greater educational expectations of this cohort (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2010) carry over into their post-graduate life leading to greater career expectations. Unfortunately, research suggests that recent college graduates' expectations do not conform to market realities (Carvajal et al., 2000; Metz, Fouad, & Ihle-Helledy, 2009). For example, only 15% of surveyed 2013 graduates expected to earn less than $25,000 in their first job, when one third of graduates over the last two years reported making that amount or less (Adams, 2013). Additional findings suggest that young job seekers are selective in their job searching process and only apply for jobs that have potential to meet their expectations, which could be to blame for the prolonged job search period of recent graduates. Moreover, college graduates are typically disappointed to find out that an undergraduate degree is not a ticket to employment (Graham & McKenzie, 1995), underscoring the false expectation that finding a job will be easy because they are college graduates. New college graduates also fail to realize upon beginning their job searches that the

skills cultivated within college differ from the skills employers seek in new employees (Holton, 1998).

Career related research has emphasized the importance of a recruitment process which clearly displays an organizational culture to job applicants. The recruitment process can be essential in helping applicants form realistic expectations about their future jobs based upon the norms they experience throughout the recruitment process (Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995). This concept has been referred to as "anticipatory socialization" in organizational literature, and focuses on forming expectations among potential employees (Dubinsky et al., 1986). The anticipatory socialization phase of job recruitment helps establish career expectations via realism and congruence. Realism is the degree to which recruits have a complete and accurate notion of what life is really like at an organization (Dubinsky et al., 1986). Congruence is the degree to which an organization's resources and demands, and a job candidate's needs and skills are compatible (Dubinsky et al., 1986). Both realism and congruence have been shown to affect job satisfaction and turnover rates, because when the career related expectations of employees are not met, they find new employment (Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975). The objective of anticipatory socialization is to influence the formation of job seeker's expectations and to reduce the likelihood of unmet expectations in the future (Wanous, 1977). Both EVT and career related research have put a stronger focus on how people respond to expectation violations, rather than the formation of expectations.

Although anticipatory socialization research provides some insight into how expectations are formed, it does not account for pre-existing career expectations that recent graduates may hold. Such expectations may include expecting to find full time work (Olson, 2014), a meaningful work experience (Ng et al., 2010), on the job training (Godofsky et al., 2011), and

flexible schedules (Ng et al., 2010). However, anticipatory socialization research and career expectations research fails to address the expectations that recent college graduates have about the *process* of searching for a job that meets their expectations. Given constraints and opportunities available to today's college graduates, understanding career expectations and the formation of expectations can help reduce employer-employee gaps when it comes to recruiting and retaining a young workforce. Thus, based upon existing job searching and career expectations research, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ2: What are the job searching and career expectations of recent college graduates?

RQ3: How are the job searching and career related expectations formed among recent college graduates?

Moreover, an understanding of how these expectations affect communication is useful in understanding how expectations influence the job searching strategies used by first time job seekers.

RQ4: How do job searching and career expectations affect the communicative job searching strategies used by recent college graduates?

Expectancy Management and Expectancy Violations Theory

As outlined above, recent college graduates have expectations about their job search and their careers at large. However, simply knowing that expectations exist does not begin to demonstrate how expectations are developed or managed among recent college graduates, nor how they respond when their job searching and career-related expectations are not met. The job search for recent college graduates today occurs during a challenging economic period within a larger life transition, when they are also trying to adapt to new living and financial situations, while simultaneously managing changing personal relationships. Therefore, college graduates

are likely to experience unexpected encounters and setbacks throughout their job search. EVT is applied to understand how recent college graduates develop and manage job searching and career expectations, and how they evaluate and communicatively respond to expectancy violations.

Expectancy violations theory was first posited by Burgoon (1978) to understand how people respond to unexpected communication encounters especially with regard to proxemic violations. The theory centers upon expectations, defined by Burgoon (1993) as an enduring pattern of anticipated behavior based upon norms. Expectancies are the central construct of EVT. They represent shared understandings and rules for communicative encounters and serve as framing devices used to define and shape interactions. People plan their communication according to the communication they expect from the other (Burgoon, 1993). Moreover, expectancies serve as perceptual filters, which influence how social information is processed (Burgoon, 1993). Therefore, expectancies must be understood before examining expectancy violations for predicting and explaining communicative situations (Burgoon, 1993).

Using eleven axioms and assumptions (see table 1), EVT originated as a theory used to predict outcomes of space violations, but is now more widely used for a variety of communication violations. At the core, EVT explains how individuals develop expectations, evaluate, and respond to violations of expectations (Burgoon, 1978). Although EVT research has been primarily used to understand interpersonal relationships, several of the axioms make EVT a good fit for examining job search communication. Specifically, the first axiom, indicating that humans have a need for affiliation, demonstrates the desire for people to be accepted and liked within social interactions, such as impression formation during interviews, something that is important in trying to obtain a job that meets the organizational culture and social expectations of young job seekers. More importantly, as stated in axiom two, the need for affiliation may be

magnified by the presence of rewards within the communication context. In the context of job searching, the potential for rewards is high throughout the entire job application process, as the job seeker is trying to get hired, which would translate to a reward when interpreted through the lens of EVT. The second axiom also highlights the importance of a job seeker making a good impression through their application materials, networking, and interviewing in an effort to obtain a job from the hiring manager or organization. This segues into the third axiom, which posits that people will approach rewarding situations and avoid punishing situations. Throughout the job search, recent college graduates are likely going to apply for jobs which they are qualified for rather than jobs they are not qualified for, and jobs that meet or exceed their expectations, so as to get hired (reward) rather than remain unemployed (punishment).

EVT assumes that interactions are normative, and that people hold expectations about their social interactions. However, it is also normal for violations of expectations to occur in social interactions, including within job searching. An expectation violation is any deviation (either positive or negative) from a held expectation (Burgoon, 1978). In the job searching context, EVT advances that violations should activate the job seeker's interest or attention and arouse adaptive or defensive mechanisms to cope with the deviation, causing a distraction, before making an evaluation of the violation (Burgoon, 1978). Violations, especially negative violations, such as a lack of feedback while job searching or not being selected for a job, can lead to increased levels of uncertainty (Afifi & Burgoon, 2000) and therefore, have communicative consequences like a reduction in communication or a change in the communication strategy being used. Further, "any behavior that falls outside a range of expected behaviors is theorized to produce cognitive arousal and trigger an interpretation-evaluation sequence that helps individuals cope with unexpected outcomes" (Afifi & Metts, 1998, p. 367). Job searching research indicates

that job seekers with high expectations of finding a job spend less time job searching, likely because they are overestimating their ability to find a job, compared with job seekers who have lower expectations about their job search (Vansteenkiste, Lens, De Witte, & Feather, 2005). However, when an expectancy violation occurs, such as not obtaining a job as quickly as one expected, their job searching strategies change (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005).

Expectancy violations trigger an arousal, which leads into the interpretation and evaluation phase of EVT. First, people interpret what happened and then evaluate the violation (Burgoon, 1978). It is during the interpretation-evaluation phase that people assign a valence to a violation. More simply, after a violation, individuals assign either a positive or negative meaning to the violation (White, 2008). While valence helps to determine the outcomes of an interaction, it is also useful in helping people determine whether it is better to do what is expected, or to deviate from the norm when responding after a violation. To do so, people consider the communicative consequences, which are best understood through the communicator reward value (Burgoon, 1993). Communicator reward value is the concept that people possess characteristics that influence the extent to which interactions with them are rewarding (Burgoon, 1993). Typically, physical attractiveness, power, and intelligence are interpreted as rewarding traits (Burgoon, 1993) and therefore, job seekers are likely to view interviewers, CEOs, and hiring managers as rewarding.

It is important to note that expectations are related to the behaviors that are appropriate for a situation and may reflect what a person knows to be "normal." For example, when applying for jobs, it is normal to be notified that submission of the application is complete and not receiving this confirmation could be considered a violation to the job seeker when interpreted through the lens of EVT. As axiom eleven of EVT describes, positive evaluations are influenced

by the degree to which the other person is perceived as rewarding, such that: (a) positively valued messages from a positively regarded source are rewarding; (b) negatively valued messages from a positively regarded source are punishing; (c) positively valued messages from a negatively valued source are not rewarding and may even be punishing; and (d) negatively valued messages from a negatively valued source are not punishing and may even be rewarding. Within the context of job searching, feedback can be interpreted either positively or negatively, and the lack of feedback presents an interesting area for exploration to determine how recent college graduates evaluate a lack of feedback. Some examples of feedback within the job searching context could include being invited for an interview, comments about experience level, and either being selected or not being selected for a job. It has been noted that when career expectations do not align with reality, job seekers experience feelings of failure and discontent (Carvajal et al., 2000), which can inhibit the continuation of their job search, illustrating the impact that expectancy violations can have on the overall process of job searching.

The interpretation and evaluation phases of EVT are conceptually cognitive in nature and occur intra-personally, while behavioral adaptations demonstrate the communicative changes that take place following expectancy violations. Burgoon, LePoire, and Rosenthal (1995) reviewed several theoretical approaches that predicted how people would respond to unexpected communication encounters. While some theories favor compensating behavior, other theories predict reciprocal communication responses (Burgoon et al., 1995). EVT however, assumes reciprocity in some situations and compensation in others, dependent upon the reward level of the violator and whether or not the violator is increasing or decreasing communication with the receiver (Floyd & Voloudakis, 1999). While behavioral adaptations associated with EVT have primarily been studied within interpersonal relationships, they can be extended into the job

searching context. For example, in high-reward relationships, such as between a hiring manager and a job candidate, EVT posits that recipients will reciprocate attempts by the communicator to increase communication. Conversely, if the hiring manager is unresponsive or no longer communicating with the job candidate, the candidate may compensate for the decrease in communication through a change in their communication strategies (see Hale & Burgoon, 1984). Behavioral adaptations within EVT have also been described as a function of synchrony, or the degree to which communicators match each other's behaviors (Floyd & Voloudakis, 1999). Essentially, EVT predicts that when someone interacts with a rewarding other, they will reciprocate behavior following positive violations, and compensate following negative violations.

While EVT has been applied to a variety of communication contexts such as nonverbal behavior (Burgoon & Hale, 1988), communication with friends (Floyd & Voloudakis, 1999), interpersonal deception (Aune, Ching, & Levine, 1996) and intimate relationships (Afifi & Metts, 1998), it has yet to be specifically applied to job searching research. However, some EVT research has examined organizational communication and demonstrated that people have workplace expectations that are similar to their interpersonal expectations (Ainsworth & Bonifield, 2010; Kalman & Rafaeli, 2011). Knowing that recent college graduates do have expectations relating to their job searching and careers (Carvajal et al., 2000; Ng et al., 2010) and develop those expectations based upon social norms, EVT provides a theoretical foundation that can assist in interpreting what type of communicative violations occur throughout the job search to contribute to existing job searching literature. Further, because many recent graduates are inexperienced with job searching, they may not have had the time or experience to form realistic expectations, which could lead to more violations throughout the job searching process. EVT can help to interpret how recent college graduates respond communicatively to violated job searching

expectations. This is especially important information for aligning employees with employers.

For example, lack of success in job searching may cause recent college graduates to re-evaluate

or change their expectations about finding a job, while simultaneously adjusting their job

searching strategy, just as an interactant could alter their behavior following a violation.

Therefore, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ5: What communicative violations occur throughout the job search for recent college

graduates?

RQ6: How do recent college graduates communicatively respond to violated job

searching expectations?

III. METHOD

The goal of this research study was to understand the job searching behaviors, career expectations, and experiences of recent college graduates throughout their job search. Therefore, I interviewed a sample of young adults preparing to graduate and enter the full time workforce via Skype. I selected my sample to be "representative of the typical case" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). After securing approval from the university IRB, I screened potential participants through an online survey in order to identify and purposively recruit a sample of the typical case. Once participants were identified, I used structured qualitative interviews and qualitative data analysis to answer my research questions. Interviews are a beneficial method because they offer insight into the ways in which a participant makes sense of his or her experience, interviews are reflexive, and interviews allow the researcher to see things through another's eyes (Pitts, 2013). Interviews were appropriate for this context because they allowed participants to explore their job searching process in narrative detail, and discuss how their expectations and experiences changed over time.

I conducted two rounds of interviews via Skype, three months apart, with 20 participants preparing to graduate and enter the full-time workforce, which equated to 40 interviews total. Conducting the interviews at two different times allowed me to capture the initial job searching expectations and processes and compare them to the experiences, outcomes, and processes of recent college graduates after three months. This interval also provided me with time to transcribe and interpret the early findings of the study. Several job search studies have used a similar timeframe to collect job search data (see Brown et al., 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1999, 2000).

In this study, communication was operationalized three different ways, in accordance with EVT. Burgoon and Jones (1976) define communication within EVT as messages that are intentional or have the potential to be interpreted as intentional by the receiver. However, in this study, communication was operationalized as both a sender- and receiver-oriented message process. Communication was first operationalized as the intentional strategies, tactics, and methods (RQ 1 and RQ 4) that young job seekers use to gain information about jobs (receiver oriented) and send messages to potential employers (receiver oriented). These tactics include the use of sending and receiving information via synchronous (i.e. interpersonal networking) and asynchronous (i.e. online job searching websites, submitting job applications) communication channels.

Second, in the formulation of RQ 3 communication was primarily receiver-oriented and operationalized as messages sent (implicitly or explicitly) to the job seeker through social or mediated means that shape career and job searching expectations. This helped to understand how and from what communication sources first time job seekers form their expectations. This operationalization positions the job seeker as the receiver of information, rather than the sender. EVT posits that communication expectancies are based upon social norms and previous communication encounters (Burgoon, 1978). However first time job seekers have limited or no previous experience job searching and therefore, an understanding of how their expectations were formed through communication was necessary.

Third, with guidance from EVT and subsequent EVT research (see Afifi and Burgoon, 2000; Afifi and Metts, 1998), communication was operationalized as the feedback received by job seekers throughout their job search and includes both positive and negative messages sent to job seekers (RQ 5). RQ 5 positioned the job seeker as the receiver of messages from potential

employers via numerous channels (face-to-face, email, phone, and text). Finally, for RQ 6, communication was operationalized to position the job seeker as the sender of messages via multiple channels (face-to-face, email, phone) in their response to the positive and negative messages they received (RQ 6).

Recruitment

I recruited participants in a targeted way, following a purposive sampling method, to gather a sample that was representative of the typical case. A purposive sample is the most commonly used type of sample in qualitative research and occurs when the researcher makes informed judgments about who to interview based on the goals of the research study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Purposive sampling refers to selecting participants that can best inform the researcher about the topic and that are reflective and willing to share information with the interviewer (Morse, 1991). Typical case sampling is a form of purposive sampling that attempts to capture the typical or normative form of a phenomenon (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). For this study, the typical case represents college students with a range of professional experience and different areas of study throughout college, preparing to enter the full-time workforce upon graduation. These recent college graduates are thought to represent the job searching process and career expectations of most recent graduates. Therefore, the requirements for participation in this study included being currently enrolled college seniors who were preparing to graduate within the next three months, preparing to begin their job search, and not planning to attend graduate school during the 2014-2015 academic school year.

For the first step of recruitment, I electronically solicited participation from students enrolled in summer and fall communication courses at The University of Arizona. Students who met the requirements for the study were invited to take a brief online survey administered via

Qualtrics (see Appendix B). The survey captured demographic information and some descriptive statistics such as age, amount of previous work experience, and college major and minor. The survey also gave me the opportunity to contact participants for interviews, in line with Morse's (1991) articulation of a purposive sample. The second step in recruitment was to examine the survey data and verify that participants met the requirements of the study before I contacted them for interviews. A total of 91 students took the online survey, but 11 people were disqualified for not meeting the study requirements. Within purposive sampling, maximizing variation of the sample is important and refers to choosing a sample of people that highlight the diversity relevant to the research questions (Sandelowski, 1995). I maximized variation of my sample by accepting a range of experience levels from having no experience, to having part-time and internship work experience, with minimal full-time work experience. This variance represents the heterogeneity of typical college graduates, as some students graduate with more experience than others. Finally, I did my best to maximize the variation of the race and gender of participants, but was limited in this area due to the sample of college students who responded to the initial survey.

The final step during the recruitment stage was to contact the eligible survey participants and invite them to be interviewed. I contacted 80 participants via the email address they provided in their survey for interviews. Consistent with purposive sampling techniques (Patton, 1990), I waited to hear back from participants that were willing to discuss their job searching and career expectations with me, which was a total of 36 people. I did not follow up with people who did not respond to my email because I wanted to find the most information-rich cases for in-depth study, and did not want to make anyone feel required to participate. Further, this allowed me to recruit participants who were reflective and willing to be interviewed (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). I

also used email as an opportunity to verify the information provided by participants in an effort to maximize responsiveness to recruit the best respondents possible. Throughout this additional screening, some participants were eliminated from the pool because they were no longer graduating within three months, had no plans to begin their job search during a three-month period, or were no longer available for a Skype interview. Therefore, I recruited until I had 20 willing participants who comprised the sample for this study.

Sample

Participants were between the ages of 21 – 35 with a mean age of 22.6. There were 12 females and 8 males. The sample included a variety of undergraduate majors including communication (n = 15), public health (n = 1), aviation management (n = 1), psychology (n = 2), and retailing and consumer sciences (n =1). A majority of the participants (n = 14) were Caucasian, and the remaining participants were Asian/Pacific Islander (n = 2,), African American (n = 2), and Hispanic (n = 2). More detailed participant information can be found in Appendix A.

Interview Process

Interview guide. I developed a structured interview guide to ensure that every participant was asked the same questions and had a very similar interview experience to other participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). This facilitated comparison and consistency across interviews, which is useful for the data analysis, as well as demonstrating dependability (see interview guides in Appendix C). I developed my interview guides using the recommendations of Rubin and Rubin (2011) and Lindlof and Taylor (2011).

The interview guide consisted of a variety of questions in a sequential order to bring logic and organization to the interview structure (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). I began the interview with

non-directive questions such as "tell me how you feel about graduating" because these questions allow the participant to define the scope and terms of his/her answer, making them more relaxed. Toward the middle of the interview, in order to shift the conversation to more abstract topics, I asked two more non-directive questions like "explain the qualities you're looking for in your future job" and "tell me about your job searching expectations." I continued the interview with 5 – 7 directive questions such as "how do your expectations compare to those of your friends?" and how much time do you think you will spend job searching per week?" to capture the job searching and career expectations of participants. These questions are useful for encouraging people to think along certain lines or within certain parameters such as their specific job searching processes. Finally, I used probe and follow-up questions throughout the interview. I used "tell me more" probes to encourage participants to expand on an answer, as well as "uh-huh" probes, which encourage the participant to continue talking about a topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The follow up questions I asked were used similarly to probes, as a way to get more information from participants. Together, these questions formed the interview schedules.

Interviewing procedures. Each interview took no more than 30 minutes to complete and was conducted via Skype. The interviews were recorded for accuracy and to create verbatim transcripts for data analysis. All of the interviews were scheduled at a time that was most convenient to the participants, so that they could be free of distraction and interruption (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). I began each interview by briefly discussing the goals of the interview and reminding interviewees that they were free to express anything they would like, and also free to withdraw from the study at any time, as well as decline to answer any question. The first interviews were conducted in mid-August and early September. A total of 20 people participated in the first round of interviews for monetary compensation ($5.00). The first interviews lasted

between 22 and 34 minutes with average time of 28 minutes. At the end of the first interview participants were invited to participate in the second interview three months later and all 20 participants agreed. The second interviews were completed with the same sample in late November and early December, with a 100% retention rate of participants. Upon completing the second interview, participants were monetarily compensated for their time ($5.00). The second interviews lasted between 20 and 31 minutes, with an average time of 26 minutes.

While minimum changes were made to the interview guide during the interviews, I did ask questions in an order different than the interview guide for some participants. Specifically, for participants who were not very talkative at the beginning of the interview, I asked more specific, directive questions about job searching (duration of search, number of jobs to apply for, and types of jobs) to get them thinking and talking about the job search in greater detail. However, each participant was asked the same questions in accordance with the interview guide. The ability for me to make changes demonstrates the reflexivity that qualitative interviewing offers both the researcher and participant, in order to obtain the most insightful narrative (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Rapport-building. Rapport building is essential in qualitative research because it helps to build a trusting relationship in which participants feel free to disclose information to the researcher throughout the data collection process (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007). In order to develop rapport with the participants, I used several techniques. First, as suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2011) I began each interview by discussing the goals of my research and reviewing the rules for the interview, such as allowing the participant the right to decline to answer a question or end the interview at any time. Second, I asked an icebreaker question, which was "tell me how you're feeling about graduating." Pitts and Miller-Day (2007) suggest different stages of rapport

development in qualitative research to understand how rapport is built and can deepen throughout the duration of a study. Consistent with the other-orientation phase, this stage of the interview allowed the participant to disclose information to me and for me to gather relevant information from the interviewee (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007). I usually followed up icebreaker questions with an empathetic response and my own self-disclosures about my experience and feelings leading up to college graduation. This is consistent with moving into the self-in-relation to other phase of rapport building. The self-in-relation to other phase suggests increased partnership between interviewer and interviewee, and is where seeing the self in relation to others begins (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007). I also developed rapport with my participants by being an active listener through providing positive non-verbal signals such as head nodding and smiling throughout the Skype interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). These nonverbal cues used in tandem with the interview guide helped me advance to the third stage of rapport building, known as self-and-other linking. In this stage, trust is established and a connection is formed above and beyond that of researcher and participant. At the time one interviews, four participants were my students, therefore, we advanced to this stage of rapport building faster than I did with other participants whom I had not met in person. It is common for people to remain in this stage for the duration of a study and not advance to deeper stages of rapport-building, as was the case with about half (n = 10) of the participants in this study.

The rapport-building stage following self-and-other linking is known as interpersonal connection. Interpersonal connection occurs when the researcher and participant have a relationship characteristic of a friendship. Specifically, it is during this stage where there is increased openness, reciprocity, and mutuality (Pitts & Miller-Day, 2007). During my study, I was in the interpersonal connection stage with six participants who are previous students of mine.

Since I had a previously established relationship with these participants, they provided deeper responses throughout the interviews, and even asked me questions throughout the interview seeking insight about my own experiences and for advice, demonstrating reciprocity. Participants indicated that they were looking forward to speaking to me during the second interview and hoped to share good news about their job search. Finally, reciprocity was demonstrated through outward, verbal expressions, but also through non-verbal cues such as laughter, emotions such as anxiety and uncertainty about the job search, and deep breaths and pauses during the interview. I believe that my efforts to develop rapport with my participants helped to retain all of the participants for the second, follow-up interview three-months later.

Trustworthiness. In addition to the interview procedures, I took steps throughout the data collection and analysis to ensure the trustworthiness of my data. For an overview of how I met the trustworthiness criteria of qualitative research outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985; i.e., credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability) please see Table 2.

Credibility. Credibility is a twofold task outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as 1) carrying out the inquiry in a way that the probability that the findings will be found to be credible and 2) to demonstrate the credibility of the findings by having them approved by the sample under study. For this study, credibility was established through member checks of the interview transcripts for accuracy. Member checks allow the participants time to correct any errors, provide additional information, and assess the quality of the transcript. Additionally, member checks verify the accuracy of the text and that the participant agreed to be recorded. I conducted member checks within two weeks of every interview, after transcribing the interview in full, by emailing participants their transcript to review. In the email I explained that the participant could

get back to me within two weeks to let me know if any changes should be made. None of the

participants requested any changes to their transcripts.

Transferability. The second criterion of trustworthiness in qualitative research is

transferability. Transferability requires the researcher to provide a thick and rich enough

description to allow someone else to transfer a conclusion that was previously made to a new and

similar context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this study, I used a typical case purposive sample

and provided thick descriptions of participant's experiences. Additionally, throughout data

analysis I linked my findings to previous research and theory to help demonstrate the

transferability of my findings. Specifically, I relied upon previous research about Millennial's

career expectations as a guide for my analysis, as well as the axioms of EVT to help me identify

themes that link my data to EVT. I also used previous job searching research as a guide to help

me identify categories of job searching strategies used by job seekers. Finally, my interview

guides are provided (see Appendix C) to demonstrate how transferability could be achieved in

future studies and to illustrate the consistency present across interviews in this study.

Confirmability. The third criterion of trustworthiness is confirmability. Confirmability

refers to the extent to which the findings of the study are shaped through the data, rather than the

researcher's own bias or motivation, and are observable to others outside of the study. To

achieve confirmability I used detailed data management strategies such as keeping notes, logs,

and copies of transcripts in an organized fashion. Specifically, after each interview I spent time

writing personal memos so as to avoid inserting any bias or motivation into the data collection

process. Additionally, throughout the data analysis phase, I kept a detailed log of my personal

thoughts and ideas for interpretation to separate my opinions from the actual data (Emerson,

Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). This achieved confirmability by demonstrating my commitment to shaping my findings based only on information present in the data.

Dependability. The final criterion of trustworthiness is dependability. Dependability shows that there is consistency between the researcher and the researched, and that the findings could be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure dependability in this study, I kept an audit trail by writing meticulous notes indicating exactly what I did at each step of the data collection and analysis. I also reminded participants that their responses were confidential and that they would be assigned a pseudonym to further ensure confidentiality. The member checks also helped to ensure dependability, as did audit checks with an outside auditor (advisor). Finally, I kept all documents relating to this study on a password-protected computer.

Analysis Procedures

Qualitative data analysis is an interpretive, inductive process of de-contextualization and re-contextualization of the data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Qualitative data analysis is systematic and organized, and requires flexibility and reflexivity of the researcher (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). After each interview, I devoted 20-30 minutes to organize my thoughts and memos electronically in a log. This helped me reflect on ways to improve the interview process going forward and consider theoretical connections that were emerging within the data (Emerson et al., 2011). To analyze the data from this project, I conducted the following procedures. I electronically transcribed a verbatim copy of the interview within two weeks of the interview. A verbatim copy of the interviews provided a sufficient level of detail required for analysis such as preserving exact language, noting pauses, and capturing how things were said (Bailey, 2008).

Once all of the interviews were transcribed, I read them over again to increase my familiarity with the data as suggested by Lindlof and Taylor (2011). Upon reading all of the

transcripts several times, the coding phase of data analysis began. I did not use computer-aided software for my coding process and conducted the coding manually. In accordance with Kelle (1997), the central analytical task in qualitative research is to understand the meaning of the text, which cannot be computerized. Moreover, the size of my data set allowed me to effectively manage the coding without computer software. Although there are many benefits to coding with the help of computer aided software (see Coffey, Holdbrook, & Atkinson, 1996; Morrison & Moir, 1998; Welsh, 2002), I manually coded the data so that I could link my memos with the codes (Welsh, 2002) and because manual coding provided me with the opportunity to compare transcripts side-by-side since I used a structured interview guide. The manual, hand-coding process also gave me a deep level of intimacy with my data which helped me throughout the subsequent stages of analysis. The coding process was the same for answering all research questions within this study. First, I conducted open coding of the data. Open coding occurs when "the researcher examines the text…for salient categories of information supported by the text" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 160). The unit of analysis for this study was a complete thought within the interview, where a clear beginning, middle, and end can be identified. The open coding stage is unique because it is during this stage that no attempts to group the data are present. Instead, my focus in the open coding stage was to assign a label to meaningful portions of data. Throughout this stage, I read hard copies of the transcripts and laid them out on a large table to have access to all of the data. I identified meaningful portions of data by using the structured interview schedule as my guide and highlighted relevant portions of the transcripts that provided insight into answering the RQ's. This is where I assigned labels to the data but did not categorize the data. Upon completing this stage, I started the axial coding stage.

During the axial coding stage, I organized the open codes into meaningful patterns, or themes. I used a hands-on approach of physically grouping hard copies of the transcripts together on a large table with meaningful portions tagged for easy recall. It is during this stage that I "played" with the data through grouping, deleting, editing, and merging open codes. Throughout this stage I also made notes on my computer and in the margins of the transcripts to highlight potential discussion points and exceptionally good examples. My main objective within the axial coding stage was to identify themes present in the data that best answer the research questions. This required me to place open codes into thematic categories. To determine themes, I followed Owen's (1984) guidelines. Owen asserts that themes are present when there is recurrence, repetition, and forcefulness. Recurrence is present when the same meaning can be deduced from different parts of the data, even if the same words or phrases are not used. Recurrence allows for the most significant issues to become apparent from reading the data, while other meanings can remain hidden. To determine recurrence, I counted the frequency of responses themes within the data. Repetition is the reuse of a specific word or phrase in the interview. Repetition is an addition of recurrence because it also makes significant issues clear to the interviewer. However, repetition requires the precise use of a repeated word or phrase, while recurrence is an imbedded reappearance of meaning in the data. I used a similar strategy to determine recurrence and counted the frequency of information within the data. For example, I counted how many participants said they planned to use LinkedIN as a job searching strategy as opposed to just saying they would use "social media sites." The third indicator used to identify themes is forcefulness. Owen (1984) claims "forcefulness refers to vocal inflection, volume, or dramatic pauses which serve to stress and subordinate some utterances from other locutions in the oral reports" (p. 275). I used language cues from the participant to determine emergent themes based

on forcefulness. For example, when participants explained they were absolutely sure, or positive in their thoughts, this was coded as forcefulness. As Megan said, "I will not accept a job that pays less than forty thousand dollars per year. I just will not accept less than that." Following the recommendations of Strauss and Corbin (1998), axial coding continued until theoretical saturation occurred and no new themes emerged consistently from the text. Thematic, theoretical saturation is critical in an inductive approach because it provides an opportunity for the researchers to make "general assertions" from the saturation points found in the data (Erickson, 1990, p. 152). Thus, when observable patterns and sub-themes did not result in any new categories, the axial coding stage concluded and the interpretation stage began.

The interpretation stage of qualitative data analysis is the final stage and refers to transforming the data to generate new meaning (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). During this stage, I made sense out of my themes through reading and re-reading the excerpts associated with each code. I looked for similarities, differences, and contradictions within the data to help answer my research questions. I wrote analytical memos, which were helpful in organizing my thoughts as I interpreted the data and helped establish confirmability and dependability of the analytic process. It was also during this stage that I identified and defined the expectations of participants and separated expectations from "desires/wishes." Expectations were operationalized in this study to illustrate what participants expected or anticipated during their job searching experience. For example, utterances wherein participants articulated that they *hoped* their job search would only take one month, but understood it could take them up to six months to secure a job, were coded as having job searching expectations of up to six months. Burgoon's (1993) distinction between predictive and prescriptive expectancies was also helpful in differentiating between expectations and hopes/desires. Predictive expectations define communication interactions based upon what

occurs within the context of a particular environment and the relationship of the communicators. For example, within the context of job searching a predictive expectation would be to have an interview with a hiring manager before being offered the job. Prescriptive expectations, on the other hand, are based upon the social norms that are appropriate within a specific context of communication. For example, a prescriptive expectation would be to expect an interviewer to greet the interviewee with a handshake. It was important for me to make this distinction early in the coding and interpretation phases to accurately demonstrate the expectations of recent college graduates, as opposed to their hopes and desires. Additionally, I relied upon EVT in this stage to help me theoretically interpret my data to further explain the patterns present within my data. Specifically, the axioms of EVT helped me identify areas of similarities and differences within my data. EVT helped me understand how participants interpreted their job searching violations. Specifically, I used the language of the participants to help understand whether they interpreted their unexpected experiences as positive or negative. Questions such as "tell me what happened during your job search that was unexpected/better than expected/worse than expected," provided cues for me within the data to interpret their expectancy violation experiences. When participants explained their experiences as "stressful, frustrating, and disappointing" their experiences were coded and interpreted as negative expectancy violations. Conversely, when participants used positive language such as "happy," "exciting," and "good" to explain their experiences, their experiences were coded and interpreted as positive violations. I also relied upon the findings of previous job searching research studies to determine how my findings were unique, similar, and different.

IV. FINDINGS

The comprehensive findings from this study are presented in what follows. Generally, these findings provide detail and insight into the job searching strategies, expectations, and experiences that recent college graduates had over a three-month period. The themes are described including quotations from participants to deeply understand their processes and experiences. Where possible, descriptive data has been condensed into tables to help provide a broad overview of the findings. The findings and excerpts presented represent the collective experiences of the participants, highlighting the most commonly discussed strategies, expectations, and responses. Moreover, the findings presented in tandem with Table 7 which provides an in-depth overview of each participant's experiences, illustrate the journey of job searching and demonstrate how recent college graduates changed their strategies, expectations, and perceptions throughout the job searching process (see Table 7).

Job Searching Strategies

The aim of RQ1 was to understand the communication strategies that young job seekers used for their job search. The findings of RQ1 indicate that young job seekers relied upon a primary strategy to find jobs and that some young job seekers also had a secondary strategy they used to job search. The open coding phase of analyzing RQ1 resulted in 7 primary strategies and 3 secondary strategies. In the axial coding phase the strategies were condensed to 4 primary strategies and 2 secondary strategies. Each participant articulated their primary strategy to job search during their first interview, which resulted in 4 overall strategies: networking, direct application through websites, university career services, and LinkedIN. The two secondary strategies are direct application through websites and networking (see Table 4).

Interpersonal networking as a primary strategy. Interpersonal networking as a primary strategy entails communicating with personal contacts with the objective of finding a job. This was a primary strategy because participants indicated they planned to use networking more than any other job searching strategy. Eight participants indicated that they relied on their interpersonal networks as their primary strategy for finding a job. Caty explained: "I'm trying to use some connections that my parents have which I think will honestly get me a job more so than other ways. I don't have too much experience so I'm looking into contacting people and emailing them." Similar to Caty, other participants indicated that they relied on their parent's connections to help them network with potential employers. Rita's mom works in the advertising industry where Rita hoped to also begin her career. She offered:

Luckily I'm so fortunate that my mom is really well connected in advertising so she has helped me find my internships and is really good at helping me find things. Her company has a lot of clients so she always asks them if they're looking and then that's how I plan to pass my resume along.

In addition to relying on family contacts, people also used their recently graduated friends and fraternity and sorority connections as networking sources. For example, Lacey hoped that talking to her "professional friends" would help her land a job. She explained:

I'm definitely going to tell my friends that are already working that I'm graduating in December and tell them about my internship, what I'm doing there and then kinda ask them about what they're doing, how long they've been there, and just kinda guide the conversation to where it's like "oh, do you wanna work with us?" and it's like "sure!" or something like that.

Megan, Mary, and Wyatt all hoped that their sorority and fraternity friends who have graduated would help them find jobs. Megan relied on a sorority friend who works for a local wine distributor to help her get a job in sales. She explained, "I'm already emailing her, she is the one that does college campus recruiting so um I think that's kinda nice just to um ya know talk to someone who is higher up and giving me reassurance." Mary also used her sorority connections. She stated:

> The older women of my sorority might help me get a good job or get my feet in the door. I'm willing to put myself out there as much as possible and I know it's much easier to go through people that you even sort of kind of know than to do it yourself.

Finally, Wyatt hoped his fraternity connections would help him find a job. He said: "I have a lot of friends that are in my fraternity and a lot of their parents own family businesses or ya know, it's really great for networking, so I'll strike up a conversation with them." In general, participants indicated that they would first communicate with network contacts via email, and then via phone as the interaction progressed. Surprisingly, communicating with the network face-to-face was the least popular form of communication and viewed as only necessary when a job was available. Moreover, some participants indicated that first they research companies, but not available jobs, online and then see if they have a personal connection to an organization.

Direct application through websites as a primary strategy. Direct application through websites as a primary strategy requires job seekers to search for and apply to jobs through online channels made specifically for the purpose of job searching and applying to jobs. These channels may include career search engines such as Indeed.com and CareerBuilder, but may also include a company's website. Five participants indicated that their primary strategy for searching for jobs was by applying directly through websites. Since many college graduates plan to re-locate after

graduation, searching and applying for jobs online is the most convenient and informative way to job search. Emily explained:

> I mean, online seems to be where a lot of the jobs are posted or where they can be found. Especially since I'm moving somewhere else, I can't really go there and talk to people and look for a job so online is where it is.

Jane explained:

> I'm actually looking on like Indeed and those job websites just to see if there's anything else I'm more interested in, or think that there's more growth, and if I find something and get an offer then maybe I'll tell this company that I have to leave.

Tyler was not sure exactly what field and industry he wanted to work in and therefore he searched and applied to jobs online because there is a lot of variety on the Internet. He said, "I look online and try to figure out my options and kind of study, well research all the different employers, and then apply online." Finally, Tom said: "I have a schedule during the week where I only allocate time to search for a job and apply online and hopefully I'll get one sooner rather than later!"

University career service as a primary strategy. A total of three participants said they relied on career fairs and the use of career services as their primary form of job searching. Career fairs are sponsored by university career services and therefore were included within this category. University career services offer help with resume building, interviews, and more importantly, runs an exclusive website (WildCat JobLink) where available jobs are posted for only university students and alumni. Although this is essentially applying directly through a website, the exclusivity of the university career services website differentiates this type of strategy from traditional online job searching. For Andie, utilizing the career services job searching website

was more beneficial. She stated: "I don't know any other um, like, job searching sites that incorporate communication or public relations and I have no idea exactly where to search except for the career services site, so I use that." Courtney used the career services website similarly. She said: "I was using career services to see the jobs they had posted and to see what's out there." Finally, David relied on the fall career fair to really jump-start his job search. He said: "The career fair is really going to be my starting point but I don't know exactly how I will search from that point forward." Although utilizing career services was not the most popular strategy with participants, these results indicated that it can be a beneficial starting point and provide information about potential opportunities for post-graduation jobs.

LinkedIN as a primary strategy. Several participants stated that they planned to use LinkedIN as their primary strategy for job searching. LinkedIN is an online website that allows users to connect with their professional and personal (if desired) networks, but is also used by recruiters and for posting available job opportunities, making it a unique platform for job seekers. LinkedIN is different than other forms of job searching because it is a hybrid of networking and online job searching methods. Specifically, LinkedIN users can choose to only use the platform for networking, or they may also use it for searching for available jobs and reaching out to potential employers. For this reason, LinkedIN was separated from networking and online job searching strategies. Evan explained:

> LinkedIN has really helped because it's just so easy, you can narrow it down to uh, ya know what type of job you're looking for, what area you want to be in, and it makes it really easy to see what's available online.

Jim echoes this point. He said: "I use LinkedIN because I can narrow my interests and stuff." Kim, who was admittedly nervous about searching for and obtaining a post-graduation job also

used LinkedIN. She said: "I use it to look at companies that I like and then looking at their job connections and try to figure out how to get in with them." She further said that the only website she planned to use to job search is LinkedIN. While Adam had similar reasons for using LinkedIN to job search, he also hoped that potential employers would find him through LinkedIN. He explained:

> One thing I like to do is make my LinkedIN profile public and shut down my other social media stuff when I know I'm looking so I'll make all my professional stuff public and play around and Google my name enough times so that the first thing that comes up is my LinkedIN profile.

> **Networking as a secondary strategy.** Six participants stated that they planned to use networking as a secondary job searching strategy. The secondary strategy in this study was considered "plan B" if the primary strategy for job searching was not providing the desired results, or in addition to the primary strategy, but with less dedication and effort. Adam planned to use LinkedIN as his primary strategy but networking as his secondary strategy. He said:

> I'm just going to rely a little bit on who I know and what strings I can pull. I'll email some people I've worked with or someone I know that I can get a job with. At that point, I will literally do anything someone asks.

Jim said that he would use networking to help him if his primary search strategy of using LinkedIN did not work out. He said: "I'll ask my family to give me contacts to speak to and kind of point me in the right direction. Then I will email those people and ask for some guidance but I won't ask them to hire me." Tyler also planned to turn to his family for networking help if his primary online search did not work out. He said, "I will talk to my mom and my brother because they both know people in other industries, but I don't know if I really want to go that way."

Finally, Melody, who planned to start her job search before relocating to Oklahoma post-graduation used networking as a secondary strategy. She said: "Once I get there I'm using the tools that I have. I'm going to be registering my kids in schools so I hope to really network when I introduce myself and let people know that I am looking for employment."

Direct application through websites as a secondary strategy. A majority of participants (n = 18) indicated that direct application through websites was the most common secondary strategy. Especially for participants who indicated that networking was their primary strategy, almost all of them stated direct application through websites was their secondary strategy. Although Rita hoped her mom's contacts within the advertising industry would help her land a job, she said: "Right now I definitely feel like I still have a lot of options available through other ways I can get my resume out there but if nothing works I would definitely resort to like a website." Caty indicated that she would Google jobs online that she can apply for, but this was not her primary strategy. She explained: "there's so many jobs and everyone can use this tool and everyone's doing it and then the competition gets that much higher." These two examples represent the main reasons for direct application through websites being a secondary strategy, although not all participants had a secondary strategy. Since applying to jobs online is one of the most common ways to job search, it is not surprising that this was a popular secondary strategy since people are already using other online channels for communication throughout their job search.

Job Searching and Career Expectations

The goal of RQ 2 was to determine the job searching (process) expectations and the career (outcome) expectations of young job seekers. Job seekers' initial expectations for the job search process and career expectations were ascertained at the beginning of the study in order to

collect baseline data for later comparison. The job searching expectations refer to the beliefs college students preparing to graduate have about the process of searching for and finding a job. Participants were asked to discuss how long they expected the job search to take, how many jobs they expected to apply to, and how much time they expected to spend job searching, rather than their hopes or desires about job searching throughout the interview. Within this category, three main themes and seven sub-themes emerged relating to the job searching process. The general job searching expectation themes are presented first, followed by expected challenges of job searching, and expected ease of job searching. Then, the career expectations are presented and refer to the beliefs college students preparing to graduate have about their future job such as benefits, salary, and organizational culture. These beliefs highlight the desired outcomes related to the job search, rather than the process of the job search. Three main career expectation themes emerged as entry-level expectations and potential for growth, salary and benefit expectations, and organizational culture expectations.

Duration of job search. During the first interview, participants were asked to discuss how long they thought it would take them to secure full-time, post graduation employment. Since this discussion occurred before most participants had started their job search, many participants indicated they were unsure, but when prompted, offered a tentative timeline (see Table 5). Although most participants expected the job search to take between 3 and 6 months (n = 11), the wider range of expectations was between 2 months to more than one year. Participants also said that they "hoped" their job search would not take more than a few months, but realized that the job search could take significantly longer than they hoped. David said: "Ideally I'm hoping it will only take me 2-3 months to find a job. But, I mean, if I'm realistic ya know, I'm assuming anywhere up to six months." Another participant echoed this point. She said:

I would hope that it would only take me a few months, however I am completely aware

that could definitely not be the case and in the Spring when I'm ya know at home, done

with school, I'll definitely have a lot more time to invest into looking for a job so I could

say it could take me almost up to a year to find a job. I would like to say shorter but also

don't want to um, make myself hopeful of something that might not happen.

Moreover, some participants made the distinction between just finding a job to be employed, and

finding a job with more long-term potential as a career. Kim explained: "Well, I think I can find

a full time job like within a week, but a job I like could take months." All of the participant

responses demonstrated how expectations were differentiated from hopes. Although participants

hoped the job search would be short, they realized their expectations were that it could take

longer.

Time expectations of job searching. In addition to the duration of the job search,

participants discussed how much time they planned to spend job searching per week. Responses

in this area varied from 2-3 hours per week to as many as 20-25 hours per week, while some

participants indicated they were unsure. Tom explained: "I don't know how much time I will

spend, I will do whatever it takes so that might be only a few hours or it could be a lot more than

that. I have no idea."

Time spent job searching per week included using a variety of different communication

tactics, which influenced the amount of time participants expected to spend job searching. Adam

stated: "I'll spend two or three days a week spending two or three hours a day on the phone or on

the Internet. I'll be texting people, seeing what connections I can make, so I'd say probably a

good few hours per week." Melody also thought the tasks required for job searching would

increase the amount of time she spent searching per week. She said: "Getting into the company's

system, filling out their questions, learning about the jobs and companies, so honestly, I mean, I'm probably guesstimating about 3 hours a day. So I don't know, 25 hours a week." Other communication tactics participants mentioned when discussing how much time they expected to spend job searching per week included networking, applying online, and corresponding with potential employers via phone and email. A breakdown of participants' expectations for job searching per week can be found in Table 5.

Total number of submitted job applications. Participants were asked how many jobs they expected to apply for before securing full time employment. The answers in this area had a broad range from as few as 3 but as many as 20 applications (see Table 4). Participants gave different reasons for their expectations about how many jobs they will apply for. Megan said: "I think that it's always better to apply for more than rather not enough, so um, off the top of my head, probably about ten different positions." While Andie explained: "Probably like 17-20, that's just what the last person told me so now I'm thinking that's how many I'm going to have to apply for." Further, Vince explained: "I'll probably apply to like 3-5 jobs, I like options." There were five participants unsure of how many applications they would have to submit to secure a full-time, post graduation job. These participants indicated that they would apply to job postings that interested them until they found a job. In short, the unsure participants indicated they would be more selective in applying, but apply to as many jobs as it would take to secure employment.

Expected challenges of job searching. During the first interview, participants were asked to discuss what they thought would be challenging about the process of job searching and finding a job. A variety of challenges were discussed such as physical location limitations, interviewing anxiety, and time management skills. However, two main themes, lack of

experience and rejection/lack of feedback, emerged as the most common challenges anticipated during the job search.

    Lack of experience. Several participants (n = 8) discussed how they felt insecure about their previous work experience and expected their lack of experience to make finding a job more difficult. Some participants have had previous full-time work experience, while others have only had internship or part-time work experience (see Appendix A for participant information). Interestingly though, even participants with more experience than others were concerned it may not be enough experience. As Caty explained:

> There's a lot of people qualified and there'll always be that someone who's more qualified than you are. There's gunna be that PR major who worked at the Grammy's and just all this ridiculous stuff ya know? Like ok, I'm not on that level.

Moreover, not all of the previous work experience of participants' was relevant experience for their post-graduation job search, which created an expected challenge to securing employment. Mary explained:

> I had like one internship and it was in the communication side of like technology and like that kinda stuff but that's not what I wanna do and I know there are tons of people who have like been doing internships since they started college and have all this experience and I don't know, so I guess just like other people having more experience than me, it's gunna be the hardest part of me getting a job.

Although Tyler had previous work experience from his time in the military, he still expected a lack of relevant experience to be a job searching challenge. He said: "I don't have extensive work background in the business world because my side is more of the safety management kinda side, so that would be one of the disadvantages that I have on what I wanna do." Overall,

participants expected their previous work experience, or lack thereof, to be a challenge of finding a job.

  Rejection/Lack of feedback. When discussing expected challenges of job searching, five participants mentioned that they expected rejection and a lack of feedback from potential employers to be a challenge of job searching. Participants discussed rejection and a lack of feedback together, because participants believe "no news is bad news" and therefore interpreted a lack of feedback as rejection. Wyatt explained:

> Sometimes when you apply they'll send you an email saying like 'thanks for applying, we will get back to you' but [last summer] I applied to a ton of places and a lot of the time I wouldn't get a response whether it was a yes or no, so it was kinda left up in the air, and left me kinda like waiting and thinking it's still an option and then three months go by and obviously they said no, but they don't give you a call or an email to let you know. So my issue is kinda like, I don't know when to stop or when to kinda settle because I'm like sitting on these ones that may have said no, but I don't know that.

Rejection and lack of feedback was perceived as a challenge because it makes continuing the job search harder for job seekers. Adam explained: "I think the biggest challenges probably for me are gunna be um, rejection's gunna be one but ya know that's life and uh, persistence, ya know if you keep getting rejected it's hard to keep going and move forward." Another participant agreed. She said: "Definitely a challenge would be just not hearing back because especially if I had something that I'm interested in and I try and pursue it and they don't answer me back, that could get very frustrating." Together, rejection and a lack of feedback from potential employers were expected challenges because it creates frustration and a lack of motivation for job seekers to continue job searching.

Expected ease of job searching. In addition to discussing expected challenges of job searching, participants also discussed the elements of job searching they thought would be easy. A variety of factors were discussed including employment skills, communicating and corresponding with potential employers, and job seeker flexibility, but the two most prominent themes (based upon recurrence and forcefulness) were finding available jobs online (n = 11) and interviewing skills (n = 4).

Finding available jobs online. More than half of the participants in this study indicated they expected finding available jobs online would be the easiest part of job searching. Finding available jobs online can be done by using online career search engines such as CareerBuilder and Monster, professional social networking websites like LinkedIN, company websites, or through university career services. The availability of jobs was only talked about in terms of an online search context, and participants did not discuss finding jobs using other channels (networking, third party help, non-online channels) as being an expected easy part of job searching. Courtney said:

> The easy part is just positions that I could see myself in because I found that over the summer there were, I didn't realize how much was out there that I think I would like to do, so probably finding positions that I want to apply for.

Mary thought the amount of available jobs online will help her figure out exactly what she wants to do. She explained:

> I think the easiest part is I know what I *don't* want to do and I'm really like detail oriented so like, if I'm reading something, I'm not just gunna go off something based on the name or title of the job. I'm gunna research it and make sure, and like research the

company, so I think the fact that I'm detail oriented and I know exactly what I don't want

to do will kind of help narrow that stuff down.

Although participants anticipated challenges to securing a job, they expected finding available

jobs online, for which they are qualified, to be one of the easier aspects of job searching.

Interviewing skills. In addition to discussing the availability of jobs, some participants

indicated they expected the interview and their personal interviewing skills to be the easiest part

of job searching. These participants felt as though their communication skills were exceptional,

and therefore interviewing for a job would be easier for them than it would be for someone with

less communication competence. Vince explained:

If I can get the interview or I can get in front of somebody I feel confident in myself and I

can do it, I can get the job. I feel like as long as I can get in front of somebody I can

maybe make it work out to my advantage a little bit better, I think that's where my strong

skills are.

Jim also explained why he expected the interview process and his interviewing skills to be the

easier part of job searching. He stated: "Communicating with people is fun. It's more fun for me

to interview and talk with people than nerve-wracking." It is noteworthy that the four

participants who indicated they expected the interview process to be the easiest part of job

searching were all male.

Career expectations. During the first interview participants were asked to discuss the

qualities and attributes they expected in their post-graduation, full time job. This discussion

resulted in three main themes: entry-level expectations and potential for growth, salary and

benefits expectations, and organizational culture expectations.

Entry-level expectations and potential for growth. The majority of participants (n = 18) indicated they expected to get an entry-level job post-graduation. Additionally, most of these participants (n = 12) said they expected to get an entry-level job with the potential for growth in the organization. Since so many participants thought about entry-level work and potential for growth together, it is worth merging the two themes for the purpose of this study. The participants viewed the entry-level position as a gateway to future growth at the organization. More importantly, some participants even articulated that the potential for growth was more important than other job related qualities such as benefits or salary. The expectation of an entry-level job with the potential for growth also demonstrated the willingness of recent college graduates to remain with an organization long-term. Kim explained:

> I'm going to get an entry-level job, but potential for growth is more important to me than anything else, even salary because I feel like if I grew at the job I start at, I would want to be there long-term. I wanna be able to take on a position that's like a leadership role and I also hope that if I grow at my company it will give me the option to maybe move around.

Other participants expected an entry-level job with the potential for growth through on-the-job training and learning opportunities, which would enable them to build a skillset that can lead to future promotions either within or outside of their organization. Tom said:

> I need more experience, entry-level so I can learn, however, if training for a managerial position is there I'll definitely take it because I'm a fast learner and there isn't an environment where I cannot advance. I have not seen one yet.

Finally, Adam understood he would likely get an entry-level job upon graduating, but hoped to climb the corporate ladder quickly. He said:

I am expecting an entry-level, very entry-level, very ya know, I think that I'm gunna ya
know I don't want to start out, but I think I'm gunna have one of those jobs where I gotta
do maybe a little mail room, manual labor, administrative stuff for a year or two but from
there I'm sure I'll work my way up. I know I don't wanna be working in an office from
ya know, 9-5 relying on a weekly paycheck, I need to have something that I can excel in
and be running. I'd like to be an executive sooner rather than later.

These quotes are representative of the sample indicating that participants did expect entry-level
work, in tandem with an expectation for growth and promotion potential within an organization.

Salary and benefits expectations. When discussing career related expectations salary and
benefits were brought up by most participants. Those who did not bring up salary and benefits
were prompted to discuss their expectations. Notably, salary and benefits were discussed in
tandem by participants even when asked about each separately. Therefore, these expectations are
presented together. First, with regard to salary expectations, a majority of the participants (n =
16) expected their post-graduation job to be a salaried position, rather than an hourly wage or
commission based position. Five participants had specific monetary expectations for their salary,
based upon the cost of living in certain metropolitan cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco,
and New York, and upon what their friends make. Salary expectations ranged from forty
thousand to seventy thousand dollars. Caty explained:

I'm so scared of getting a job and not making enough income to live in Los Angeles. I
think enough income would be, I don't know, sixty or seventy thousand? That's so high
but the cost of living here is just absolutely ridiculous.

For some, the salary expectations also served as a benchmark for accepting or rejecting a job.
Megan said: When I've looked around so far and heard from my friends that were recent grads

and entered the workforce, I think that forty thousand would be a good goal. I don't think I wanna accept less than that." While not all participants could articulate a specific salary expectation, it was evident that majority of the participants did expect a salaried job when they graduated. During the time 2 interviews, some participants had changed their salary expectations based upon the current market realities. For example, Caty explained how she ended up accepting a job that did not pay her sixty or seventy thousand dollars because she really liked the opportunity and at the end of the day, needed a job. Other participants noted in the follow-up interview that their expectations for a salaried versus hourly wage job remained the same, but they were flexible on the amount of the salary.

Benefits were discussed in greater detail than salary expectations during the first interviews. Six participants said they did not care whether their job included benefits, while ten other participants said they were expecting a benefits package, which could include benefits such as health insurance, dental insurance, retirement plans, and paid time off. Lacey said: "I'm expecting, and want, full benefits. Health, dental, life, 401k, the whole thing." Although for some participants, receiving benefits would not a deal-breaker for accepting a position. Several participants noted that benefits are less important to them because they are covered under their parent's insurance until age 26. For example, David said: "Benefits, that's interesting. To be honest, not really. I am covered through my parents for a while." Also, for some, getting a job, regardless of whether the job had benefits, was more important to them. Andie said: "As of right now, benefits are not a big deal but I'm pretty sure later on it will be." Finally, Mary explained: "I know that going into the workforce if I get with a good company I'll probably have like a 401k ya know, the full term benefits, but I'm not, that's not a make or break for me."

Organizational culture expectations. During a discussion of career expectations and qualities recent graduates expected from their first, post-graduation job, twelve participants discussed the importance of organizational culture. Organizational culture refers to the informal work environment and relationships between co-workers, supervisors, and the organization at large. When discussing organizational culture expectations, participants repeatedly mentioned how they expected to work in an environment they enjoy. Participants in this study classified an enjoyable work environment as one that was friendly, social, collaborative, and team-focused. However, the social aspects were the most prominent expectations of an organizational culture. Kim explained: "Since I'm looking for like marketing jobs, I'm expecting a job that involves a lot of other people, talking to other people, doing more of like group work and a lot of like open discussion." Amy also illustrated the type of work environment she expected in her first job. She said: "I've learned from internships that I like a job where I'm working with people so I'm expecting a job where I do that. I won't take a job where I don't work with other people." This is a good example of prescriptive and predictive expectations operating in alignment. Amy's prescriptive expectation is enjoyment of a job where she works with people while her predictive expectation is that she will work with people. Some participants with previous work experience stressed the importance of working in an organizational culture that was the right "fit" for them. Jane said:

> ...I kind of do that right now, um, very like relaxed and stuff, it's kinda like whenever I can come in and stay until my work's done or if I have to go somewhere then I can leave, it's very relaxed. Since that's what I've been doing, that's what I expect now, I expect a relaxed place where I don't have to stay just to stay if I'm done working.

These examples highlight the organizational culture expectations that recent college graduates have about their job, specifically, the need for working in a social, friendly environment. Other participants said they expected to work in cubicles, or open-area workspaces where it was easy and encouraged to collaborate with co-workers. In sum, recent college graduates in this study were expecting to work in an organizational culture that supports communication between employees and use their job as an opportunity for making new friends.

Formation of Expectations

The goal of RQ3 was to understand how recent college graduates formed their job searching and career related expectations. During the first interview, participants were asked to discuss how they formed their expectations and through this discussion, three prominent themes emerged. The three themes are expectations formed through the experiences of family and friends, expectations formed through direct internship and classroom experience, and expectations formed through mass media and observation.

Expectations formed through the experiences of family and friends. Eleven participants discussed how their job searching and career related expectations were formed through the experiences of their friends and family. This included hearing stories about how their recently graduated friends searched for and found jobs, watching how friends and family have searched for jobs, and hearing input from their family including their siblings. Expectations are formed vicariously through the experiences of friends and family, and not influenced by people outside of an interpersonal network. Family was integral in forming some participants' expectations about finding a job and shaping their career expectations. Amy said:

I think a lot of my expectations are based off of my parents and my upbringing, I guess. Just seeing like family members and what they go through and I have an older brother so

watching his development and growth, um after graduation, I think I have kind of formed

an idea for me that's like ideal and comfortable, and know the right process and steps to

take.

Other participants attributed their expectations to both friends and family influences. For

example, Jim said: "Talking to people I'm close to that just graduated, and they had the same

background as I do, and the stuff they care about, my family. All of that has made my

expectations what they are."

Not all participants mentioned family in their formation of expectations, and instead

relied on learning vicariously through the experiences of their friends. David explains: "Seeing

some of my older friends graduate it was kind of like a reality check for them and for me. It

made me realize that I have a lot to prepare for because those guys weren't prepared." More

specifically, some participants formed expectations about which communication strategies to use

for job searching based upon what has worked for their friends. One participant said:

I think I base my expectations off of like, people I know that have gotten jobs or

internships, and kind of like how they looked and what they went through and kind of

were looking at so just kind of not my own experience, but others' experience.

It is evident that the role of friends and family were central in forming job searching and career

related expectations for recent college graduates in this study. Hearing about and watching close

friends and family members apply for, accept, and change jobs created a vicarious learning

environment for expectations to be formed.

Expectations formed through direct internship and classroom experiences. In

addition to forming expectations based on the experiences of others, seven participants

mentioned how direct internship and classroom experiences have shaped and influenced their job

searching and career expectations. In essence, this theme is based around using previous professional experiences to form expectations about future careers. For example, some college majors are more applied than others and require students to have internships and participate in "real-world" experiences in the classroom. Experiences like these helped shape career related expectations for college students preparing to graduate. Rita said: "My major instilled a lot of my expectations. It's very pressing about getting a job because it's retail so you can have a retail job while being in school and work your way up so that's molded my expectations." Some participants have had negative direct internship and classroom experiences, which have created more negative career expectations for the future, because people considered their previous experience the norm. Caty explained:

> I think I'm just comparing it to what I've been used to and like jobs that I've had. The internship was not a very fun experience. I worked at um Quicksilver for a summer and that was fun but it wasn't that exciting. I just need to find something that I actually enjoy doing and so far I haven't and so I'm kinda thinking whatever job I'm gunna find I'm gunna hate, but hopefully that'll change eventually.

Conversely, some participants have had positive work and classroom experiences, which have shaped more positive expectations about job searching and entering the full-time workforce. Vince said:

> Definitely from my own experiences and I guess getting like these, they're small jobs, they're not really like actual jobs, I mean, it's an actual job, but it's not a corporate position whatever. But I think my experience in getting dressed and going out and asking for the hiring manager, shaking their hand, introducing yourself, look 'em in the eye, I feel that stuff has definitely, that's an edge I have for job searching.

Direct internship and classroom experience played a role in how some recent college graduates form their job searching and career related expectations, in both positive and negative directions.

   Expectations formed through mass media and observation. Six participants discussed how the mass media and observation has influenced their expectations. Observation refers to seeing and watching the job search and other career related elements portrayed by media outlets such as social media, TV, and movies. Mass media have formed expectations in ways such as hearing reports about the job market, Millennials, and the values and burdens of a college education. Adam explained:

   I think social media, the news, there's just so much, I mean every day it's how bad the

   economy is, how bad everything is. It's just story after story of people who can't get a job.

   Nobody wants anyone with no experience, but it's like how do you get the experience?

Andie loves to read which has had an influence on her job searching and career expectations. She said: "I've formed my expectations through reading a bunch of Huffington Post articles (laughter). I like to read a lot so I'd say it was that." Finally, Courtney explained how she has used the mass media for observation of the job searching process. She stated: "Even in the media and movies and stuff you see people applying for jobs so I would say that has formed my expectations." Although mass media and observation was not the most widely discussed way of forming expectations, the examples above illustrate how the media influenced the job searching and career related expectations of recent college graduates.

Communication Strategies

   The goal in answering RQ4 was to understand how the job searching and career expectations of recent college graduates affected the communication strategies they used throughout their job search. EVT assumes that people plan their communication according to the

communication they expect from the other party. In this context, participants planned their communication during the job search based around the expectation that they would receive help finding a job, or find and secure a job. The analysis of data resulted in two themes that emerged from the first round of interviews: reliance on other people to find available job opportunities and seeking feedback from others.

Communication with interpersonal contacts known to have available opportunities. Interpersonal networking was the most commonly used primary job searching strategy of the participants in this study. Notably, eight participants selected and optimized their communication with contacts whom they believed were the most likely to actually find them job opportunities, rather than reaching out to contacts who may or may not know of available jobs. For example, Caty explained that she hopeda contact she knew at the University of Southern California could get her a job in event planning for the university. She said:

> I have a friend who works in events at USC so I'm gunna talk to her, I've known her for a while so it won't be like scary. I'm just probably gunna go have lunch with her and hope she finds me a job!

Similarly, Kim hoped that her brother's girlfriend could find her a job. She explained: "I'm gunna use my brother's girlfriend because she works for A&E and like see if she knew any job openings or places hiring." This statement illustrates how some recent graduates relied on their network to actually do the job searching for them. Finally, Jim explains that because he relied on contacts to find him a job, he did not plan to submit any job applications. He stated: "The jobs I'm looking for are contact based so I'm emailing and talking to people so it's really, I'm not going to ever apply anywhere for a job." Jim's example really exemplifies the idea that people

sought out only the contacts that could offer the greatest reward (a job) when communicating during their job search.

Seeking feedback from others. Six participants noted that they solicited feedback from other people throughout their job search. This included feedback such as resume and cover letter advice, feedback about specific fields of interest, and other information related to finding a job. Again, this theme illustrates how people planned their communication according to the feedback they expected. This theme also demonstrates how people reached out to the people with whom they knew would provide constructive and positive feedback, rather than feedback that could be interpreted and evaluated more negatively. Common sources of feedback for participants included family and friends, where a need for affiliation was not a concern during interactions. Megan said: "My parents help me like draft my resume and cover letters and give me advice about how to contact people and tell me stories about other people they know." Vince was a great example of how people seek feedback from others throughout the job search. He explained: "In this stage I'm in, any kinda input from anybody is more than welcome. I'd like to hear their suggestions, I'd like to hear what, maybe what they've done, what worked for them and what didn't work for them." Together, these excerpts illustrate how young job seekers relied on other people for feedback and advice throughout their job searching process.

Job Searching Expectancy Violations

Data pertaining to research questions five and six were gathered during the follow-up interviews, three months after the first interview, with the same 20 participants. At the time of the follow-up interviews, seven participants had secured full-time, post-graduate employment, while the remaining 13 participants were unemployed, with some participants continuing their job searching and some participants considering other options, such as graduate school.

The goal of RQ 5 was to understand the communicative violations that happened to jobseekers throughout their job search. EVT was central to interpreting and analyzing the job searching violations participants reported. Specifically for RQ 5, the interpretation and evaluation phases of EVT guided the analysis of participants' experiences. This culminated in six total themes, three of which report positive violations, and three that describe negative violations that occurred throughout the job search process for these college graduates. The positive expectancy violations will be presented first, followed by the remaining three, negative expectancy violation themes.

Positive feedback from potential employers. Within the second interview, participants were asked to describe some experiences of job searching that were better than they expected. This question and the responses participants provided helped determine what unexpected experiences participants assigned a positive valence to. During the first round of interviews, several participants indicated they were expecting not to hear back from potential employers after submitting an application, or to consistently hear bad news (see RQ 2 results). However, six of those same participants received positive feedback from potential employers. Positive feedback from potential employers is categorized as a positive expectancy violation because participants reported being "pleasantly surprised" and "happy" to receive this type of feedback from potential employers, who are seen as highly rewarding individuals within this context, consistent with EVT. Some participants considered receiving an email containing information acknowledging submission of an application and a hiring timeline to be positive feedback. During the first interview Tom stated: "I am not expecting to hear back from employers and I think that will be really hard because I can be impatient." However, during the second interview Tom explained: "It's really nice when I apply to a job and after I apply they send me an email

letting me know my application's been received and will be reviewed in however much time, like the next month or something. Some places send those emails and I didn't expect that. I really like it."

For others, positive feedback from potential employers included complimenting the job seeker's skills or personality, even when attached to bad news such as the position no longer being available, or not being selected. One participant who expected to be rejected from a lot of jobs due to a lack of experience and being a young candidate said: "It's definitely positive when I interview, a lot of people say they like my personality which is good to hear. It's good to ya know, be a person they wanna be around." Participants who received this type of feedback noted how this made them feel good, and appreciated the extra time a potential employer took to extend a few kind words. Melody, who began her job search after relocating to a new and unfamiliar state, experienced a positive violation from one potential employer. During the first interview Melody said, "I think I am expecting a lot of rejection. I've been rejected a lot in the past, and that seems like a common part of job searching." Although Melody expected to face a lot of rejection in her job search, she was not expecting to receive positive feedback from potential employers, especially during the process of being rejected. She explained:

> I had one job at the oil fields as the secretary for oil fields out here, um, I had interviewed
> there and the lady called me back two days later and said that they went ahead and chose
> someone else but she wanted me to know that I was in the top three of consideration and
> they asked me if they could keep my information and give me a call if something didn't
> work out with the candidate they had chosen and um, I mean, they may never ever call
> me, but that was, that made me feel good about myself and my skillset, and they just

simply said they went with another option but she still reached out to me and it didn't feel like a complete loss.

Potential employers provided information about other available opportunities. Some participants applied for jobs although they were not ideal candidates. Although most of these same participants expected to receive a lot of rejection throughout their job search, they did not also expect to receive information about other opportunities from potential employers. Participants recounted this experience when asked during the interview to explain an experience of job searching that was better than expected, or unexpected. Participants were turned down for the job they initially applied for, but following the rejection, potential employers reached out to the applicant to tell them about another opportunity within the organization for which they were more qualified. Participants considered this a positive expectancy violation because it was unexpected, in a good way, by potential employers (rewarding source) and encouraged a positive response from the job seeker. Mary said:

A rejection letter, like I got, I don't even remember what company it was for but I got like a letter that was like "you didn't fit, but we have this position that we think you should apply for." So that was nice, I actually got, it wasn't just like a "no" but it was like ya know, you might be better suited for this position, ya know, you should apply for that one, and I'm going to do that. It was nice.

Help from interpersonal connections. Although several participants planned on using interpersonal contacts to help them find a job, many of them were surprised at how much their interpersonal connections helped them find available job opportunities (n = 5). For example, Caty expected to use her parent's friends for networking opportunities, but was still pleasantly surprised when she found her job through a friend of her parents' within her first two weeks of

job searching. In discussing an experience of job searching that was better than expected, she explained:

> It's pretty great. Our family friends own the company so honestly that's how I got the job and it's really nice cuz my boss, I know her, they're good family friends and she's all about making sure everything's ok for me. It definitely happened fast, I mean, I started in mid-September, so that was like really unexpected because I didn't even think I would get a job, and definitely not that fast! It was really easy, actually.

Help from interpersonal connections was not only a positive violation for participants that secured employment, but also for participants whom were still job searching. Three participants, that were still actively job searching at the second interview, mentioned how much more their interpersonal network is helping them, compared to their initial expectations. This included recommending participants for positions, passing along contact information to both potential employers and job seekers, and putting a resume in the right hands. Amy explained:

> My job search has gotten a lot better because I've talked to like a lot of family members that live in Boston, cuz that's where I plan to move, and it was like really successful, like almost everyone had someone, whether it was like, I don't know, a co-worker, friend, or um anyone that they knew that I could talk to who might have an idea, or someone who's looking for someone, um, I got a lot of references which is really nice.

Rita also mentioned how her interpersonal connections have helped her more than she originally anticipated, demonstrating how her expectations regarding networking changed throughout her job search. She said:

Job searching is a lot more of a referral process, I'm realizing. Like people will give me someone's number and I'll go through them, or someone else will give me someone to contact, it just kinda goes like that, so I'm glad I have people who can help me!

Lack of feedback/follow-through from potential employers. In the second interview, participants were also asked to discuss job searching experiences that were worse than they originally expected. During the first interview, many participants said they expected not to hear from potential employers, however, in the follow-up interview, a majority of participants (n = 15) noted how shocked they were by a lack of feedback or follow-through from potential employers. Noting that the lack of feedback was even less than expected, participants used adjectives such as "frustrating," "stressed," and "annoying" to describe not hearing back from potential employers, illustrating the negative valence assigned to these expectancy violations. Several participants discussed the problem of not hearing any information from a potential employer after applying for a job, including a receipt of an application submission, or a notification that they have not been selected for a job. David was one of the participants who originally expected not to hear back from employers. During the first interview he said: "I'm not expecting to hear back from people when I apply or when I haven't been chosen. I don't think they'll tell me I wasn't picked." However, he was still surprised at the lack of feedback he received throughout his job search. When asked to describe was worse than expected about job searching he explained:

I expected not to hear much from employers, but I mean an email or something would be nice. It's like really frustrating not knowing what's going on, like have they even looked at my resume yet? Have they moved on? I'd just like to know where I am in the process, even if it's bad news, because not hearing anything sucks.

Other participants were unpleasantly surprised that potential employers did not follow-through on promises they made, such as calling someone at a certain time, or following up with more information. In some instances, potential employers asked for a reply email to a fake email account, causing the email to bounce-back to the sender, or provided a dead phone number for job seekers to call. Although Evan expected job searching to be hard, he did not expect to be misled throughout the experience. He described how he experienced a lack of follow-up from a potential employer. He said:

> For one company, I drove to Phoenix to interview, and they did not follow up. I didn't end up getting the job, but they were supposed to reimburse me for my mileage, and then never followed up. I mean, they followed up to tell me I didn't get the job, but then failed to reimburse me like they promised. I was a little bitter that didn't happen.

False information from potential employers and organizations. A handful of participants also discussed their frustration and disappointment because some potential employers and organizations provided them with false information. Participants described these experiences when discussing what was worse than expected and used language such as "disappointing," "rude," and "frustrating" to describe these experiences, demonstrating the negative valence they assigned to them. Some violations experienced were misleading job postings, or false job descriptions, postings for jobs that had already been filled, and inaccurate location or salary information. One participant explained:

> The first time I got like a call back for like an interview, um, it was, well I really don't wanna do like cold-calling or sales, that's just not what I wanna do so the first time I got something back, it happened to be from a company that did that, and I didn't know that at the time, so I was just like so excited ya know? I was texting my friends, and just super

excited and happy and then like, I had a gut feeling, so I decided to do some research and realized it was not at all what I wanna do so I had to tell the guy 'thanks, but no thanks' and that just really sucked. It was just so frustrating because I was so excited and then had to drop it. I didn't realize what it was though cuz the job description was different than what it really was.

Other participants received false information from potential employers regarding the interview process and timeline for hiring and starting the job. For example, Megan's first interview at a potential organization was not what she expected. She explained:

One company asked me to come up to their office in Phoenix and do what they call a "half-day" so I kinda went in there and I was kind of expecting um, more for it, it was um, a half-day I sat with different people and kind of shadowed them so that's how it was explained to me and then when I got there, it was more of like um, almost like speed round interviews where um, I thought I would be shadowing and seeing what the company was like, rather than interviews all day long. So that was kind of a bad surprise because I went into it thinking it was different and it was a long, stressful day.

Another participant was hired to start work in mid-January, but after accepting the job, the employer changed the start date to mid-March without an explanation, contrary to the original information. She said:

Well, my start date was supposed to be in January, and now it's mid-March, but I still don't know when exactly in March. They just said they'll call me a few weeks before they want me to start. It was like awkward because I had to ask if it was ok if I find another job in the meantime, because ya know, I need money. So that's been frustrating since I don't know when I'm going to start and it kinda seems like they don't know either.

Finally, some participants felt that organizations misrepresented themselves during the recruiting and hiring process, which was not originally expected at the beginning of the job searching process. For example, Evan was hired by a restaurant group as a manager, but later learned he would be a manager for a *new* restaurant group, not the one he thought he was interviewing with. All of these participants expressed negative emotions such as anger and frustration relating to these experiences, and therefore, evaluated the situations and employers negatively.

Time commitment of job searching. In the follow-up interviews, participants were asked to discuss the elements of job searching that have been harder than anticipated. Overwhelmingly, participants (n = 15) said that job searching was far more time consuming than they initially expected (see RQ 2 results), in the amount of time spent job searching and time spent applying to jobs. Participants expressed feelings of discouragement, stress, and confusion over the time required to find a job, indicating their negative interpretations and evaluations of the job searching process. One participant said: "It's really a lot harder and more time consuming than I thought it would be. It's stressful. I feel like I'm never going to get a job!" Another participant said:

> I didn't expect it to take up so much time. I mean, I have to look for jobs, get my stuff together, apply, and then keep doing it. It takes a while, and I was hoping to have a job by now.

The duration of the job search was not actually taking longer than most participants expected, after three months of job searching (see Table 6). For example, more than half of the participants expected their job search to take between three and six months, and at the three month follow-up interview, most of the same participants were still searching for jobs, as expected. However, participants spent more time job searching per week than initially

anticipated, with over half of the participants actually spending as many as fifteen hours per week job searching, compared to the initial expectation of between two and nine hours job searching per week. Although, two participants are spending more than 20 hours per week job searching, one of them expected to spend this much time searching, while the other one did not. Finally, the number of submitted job applications was consistent with initial expectations, aside from the participants who were unsure of how many applications they would submit during the first interview. The initial expectation from fifteen participants was to submit between three and twenty job applications before getting a job. The actual number of job applications submitted was consistent with initial expectations, with sixteen participants having submitted between one and twenty applications. Interestingly, the same participants, except for one, who were unsure of the number of applications they would submit, are the participants who have submitted over twenty applications in three months of job searching. Together, these findings indicate that although the job search did not take longer in duration than expected, it was more time consuming with regard to the time spent job searching and applying for jobs.

Communicative Responses to Expectancy Violations

RQ6 was asked to determine how recent college graduates communicatively respond to expectancy violations throughout their job searching process. EVT presumes that people respond in two different ways, either through reciprocating the same behavior that caused the violation, or compensating to try and overcome a violation. The results of RQ6 are based upon the expectancy violation themes presented in the results of RQ5, and demonstrate that participants in this study had three main ways of communicatively responding after job searching expectancy violations. During the second interview, after participants explained their unexpected experiences they were asked to describe whether or not and how they changed their

communication following those experiences. This was asked to understand how the participants communicatively responded to expectancy violations.

Self-presentation of relevant skills in written communications. Following negative expectancy violations such as not hearing back from potential employers and not being selected for jobs, participants discussed how they changed their job materials to better reflect their skills, capabilities, and desire for jobs they applied to by writing more specific applications (n = 11). Specifically, participants discussed tailoring their resume to each job they apply for, in order to demonstrate why they are the best candidates to the potential employer. One participant who was disappointed that he had not heard back from employers and was originally expecting to receive more interest from potential employers, said:

> Well, I haven't been hearing back from anyone so I changed things up a bit. I have like different resumes depending on the type of job I'm applying for. Like I have a resume for sales focused jobs, one for HR jobs, and then I have a general one I use when I'm networking.

> Participants who experienced the negative violation of not hearing back from potential employers also discussed how they wrote more thoughtful cover letters that more fully showcased their personalities and experience. Many entry-level jobs of interest to participants in this study required between one and three years of previous work experience. Some participants did not have enough formal work experience, but despite that, believed they did have the relevant skills for the job. Therefore, these participants used the cover letter to articulate why they should still be considered for the job. After applying for more than five jobs without hearing any feedback over three months, Lacey discussed how she changed her approach when applying. She said:

I am more outward when I communicate with them [potential employers]. They want so

much experience, so the hardest part is coming up with experience I've done. I elaborate

more on simple things, like, let's say I have to make some presentations or something, I

would kinda jazz it up and make it sound better than it actually was haha.

Tom was also frustrated with the unexpected lack of feedback and interest from potential

employers. Therefore, he changed his communication to try and make a better impression

through his writing, demonstrating a compensating response to his expectancy violations. He

said:

I've changed my communication on my cover letter. I address all the issues or problems,

all the potential problems as far as the requirements, ya know, I refer to like, this job I did

a project in one of my political science classes where we were to like study a poor

country and come up with data and then analyze it and come up with a solution, and like

one of the job requirements was to be able to do that, but they needed somebody with

experience. So since I know I don't have the actual experience but I've done this school

project, I included that in my cover letter. So instead of having a generic cover letter for

everybody, I customize every letter and talk about specific things they want.

Finally, two participants mentioned how they used an "active" voice in their writing

when applying for jobs and communicating with potential employers after not receiving as much

or any interest from potential employers as initially expected. This was noted as important not

just in the application stage of job searching, but throughout the interview and recruitment

process, because most correspondence occurred over email. These participants thought using an

active voice demonstrated their willingness to work hard, a positive attitude, and positively

highlighted their previous achievements. One participant explained:

I like to use a lot of active verbs whenever I write. Instead of using like the 'to' a lot, like 'to do this' I try to use an active verb. So on my resume I have like a lot of um, active type words on there like 'managed social media accounts' or 'assisted PR manager' so I use words like that. Another thing I do, that I learned in one of my classes, is to use the same vocabulary they use in the job posting and job description, so I'm doing that in my cover letters.

Together, these examples illustrate how participants changed their written communication following negative expectancy violations to more accurately and positively present themselves to potential employers. Since these changes move in the opposite direction of the communicator's response, they are compensating responses.

Additional job searching strategies. Although the actual duration of the job search did not take longer than most participants expected, participants who did not have jobs at the time of the follow-up interview were still experiencing discouragement over finding a job, which caused some of them to search for jobs in additional ways (n = 10). Participants added new strategies to their job search following negative expectancy violations, such as not hearing back from employers or receiving negative feedback. However, participants did not change their primary job searching strategy, instead, they added more secondary ways of searching into their plans. For example, several participants who primarily searched for jobs online started networking as an additional job searching strategy. When her primary strategy of searching online was not providing as much success as Jane originally expected, she added an additional job searching strategy. She explained: "I started networking to find a job. I might want to start my own business one day, so I've been talking to a lot of like local business owners around town and seeing if they can help me at all." Other participants who used networking as a primary strategy,

added job searching online to their strategies, to try and find more job opportunities. Kim originally expected her network to be extremely helpful to her job search. During the first interview she said: "I'm really relying on my network to find me a job. My brother's girlfriend works for AE so I'm counting on her to find me something." But, during the second interview Kim explained how her expectations were negatively violated. She said: "My network hasn't really found me anything, at least not yet, so I'm looking online for jobs now too, just on big sites." In sum, the objective of adding additional job searching strategies was not only to get a job, but also to increase the amount of feedback received from potential employers, and to increase the chances of finding a job that was the right fit for the job seeker. In line with EVT, this is a compensating response to the negative expectancy violations of job searching.

Change in the amount of time spent job searching. For most participants (n = 18) a job searching expectancy violation, either positive or negative, resulted in a change in the amount of time they spent job searching. For example, participants who had their expectations positively violated decreased the amount of time they spent job searching immediately following one of these positive violations. This happened because receiving positive feedback made the job seeker believe what they were doing was working, and they wanted time to follow through with their job lead, rather than chase down other opportunities that may not work out. Vince said: "I'm in the final rounds of interviews at two places, so I'm not searching anymore. I think between them, I'll get one, if not both jobs, so I don't want to look for more jobs until I know for sure."

When job searching expectations were negatively violated, some participants increased the amount of time they spent job searching, while others withdrew from the job search and decreased the amount of time they spent job searching. Participants who increased the amount of time they spent job searching described it as a "natural" response that "made sense" since they

were not hearing from potential employers. Jim said: "I mean, obviously I don't have a job yet, so I'm spending more time searching for jobs and talking to people. I don't think I spent enough time before, so hopefully being more dedicated will work out." Increasing the amount of time spent job searching following a negative expectancy violation can be considered as compensating response in this context.

For the participants who responded to negative expectancy violations with a decrease in the amount of time spent searching, the decision was described as "sad," and "frustrating." This represents a reciprocal response because participants are responding to a lack of feedback with decreased communication. Participants interpreted the lack of feedback from potential employers as rejection and rather than push forward with their job search, some chose to pull back on their search efforts to re-evaluate their strategies, expectations, and future goals. Emily explained:

"It's kinda overwhelming. I definitely started withdrawing because I was content with what I had applied to, but I'm not hearing back, or I guess, not hearing what I want back, so I just stopped applying for the time being to really get everything else together and figure it all out."

A few other participants said they were putting their search efforts on hold to consider other options such as graduate school, or moving to a new location, and would resume their job search once they finalized the timeframes for those plans.

V. DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to understand the communicative processes of job searching and how recent college graduates manage their expectations throughout the job search. Collectively, the time 1, time 2 data from this study demonstrate how recent college graduates rely upon traditional job searching strategies and use multiple methods to help find post-graduate employment. The findings also highlight how social media has changed the process of job searching and influenced networking efforts. Moreover, this study demonstrates how recent college graduates form their career related expectations, providing insight for organizations to consider when recruiting young candidates. The findings also illustrate how young job seekers use communication to respond to violated expectations, as explained through the mechanisms of EVT. Finally, two novel findings emerged demonstrating that young job seekers evaluate some negative information positively because it reduces their uncertainty, and that job seekers with more realistic career expectations had greater success job searching over a three-month period.

The T1 and T2 data of this study provides a comprehensive overview of participant's original expectations (T1 interview), their career-related experiences over a three-month period, and how their communication changed in response to positive and negative expectancy violations (see Table 7). This data is useful for interpreting how job searching and communication strategies change for first time job seekers throughout the process of trying to secure a full-time, post-graduate job. Specifically, the comprehensive data (T1 and T2) demonstrate how participants added job searching strategies, and changed their job searching strategies and communication in response to communicative experiences. The cumulative findings also highlight how expectations are continually being formed, changed, and responded to throughout the process of job searching. For example, Table 7 illustrates the unique

experiences of young job seekers over time. In response to their violations, several participants had chosen to postpone their job search and re-evaluate their post-graduate plans and career expectations after three months of job searching. Other participants explained that they spent more time job searching and applied to a greater number of jobs as the duration of their job search continued without any job offers.

Job Searching and Communication Strategies

The participants in this study relied upon traditional job searching strategies but distinctly used social networking websites such as LinkedIN to help them find information about available jobs. For example, several participants discussed how networking was their primary job searching strategy. For these participants, networking efforts did not include making new connections and instead relied upon communicating with previously established personal contacts for information about job opportunities. Participants especially noted how they used social networking channels to make initial contact with networking contacts, and then proceeded from there with meeting in person or talking over the phone. The use of interpersonal networking has been noted as a beneficial job searching strategy because it allows job seekers the opportunity to speak directly with decision makers (Mau & Kopischke, 2001), a point which participants in this study echoed in their second interview. The findings of this study are consistent with Granovetter's (1995) observation that people search for jobs by using three techniques (personal contacts, formal means, and direct application), demonstrating that recent college graduates search for jobs using techniques that have proven to be effective for job seekers of all ages and across all industries. However, the use of social media channels for job searching is a strategy that uniquely defined the way participants in this study searched for jobs.

Findings from this study highlight the influence that technology and the use of online channels for job searching have had on the traditional landscape of the job search, especially for recent college graduates. While some participants in this study used direct application as their primary strategy, it was not the overwhelming majority. In fact, some participants noted they were using direct application and online job searching strategies as a way to gather information about available jobs. This finding indicates that online job searching may be more of a preparatory job searching strategy, rather than active job behavior, as described by Bretz and colleagues (1994). The idea of online job searching as way to obtain information about jobs and available opportunities is supported by a longitudinal study of job seekers, not specific to young or first time job seekers, which demonstrated that only 40% of online job searches result in finding relevant job postings (Jansen et al., 2005). This is an example of how the anticipatory socialization phase between a job seeker and an organization can begin before formal recruitment efforts take place, such as interviewing. Although, the findings of this study counter previous research indicating that direct application is the most commonly used job search strategy for recent college graduates (Mau & Kopischke, 2001), they are useful to understanding how recent college graduates research and selectively apply for jobs, particularly during the early stages of their job search.

Most notably, participants discussed using LinkedIN as a primary job searching strategy. LinkedIN is one example of how social networking and online channels have changed the communication strategies of job seekers. Using LinkedIN as a primary strategy may be one explanation as to why more recent college graduates did not report using direct application or formal means strategies. LinkedIN provides the opportunity for job seekers to connect with personal contacts such as previous classmates, professors, and friends while also browsing job

postings and applying for jobs directly. Moreover, job seekers can post their business qualifications and information that would otherwise be included in job applications, providing the opportunity to be recruited for a job. For example, many Fortune 500 companies recruit candidates directly from LinkedIN and other employers are also using social networking sites more than online job boards to solicit applications (Joyce, 2014). Although participants in this study did not discuss using recruiting firms, their use of LinkedIN operates in a similar fashion to working with a recruiter. However, LinkedIN gives the job seeker the ability to remain selective in their applications, while providing the opportunity for recruitment. The findings of this study provide further evidence for the utility of social networking websites throughout the job search and indicate that young job seekers are relying on internet-based channels more than traditionally used job-searching outlets.

The findings of this study demonstrated that most participants used more than one strategy to search for jobs over a three-month period, consistent with previous job searching research (Holzer, 1987; Jensen & Westegard-Nielsen, 1987; Mau & Kopischke, 2001). Findings from this study suggest that recent college graduates consider their secondary strategy a "back-up" plan in case their primary strategy does not lead to a job, indicating that recent college graduates use both structured and hidden information markets while job searching. Structured information markets provide job information through online job postings, and employment agencies such as university career services. Hidden information markets transmit job related information through personal contacts and direct applications to employers (Allen & Keaveny, 1980). The use of both structured and hidden information markets is clearly illustrated through the participants who indicated they considered networking as their primary strategy, but

throughout the three month period of this study, added online job searching (direct application) as their secondary strategy based upon a lack of feedback and interest from employers.

The change in job searching strategies and addition of more strategies throughout the job search showcases that expectancies and communication strategies are not stagnant, but rather evolve throughout the job search. Participants discussed how they added additional job searching strategies over time as a result of negatively violated expectancies. For example, some participants who relied on networking as their primary strategy but did not have immediate success finding a job or securing interviews, added direct application strategies to their job search. Similarly following a lack of interest from potential employers, other participants noted that they began to solicit feedback from trusted interpersonal sources and reached out to contacts that may have information about available job opportunities. The time 1 and time 2 findings suggest that job searching strategies change over time based on feedback received throughout the job search. This is an important point because it demonstrates an explanation for how and why expectations can change and evolve over time to become more aligned with the needs of the labor market. Some participants discussed how receiving feedback about their experience helped them realize that they needed to find a "starter" job before landing their "dream job," which in turn, changed their job searching strategies and expectations for the remainder of their job search (see Table 7).

Expectancy Formation and Management

The cumulative findings from this study illustrate the career expectations that recent college graduates have about their first postgraduate jobs. Contrary to previous research (Adams, 2013; Carvajal et al., 2000; Godofsky et al., 2011), participants in this study were aware they would likely obtain an entry-level job and were expecting nothing more than an entry-level job.

However, the findings from this study also highlight other career related expectations that recent college graduates have such as advancement opportunities and social environments. Participants also discussed how their career and job searching expectations were formed based upon a combination of interpersonal sources, direct experience, and mass media outlets. Finally, participants discussed their job searching process expectations which indicated that they did have realistic expectations about the duration of the job search but unrealistic expectations about the effort required to find and secure employment.

The findings from this study provide unique insight into the specific career expectations of college graduates today and how those expectations are formed throughout their educational journey. For example, findings from this study help to determine whether or not recent college graduates have realistic career expectations compared to labor market realities, for example (see Adams, 2013; Godofsky et al., 2011; Ng et al., 2010). Participants in this study were expecting entry-level jobs with the opportunity for rapid advancement within the same organization for their first post-graduate job. Moreover, both of these expectations (entry-level and rapid advancement) remained consistent over time throughout this study. While participants adjusted other career expectations pertaining to their expected job responsibilities and workplace environment, participants overwhelmingly noted that the opportunity for rapid advancement was a requirement for their first post-grad job. The expectation of securing an entry-level job is important because it demonstrates that this age cohort does understand the current labor market and is not over-valuing their skills, nor do they have unrealistically high expectations about their first job as frequently suggested by popular media and empirical research (Carjaval et al., 2000; Ng et al., 2010). Knowing that Millennials and young employees seek out advancement opportunities and are highly ambitious (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008), the expectation

for inter-organizational promotion is not surprising. This finding is characteristic of recent college graduates, and is beneficial to organizations because it demonstrates that young employees want to remain employed by organizations long-term, rather than move to other organizations for advancement. This highlights the importance that recent college graduates place on advancement opportunities, particularly early in their careers. Finally, findings from this study demonstrate how expectations are formed which provides insight into the two expectations of entry-level work and rapid advancement. Specifically, participants discussed how their previous work experience shaped their career expectations, particularly internship experience. Working at an internship is a unique context because the intern is encouraged to work their way up and often has to prove their work ethic by executing administrative, entry-level type tasks. However, internships also provide the opportunity for advancement such as paid positions, and full-time job offers based on the quality of the work completed and organizational needs. This might instill an expectation in young job seekers that working hard should lead to advancement based on recent college graduates previously work experience.

The findings also demonstrated that participants were looking for social and collaborative work environments, which highlights how this age cohort has unique career expectations. This is likely the case because Millennials and recent college graduates want to establish a psychological contract with an organization, which emphasizes social involvement (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Wong et al., 2008). Moreover, research indicates that Millennials are strongly motivated by a cooperative workplace (Wong et al., 2008). Participants noted how they are expecting to develop friendships with their co-workers and socialize with their supervisors and peers outside of the office environment. Additionally, participants discussed how they envisioned their work environments to be open spaces, where brainstorming sessions can unfold

freely between employees. Caty explained: "I don't want to just sit in a cubicle and stare at a fabric panel all day. I want to work in a place where we are all working *together,* and can easily talk and share ideas." This example further supports the idea that recent college graduates want to build a psychological contract with an organization and are excited by a cooperative work environment.

The cumulative findings indicated that participants with more realistic career expectations (n = 5), such as entry-level positions and flexibility about salary and benefits packages, had greater job searching success over a three-month period. This illustrates the importance of expectation formation, but also the impact that expectations can have on the overall job search. Recent college graduates in this study said that they were expecting salaried jobs with benefits, although a job offer without benefits would not be a deal-breaker for everyone. While some participants had specific salary expectations, by the second interview, these expectations had changed based on the current job market. Moreover, some participants discussed during the second interview how they only applied for jobs that met or exceeded their salary and benefits expectations; this strategy was successful for some participants and not others. These findings partially support previous research that recent college graduates have unrealistic expectations about salaries and benefits, and are more selective in their job search based on these expectations (Adams, 2013; McDonald & Hite, 2008).

Broadly, participants' expectations about the duration of the job search were realistic at the three-month follow-up interview, however, participants noted the job search was harder than they expected because it required more time and effort for finding and applying to available jobs. Participants in this study expected job searching to be a difficult task without much feedback and a lot of rejection. This idea is consistent with job searching definitions and how job searching is

portrayed in empirical literature and mass media outlets (Price & Vinokur, 1995). Additionally, these findings echo those of Wanberg and colleagues' (2012) study indicating a successful job search requires a combination of intensity and effort which lead to the shortest job searching durations (Wanberg et al., 2002; Wanberg et al., 2000). Over time, participants began to realize that effort alone would not find them a job, and their job searching intensity changed as a result of this realization.

One important finding that emerged in this study was sources of expectations (interpersonal contacts, direct experience, and mass media observations), which suggest implications for a shift in thinking about the formation of organizational and career related expectations. This is especially important for understanding and expanding anticipatory socialization research, which argues that expectations are formed throughout the career recruitment process (Dubinsky et al., 1986; Major et al., 1995). Since recent college graduates are mostly first time job seekers, they have not had the opportunity to form career related expectations through a formal recruitment process. Instead, recent college graduates rely upon their previous experiences and interpersonal contacts to form their expectations about job searching and their future careers. These sources of expectation formation likely provide young job seekers with unique career related expectations compared to others in the workforce. However, the formation of expectations through sources other than recruitment is present among all job seekers during early stages of their job search, before recruitment with an organization begins. Thus, job seekers, especially young job seekers, rely upon interpersonal relationships, previous experience, and the media to form general career expectations, which simultaneously begins the anticipatory socialization process even though formal recruitment with an organization has not begun yet. Anticipatory socialization then continues once formal

recruitment of a candidate has started, and this helps the job seeker form expectations specific to an organization. Therefore, anticipatory socialization research should consider the cumulative impact of the job searching and employment process on the formation of expectations especially with regard to recent college graduates.

Responses to Expectancy Violations

The qualitative design of this study provided information about how the job searching expectations of recent college graduates affect the communication strategies they used to find a job (RQ 4). Two themes emerged from the data regarding how expectations affect communication within the context of job searching: communication with interpersonal contacts known to have available opportunities and seeking feedback from others. Both themes can be interpreted by using the third axiom of EVT stating that people approach rewarding communication situations, while avoiding punishing, or in this case, non-rewarding situations (Burgoon, 1978). Specifically, participants noted how they only networked with people who could offer them a job or put them in touch with hiring managers. The second theme focused on how participants solicit feedback about themselves from others. Again, this highlights how people turn to rewarding sources for help and information and avoid seeking feedback from people who may not provide constructive feedback to the job seeker.

Participants carefully selected interpersonal contacts for networking opportunities and feedback based on the potential to yield an expected and/or desired outcome. These findings can be explained through EVT to understand how people use the communicator reward value, previous interactions, and the relationship itself while communicating to minimize the opportunity for negative violations, and increase the opportunities for information seeking and positive expectancy violations. Implicitly, participants were seeking interactions with personal

contacts that would at the very least meet their expectations, illustrated by only speaking to people with available opportunities and the offer to provide feedback. For example, rather than networking with interpersonal contacts who may or may not know of an available job, participants sought out conversations with contacts they were sure had available opportunities. This helped participants predict the topic of conversation more easily, and also allowed them to be a more active communicator. For example, Jim said:

> Networking with people who I know have a job I could get is so much easier than just applying online to a black hole and someone I don't know. I want to work in a sales type job, so being able to talk to someone and convince them to hire me is important. I know if I talk to someone, especially someone I already know, that I can persuade them to offer me the job.

Although participants understood they might be given bad news about the position or told they are not the right fit, they felt the opportunity was greater for their expectations to be met, and for positive violations such as getting their resume passed on to a direct hiring manager, or even being hired on the spot. Following the same logic, participants solicited feedback from trusted interpersonal contacts whom they knew would provide constructive and meaningful suggestions regarding their job search. Participants noted talking to senior level industry contacts for resume help and to ask questions about the process of job searching. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that within the context of job searching, job seekers communicate strategically with selected contacts for the purpose of enhancing their own job search and minimizing negative expectancy violations and feedback.

Within the context of job searching, every participant experienced both positive and negative expectancy violations and their evaluations of those experiences can be explained

through EVT. EVT posits that when potential employers provide positively valued messages, this would be evaluated as rewarding and when a potential employer provides negatively valued messages, the job seeker would evaluate the interaction as punishing (Burgoon, 1978). The time 2 findings demonstrate that positive information was evaluated as rewarding, but also showcase that bad news can be evaluated positively, in contrast to what EVT predicts. Participants considered information that provided no affirming information, such as a receipt of an application, to be positive feedback, because that information made them feel secure and relieved to know their application would be reviewed. Additionally, participants noted how their expectations were positively violated when receiving bad news, like not getting a job, followed by information relating to other available opportunities. Participants evaluated these experiences positively because they expected to receive no news at all regarding their applications. Naturally, participants evaluated this information as rewarding even when it contained bad news. The most likely explanation for this finding is because even bad news from a highly rewarding source during the job search helps to reduce uncertainty. For example, some participants discussed how they were happy to know their application was no longer being considered because it reduced their uncertainty about the job. The findings of this study parallel those found by Afifi and Metts (1998), which demonstrated that in interpersonal relationships, people prefer information that reduces uncertainty, even if it confirms negative traits about their partner. Similarly in this study, people preferred to receive negative information over no information at all, because it reduced their uncertainty. These findings suggest that job seekers do not consider "no news to be good news" as often suggested, but prefer to receive bad news, or confirming news, than no news at all.

Participants collectively experienced three types of negatively valenced violations throughout their job search: lack of feedback/follow-through from potential employers, false

information from potential employers and organizations, and time commitment of job searching. While EVT research has indicated that most negative violations increase uncertainty (Afifi & Burgoon, 2000), the only negative violation experienced by participants in this study that produced increased uncertainty was the lack of feedback/follow-through from potential employers because the job seekers did not know whether or not they were still being considered for the job. However, the other two themes illustrate that some negative violations do not always produce uncertainty, in contrast to what some EVT research has demonstrated (Afifi & Burgoon, 2000). Instead, the negative violations that participants experienced provide insight into how any communication, in the forms of feedback, encouragement, and advice for example, can buffer the disappointment and help job seekers manage their expectations throughout their job search. Job seekers who did have their expectations negatively violated all discussed how communication from potential employers would help ease their frustration and reduce their uncertainty. Additionally, the frustration job seekers felt following negative expectancy violations may also be buffered by supportive, emotional communication from interpersonal sources (Holmstrom et al., 2013). Rita explained,

> "My mom is like my rock. I call her a hundred times a day and she is an executive in the field I want to work in, so she gives me good advice and keeps encouraging me. I think I'd give up without her."

The role that supportive communication and feedback have on the job search provides an interesting avenue for future research as well as practical ideas for organizations to implement.

The time 1 and time 2 study design also demonstrated how recent college graduates change their communication strategies over a three-month period as a result of expectancy violations (see Table 7). Interpreting the findings through EVT's compensation and reciprocation

mechanisms demonstrates how participants adjusted their communication and job-searching behavior after a violation occurred. When participants' expectations were negatively violated, particularly when participants were not hearing back from potential employers, they adjusted their communication strategies in an effort to overcome the violation, by using either reciprocating or compensating responses explained by EVT (Burgoon et al., 1995). For example, some participants changed how they presented themselves to potential employers by writing more specific resumes and cover letters. Participants discussed how they used a more active voice in their cover letters and tailored the skills on the resume to highlight why they were good fit for the job. Therefore, participants changed their behavior in an effort to increase the involvement with potential employers going forward. Finally, when job-searching expectations were negatively violated, participants also began to use additional job searching strategies as a way to increase their involvement with potential employers. This demonstrates a compensatory, rather than reciprocal, behavioral adaptation. EVT provides an explanation for these findings demonstrating that when communication decreases, communicators will initiate compensatory behavior in an effort to maintain the previous level of engagement or improve the amount of engagement (Burgoon et al., 1995) within the context of job searching.

For all participants, whether a negative or positive expectancy violation occurred, they changed the amount of time they spent job searching. When job-searching expectations were positively violated, for example by receiving interview requests sooner than anticipated, participants reduced the amount of time they spent job searching. This demonstrates a reciprocal response toward the interested employer(s) because the job seeker adjusted their attention to the opportunity at hand and responded positively to the interest from the potential employer. Thus,

this finding is supported by EVT's assertion that communicators will reciprocate attempts to

increase involvement (Floyd & Voloudakis, 1999), even in a non-interpersonal context.

When job-searching expectations were negatively violated, the communicative responses

were mixed and included both compensatory and reciprocal adaptations. This is an interesting

finding within the lens of EVT because it demonstrates that people do not always respond to

negative violations with compensatory behavior, even with highly rewarding communicators

(potential employers). For example, some participants increased the amount of time they spent

job searching when they were not receiving any interest or interview requests, while others

withdrew from the job search and re-evaluated their plans.

Within the context of job searching, EVT is helpful in understanding how job searching

and career expectations are communicatively formed and from what communication sources,

how expectancy violations are interpreted and evaluated, and how people communicatively

respond to violated expectations (see Figure 1). As discussed, the findings from this study

demonstrate that people respond to violations with either a compensating or reciprocal response,

when evaluated through the lens of EVT. However, the findings from this study also demonstrate

that people can respond to positive expectancy violations without a change in their

communication or job searching strategies. Moreover, the findings illustrate specific types of

compensating and reciprocal expectancy violation responses such as increasing/decreasing job

searching efforts, adding other job searching strategies, sharpening their written communication,

or ending the job search entirely. One of the limitations of EVT in this context is that it cannot be

used to understand is *why* people respond differently to violated expectations. Although EVT can

help to understand the communicative progression of first time job seekers (see Figure 1), the

theory does not provide a truly comprehensive understanding of the changes that occur

throughout the job search and does not account for changing expectations based on the cumulative effect of communication experiences. The findings of this study begin to fill that gap and demonstrate the potential importance of expectations and expectancy management over time, across cumulative interactions in the job searching context.

Individual differences, such as personality and socioeconomic factors (Brown et al., 2006; Hsieh & Huang, 2014; Kanfer et al., 2001), may help to explain why some people increased their job searching efforts while others decreased their efforts. There are two possible explanations for why some participants did not respond to negatively violated expectancies with a compensatory response. First, the amount of supportive communication the job seeker received during their job search can affect job searching behavior. For example, when job seekers receive helpful messages of support from interpersonal contacts that increases their self-esteem, job searching activity increases (Holmstrom et al., 2014; Holmstrom et al., 2013). These previous findings may be the key to understanding why some participants increased their job searching efforts, while others decreased their efforts. A second explanation is that participants realized their career expectations were unrealistic, and they needed to re-evaluate their plan before moving forward with their job search. Carvajal and colleagues (2000) demonstrated that when career expectations do not align with reality, job seekers experience feelings of failure and discontent. This helps to understand why some participants responded to negative violations by withdrawing from their search and re-evaluating their plans. Moreover, some participants discussed how throughout their job search they realized the job they wanted to obtain is unrealistic for a recent college graduate, and therefore, they had to adjust their job searching strategies and expectations. The findings from this study partially support research arguing that recent college graduates have unrealistic labor market expectations with regard to salary (Metz et

al., 2009) and may be disappointed to realize a college degree is not a ticket to employment (Graham & McKenzie, 1995).

Limitations

Strengths of this study included the time 1 and time 2 data collection over a three-month period with current college graduates actively job searching, however, some limitations warrant caution in interpreting the findings. There are four limitations to this study: the transferability, the sample, met expectations, and the duration of the study. The first limitation of this study is the transferability. Transferability refers to the applicability of the findings to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was optimized in this study by providing a thick description in the transcription and data analysis procedures. However, the case-to-case transferability is limited to other similar groups, namely Caucasian, college educated, recent graduates. Specifically, the findings of this study would likely not transfer to a more experienced cohort, or a mixed age sample. Also, because the sample included only first-time job seekers, their expectations and interpretations and evaluations of violations may not be transferable to job seekers who have more experience with the labor market.

The second limitation was the overall sample for two reasons, the homogeneity of the sample, and the oversaturation of PR and communication-centered job searching. Although the participants in this study were recent college graduates, there was not much diversity in race, experience, or industry. All of the participants were from the same university. Each university has a slightly different way of training their students and some universities provide more practical help for job searching than others, which relates to the development of expectations. This is also a limitation because it could explain why only a few participants elected to use career services during their job search and may have affected the formation of their expectations.

Finally, most of the participants in this study were job searching within the same geographic area. A sample with more geographic diversity and data about the socio-economic backgrounds of participants would have been ideal because both of those variables can affect the resources available to young job seekers. For example, previous job searching research indicates that Millennials from families with high socioeconomic statuses report greater levels of confidence and expectations in their ability to search for a job (Hsieh & Huang, 2014). In this study, although this data was not capture, the socioeconomic backgrounds of participants may have influenced their job searching and career expectations. The second reason the sample was a limitation was because most of the participants in this study were all job searching within the same industries (Public Relations, Sales, and Communication). This may have confounded the job searching strategies used and explain why networking was a popular choice for these participants. A study using recent college graduates from several different institutions, job searching within a variety of industries, in an effort to build a better purposive sample to maximize variation, would be ideal for future research.

The third limitation of this study was the lack of focus on met expectations. Although the goal of this study was to understand the expectations and expectancy violations that occur to recent college graduates throughout their job search, this study did not explore the role that met expectations play in a job search. While every participant did experience expectancy violations, more attention and discussion should have centered upon met expectations throughout the second, follow-up interviews. This is a limitation because it is unclear whether or not communication strategies change when expectations are being met, and how job seekers respond to met expectations. Likely, the communication strategies of job seekers would not change under the circumstances of met expectations because met expectations maintain the status quo, and

therefore, do not product arousing situations. However, understanding met expectations could provide an avenue for further interpreting the reciprocal and compensatory communication responses and management of expectations over time.

The fourth limitation was the duration of the study. Although previous research has used a three-month time from to collect job-searching data (Brown et al., 2006; Saks & Ashforth, 1999; Saks & Ashforth, 2000), those studies were not specific to recent college graduates. As some previous research indicates, it can take longer for recent college graduates to find jobs, sometimes as long as one year for recent college graduates to secure employment (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Therefore, the duration of this study could have been longer. Although some participants did find jobs within this timeframe, many did not and at the three-month interview, they were just beginning to decide how to proceed. Given more time to follow up, it is possible that expectations would have changed and different strategies could have emerged. For example, conducting interviews every three months for a one-year period would be ideal because it would help capture the natural variation that occurs throughout the job search. Additionally, a longer duration would allow an exploration into how recent college graduates decide between multiple job offers, and how they adjust to their jobs.

Future Directions

The findings from this study offer many avenues for future research about job searching and communication especially among recent college graduates and the organizations that they enter. Four future directions will be discussed including (1) a closer examination of job searching via social networking websites, (2) hiring expectations contrasted against employment expectations and anticipatory socialization, (3) the role of self-efficacy and supportive communication in job searching, and (4), qualitative testing of EVT.

First, many participants discussed using LinkedIN as their primary job searching strategy. This is an example of how the anticipatory socialization process begins prior to formal recruitment strategies. Job seekers use social networking websites as a way to gather information about the organizational culture and their future co-workers. As previously noted, LinkedIN is a unique form of job searching because it enables job seekers and employers to mutually search for each other. The use of online channels including LinkedIN has significantly changed the landscape of job searching and therefore, warrants future study. For example, future research could examine the success rate of job searching solely using social networking sites (SNS). Specifically, determining whether job searching via SNS shortens the duration of the job search would be insightful. Additionally, research could explore how recent college graduates communicate using SNS and compare this against how more seasoned employees use the same networking sites. This may help determine whether SNS are used more commonly for searching job postings or for obtaining jobs through professional contacts. A final consideration of future research examining SNS use could focus on how employers use the site to recruit candidates, aside from posting available positions to job boards.

The second future direction could examine the expectations that organizations and hiring managers have regarding recent college graduates. The findings of this study clearly illustrate the expectations that recent college graduates have about their careers, including the qualities and culture they are expecting. Previous research suggests that employers look for candidates with strong communication skills and organizational skills (NACE, 2006) implying that employers expect job applicants to clearly demonstrate these skills both on paper in resumes and cover letters and while being interviewed. Determining how employers evaluate these qualities would be useful, as well as learning more about other skills employers want recent graduates to have.

Additionally, understanding the expectations that employers have about organizational culture and job responsibilities for recent college graduates would provide insight valuable to determining whether recent college graduates and employers are on the same page with their expectations. Finally, future research with hiring managers could explore how they interpret networking with recent college graduates to determine whether or not hiring managers emphasize the value of networking in ways similar to those of recent college graduates.

Self-efficacy provides the third possibility for future research. The findings of this study demonstrate that recent college graduates react to job searching expectancy violations in different ways, some with compensating responses, and others with reciprocal responses. Since not all of the findings can be explained through EVT, another construct, such as self-efficacy, may help to explain why some participants forge on with their job search, while others retreat following expectancy violations. Self-efficacy beliefs influence how people motivate themselves and persevere in difficult situations (Bandura, 2012), and the context of job searching is an opportunity for further study. While a number of studies have explored how self-efficacy influences job searching, future studies could examine self-efficacy as a moderator following expectancy violations and job searching behavior. Supportive communication from interpersonal sources has been demonstrated to positively influence job-searching behaviors (Holmstrom et al., 2013; Holmstrom et al., 2014), and therefore, supportive communication may also positively influence self-efficacy (Wanberg, 1997; Wanberg et al., 2000), leading to an increase in job searching behavior.

The final direction for future research is to continue expanding EVT research by using qualitative methods in non-interpersonal, asynchronous contexts. Throughout the job search process, most communication is asynchronous, until a job candidate reaches the interview stage.

EVT has been primarily tested in experimental settings while manipulating synchronous communication encounters. The findings from this study demonstrate how testing EVT qualitatively can be useful to understanding how the theory applies to asynchronous communication. Although qualitative EVT research is less common than experimental and survey research, it is beneficial to help understand how expectations are formed, the interpretation-evaluation phase, and how people communicatively respond to violations in asynchronous contexts. For example, in a focus group study, EVT was applied to understand how people respond to violations on social networking websites such as Facebook (McLaughlin & Vitak, 2011). The qualitative design of the study provided an understanding of how norms and expectations evolve over time, and insight into the behavioral adaptations following online violations. While McLaughlin and Vitak's (2011) study focused on interpersonal relationships, the success of the qualitative design to test the utility of EVT demonstrates that qualitative tests of EVT, such as focus groups and interviews, can be useful for advancing and deepening communication research. Thus, the findings from this study demonstrate how EVT can be explored and applied qualitatively outside of interpersonal contexts.

Practical Applications

The findings from this study provide several recommendations for employers looking to hire recent college graduates and suggestions for how universities could prepare recent college graduates for the job search. First, some recent college graduates in this study noted how a benefits package including health insurance was not important to them, since they can sustain their coverage with their parents until age 26. Therefore, organizations looking to hire recent college graduates should take this into account when making job offers. Some participants mentioned that in place of health insurance or life insurance packages, they would prefer other

perks such as a higher salary or more paid time off. Since this age cohort is unique with regard to insurance costs, organizations can save money by hiring recent college graduates and should consider this fact when making hiring decisions.

One of the central findings from this study highlights the channels that recent college graduates use to search for jobs. Overwhelmingly, either as a primary or secondary strategy, recent college graduates reported using online channels to find job postings and research potential employers. While some research suggests that organizations are moving away from posting on job boards and job searching websites like Monster and CareerBuilder in favor of posting more on social networking sites like LinkedIN (Joyce, 2014), the findings here encourage organizations to utilize multiple online channels for job postings. Participants reported using larger job searching websites (e.g. Indeed, CareerBuilder, GlassDoor) to help find information about available opportunities and job responsibilities, while also turning to social networking sites like LinkedIN and sometimes Facebook to gather the same information. Further, very few participants mentioned using career services (including exclusive career services job boards) to search for jobs, indicating that employers should put more effort into online channels for recruiting recent college graduates. Finally, participants discussed how they rely upon online channels to research organizations before applying and before interviewing with a company to get a better understanding of the organizational culture. Organizations would benefit from providing as much information online as possible to clearly articulate the organizational culture to potential employees, as a way to begin the anticipatory socialization process prior to formal recruitment efforts and align expectations.

The final suggestion for organizations is to provide feedback to job applicants. Although providing feedback can be time consuming for employers, participants are not expecting detailed

feedback. Rather, they would greatly appreciate the ability to know that their application has been received, which can be done through an automated email service. Organizations should also consider informing applicants when they have not been selected for an interview or position. This can also be done via an automated email and does not require personalized or detailed feedback to the candidate. When possible, organizations should provide a timeframe for reviewing applications and making interview requests, noting to the applicant that if they have not been contacted by a specified date, they are no longer being considered for the job. Providing this information clearly on an application would eliminate the need to notify participants that they have not been selected via email and also eliminates the bothersome requests from candidates to know where they stand. Lastly, organizations could consider using a portal system for job applicants that automatically updates when the application has been reviewed and a decision has been made. This would allow applicants to track the status of their applications without the burden of organizations to send emails to applicants that have not been selected.

In addition to the suggestions for organizations, the findings from this study provide suggestions and opportunities for universities to better prepare recent college graduates for the job search. First and foremost, career services should evaluate their presence on campus. In this study, the presence and availability of career services was not well known to participants, even though career services has an exclusive job posting board, and provides resume and interviewing preparation. Secondly, career services are in a unique role when it comes to helping form realistic expectations for young job seekers. Providing networking opportunities, information about organizational cultures, and holding mock interviews, college graduates could begin to form expectations based on these experiences, which might help make the job search and college to career transition less stressful. Finally, encouraging students to have internships and partake in

job shadowing opportunities would help create more realistic workplace expectations, as suggested by anticipatory socialization research (Dubinksy et al., 1986). Collectively, the findings from this study provide several practical suggestions for organizations and universities alike to hire and prepare recent college graduates for full-time, post-graduate employment.

VI. CONCLUSION

The job search is a difficult process and is riddled with discouragement and setbacks for job seekers of all ages and across all industries. Recent college graduates are part of the most educated cohort in U.S. history, but are graduating college during one of the most challenging economic times. Additionally, recent college graduates often graduate with substantial debt, which puts added pressure on them to find high-paying jobs in a short period of time. Therefore, the already difficult task of job searching occurs during a major life-transition period for recent college graduates, which can exacerbate the challenge of job searching.

Popular media and empirical literature have taken an interest in studying the unique attributes of Millennials, including recent college graduates, and their career related expectations. A primary goal of this study was to understand the job searching expectations, job searching strategies, and career expectations of recent college graduates. The qualitative and time 1, time 2 design of this study provided a rich insight into the minds of recent college graduates on the job market. Findings illustrate that prior to beginning their job search, participants expected job searching to be hard, but were surprised at how time consuming and detail-oriented it was once they began their search. Additionally, the findings showcase the job searching and career expectations of recent college graduates, which are useful for organizations to understand. Specifically, current college graduates expect entry-level jobs, but they want these positions in organizations that will provide opportunities for advancement, and a collaborative, social work environment.

One particularly unique finding of this study was the role that social networking websites play in the job searching process of recent college graduates. Several participants reported using SNS as their primary job searching method and as a way to conduct research about potential

employers. This finding is particularly useful for organizations to utilize in their recruitment efforts because it provides an additional avenue for position advertisements. Additionally, the use of SNS to conduct research on employers demonstrates that anticipatory socialization begins prior to formal recruitment processes such as interviewing, meaning that job candidates form expectations about an organization before they ever walk through the door.

This study was guided theoretically by EVT to help understand how recent college graduates evaluate and respond to expectancy violations throughout the job search. The time 1, time 2 design provided the opportunity to hear about the unexpected experiences that occurred throughout participant's job search and how participants interpreted these experiences as either positive or negative. One notable finding was that bad news, even when coming from a highly rewarding source such as a potential employer, can be evaluated positively because it helps to reduce uncertainty. Another unique finding was the compensating and reciprocating responses enacted by young job seekers in response to potential employers' communication, or lack thereof. For example, when current college graduates received an interview request, they cut back on the amount of time they spent job searching and re-focused their effort on to the potential employer, which can be considered a reciprocating response in this context. This novel finding highlights that EVT alone cannot explain all of the communication responses participants used throughout their job search. It is possible that supportive communication, feedback, and/or self-efficacy influence job seeker's responses to expectancy violations through their job search.

Broadly, this study contributes to job searching literature by providing further insight into the career expectations of current college graduates while also providing information about their job searching process expectations. Additionally, this study contributes to communication scholarship by demonstrating the specific communication strategies used by recent college

graduates throughout their job search. Further, this study contributes to EVT research in several ways. First, results from this study provide greater depth into understanding how job searching and career expectations are formed. Second, the results from this study showcase that within the context of job searching several components of EVT can help explain communicative behaviors of job seekers like their evaluation of information and follow-up communication strategies. Third, this study demonstrates the behavioral adaptations following expectancy violations in a non-interpersonal context such as job searching and organizational communication. Finally, this study contributes to EVT by demonstrating how young job seekers evaluate unexpected situations in asynchronous communication contexts and how expectations can change over time.

In sum, job searching today, especially for current college graduates is a challenging task. The challenges of job searching can be further exacerbated by the job search process and outcome expectations of recent graduates, making it harder for employers to recruit and retain young employees with positions that meet their expectations. This study provides a timely account of the job searching and career expectations of today's college graduates, specifically those graduates job searching in communication-centric industries such as sales and public relations. The findings from this study specifically illustrate how the use of social media and technology is changing the communicative landscape of job searching among young job seekers, a useful point for employers to consider when soliciting applications. A deeper understanding of the communicative responses to violated expectations further extends EVT into the organizational context, and demonstrates job seekers' desire for information regarding their applications, even if that information is negative. Finally, this study suggests how employers can leverage the findings to recruit and retain recent college graduates as potentially long-term employees.

APPENDIX A: TABLES

Table 1.

Axioms and Assumptions of EVT

1. Humans have two competing needs, a need for affiliation and a need for personal space (or distance).
2. The desire for affiliation may be elicited or magnified by the presence of rewards in the communication context.
3. The greater the degree to which a person or situation is defined as rewarding, the greater the tendency for others to approach that person or situation; the greater the degree to which a person or situation is defined as punishing, the greater the tendency for others to avoid that person or situation.
4. Humans are able to perceive gradations in distance.
5. Human interaction patterns, including personal space or distance patterns, are normative.
6. Humans may develop idiosyncratic behavior patterns that differ from the social norms.
7. In any communication context, the norms are a function of three classes of factors: (a) characteristics of the interactants, (b) the nature of the interaction itself, and (c) features of the immediate physical environment.
8. Interactants develop expectations about the communication behaviors of others.
9. Deviations from expectations have arousal value.
10. Interactants make evaluations of others.
11. Evaluations are influenced by the degree to which the other is perceived as rewarding, such that: (a) positively valued messages from a positively regarded source are rewarding; (b) negatively valued messages from a positively regarded source are punishing; (c) positively valued messages from a negatively valued source are not rewarding and may even be punishing; and (d) negatively valued messages from a negatively valued source are not punishing and may even be rewarding.

Table 2.

Participant Demographic Information

Name	Narrative
David • 22 years old • Male • Asian/Pacific Islander • Communication major and Business Administration minor	David has not searched for a full time job before and has less than 6 months of full time work experience. He has had 2 internships.
Melody • 35 years old • Female • Caucasian • Communication major and Psychology minor	Melody is a mom to 4 children and has over 3 years of full time work experience, but has not ever had an internship. Upon graduating, she is moving her family to Oklahoma where she plans to search for a full time job.
Tom • 25 years old • Male • African American • Communication and French majors	Tom has searched for full time jobs before and has over 3 years of full time work experience, but has not had any internships. He is hoping to find a job where he can help people and make a difference in the world, particularly by working for a non-profit organization.
Tyler • 24 years old • Male • Asian/Pacific Islander • Aviation Management major and Business Administration minor	Tyler served in the Army and is now a member of the Army Reserves. He has not searched for a full time job before despite his 3 years of full time work experience in the Army. He is hoping that job searching will help him figure out which industry is best suited to his skills.
Caty • 22 years old • Female • Caucasian • Psychology major and Communication minor	Caty has less than 6 months of full time work experience and has not searched for a full time job before. She had an internship during college but did not enjoy that experience and is hoping to find a full time job that is more enjoyable for her than her internship was.
Jane • 21 years old • Female • Caucasian • Communication major and Nutrition minor	Jane has not searched for a full time job before and despite completing an internship, has never had a full time job. She is hoping to find a job as a college admissions counselor or work in media communications.
Evan • 22 years old	Evan is currently a full time manager for a local restaurant group. While he could remain at his current job post-

• Male • Caucasian • Communication major and Business Administration minor	graduation, he is looking for new opportunities in other fields such as sales or recruiting.
Amy • 22 years old • Female • Caucasian • Communication major and English minor	Amy has not searched for a full time job before and has less than 6 months of full time work experience. She has completed one internship throughout college. Amy is hoping to move to Boston after graduation.
Megan • 21 years old • Female • Caucasian • Communication major and Business Administration minor	Megan has not searched for a full time job before and despite having part time jobs throughout college, she does not have any full time or internship work experience. She hopes to work in pharmaceutical sales but first needs to gain general sales experience post-graduation.
Adam • 22 years old • Male • Caucasian • Communication major	Adam has less than 6 months of full time work experience and is hoping that his summer internship leads to a full time job upon graduation.
Rita • 21 years old • Female • Caucasian • Retailing and Consumer Sciences major	Rita has 3 years of full time work experience and has had two internships throughout college. She is hoping to work in the advertising industry upon graduation.
Courtney • 21 years old • Female • Caucasian • Communication major and Business Administration minor	Courtney has searched for full time jobs before and has had two internships. She is hoping that her summer internship will provide a full time opportunity for her to work in event planning post-graduation.
Kim • 21 years old • Female • Caucasian • Communication major and Fashion minor	Kim has not searched for a full time job before but has had 6 internships throughout college. She is very nervous about job searching but hoping to get a job in Marketing.
Emily • 21 years old	Emily has had one full time job and an internship before. She is hoping to work in the hospitality industry upon graduation

• Female • Caucasian • Communication major and Government and Public Policy minor	and would like to re-locate to another state.
Mary • 21 years old • Female • African American • Communication and Psychology majors	Mary has not searched for a full time job before and is worried that her internship experience (one internship) is not enough experience for her to find a job post-graduation. She is open to accepting a paid, full time internship position after graduation to gain more experience.
Andie • 22 years old • Female • Hispanic • Communication major and E-Society minor	Andie is a first generation college graduate in her family. She has not searched for or had a full time job before, but has completed an internship during college. She hopes to have fun and friendly co-workers at her post-graduation job.
Lacey • 21 years old • Female • Hispanic • Public Health major and Spanish minor	Lacey is also a first generation college graduate in her family. She has not searched for a full time job before but has done two internships. She is hoping to find a full time job working for a non-profit where she can help educate people about public health issues.
Vince • 25 years old • Male • Caucasian • Communication major and Anthropology minor	Vince has searched for full time jobs before and has had four full jobs within the last 3 years. During college, he has had two internships. Vince is torn between attending law school and finding a full time job after graduation.
Jim • 22 years old • Male • Caucasian • Communication major and Marketing minor	Jim has searched for full time jobs before and has about 2 years of full time work experience. During college, he has had 3 internships. He is hoping to get an internship during his last semester of college that will lead to a full time job when he graduates.
Wyatt • 21 years old • Male • Caucasian • Communication major and Marketing minor	Wyatt has searched for a full time job before and has one year of full time work experience. He has also had an internship. Upon graduating, he is hoping to move to a large U.S. city and work in a casual and happy environment.

Table 3.

Trustworthiness Criteria

Trustworthiness Criteria	Description of Criteria	Methods to Meet Criteria
Credibility	Truth value in interpretations are established	Member checks of interview transcripts for accuracy
Transferability	Interpretations are able to be transferred to other similar cases	Thick description, purposive sample, and linking findings to previous research and theory
Confirmability	Findings observable to others outside of locale	Detailed data management and recording
Dependability	Consistency between researcher/researched	Audit trail and participant confidentiality protection

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Table 4.

Job Searching Strategies

Primary Strategies	Secondary Strategies
Interpersonal networking (n = 8)	Networking (n = 6)
Direct application (n = 5)	Direct application (n = 18)
University career services (n = 3)	
LinkedIN (n = 4)	

Table 5.

Expectations of Job Searching at Time 1 Interview

Duration of Job Search	Time Spent Job Searching Per Week	Number of Submitted Job Applications
No more than 2 months (n = 5)	2 – 3 hours per week (n = 5)	3 – 8 applications (n = 7)
3 – 6 months (n = 11)	5 hours per week (n = 3)	10 – 20 applications (n = 8)
Up to one year (n = 2)	7 – 9 hours per week (n = 3)	Unsure/as many as it takes (n = 5)
Unsure (n = 2)	20 – 25 hours per week (n = 5)	

Table 6.

Actual Time Commitment of Job Searching at Time 2 Interview

Duration of Job Search	Time Spent Job Searching Per Week	Number of Submitted Job Applications
Less than 2 months (n = 3)	2 – 4 hours per week (n = 6)	1 – 3 applications (n = 4)
2 - 3 months (n = 4)	5 – 7 hours per week (n = 8)	4 – 9 applications (n = 4)
More than 3 months (n = 15)	10 - 15 hours per week (n = 4)	10 – 20 applications (n = 8)
	20 + hours per week (n = 2)	20 + applications (n = 4)

Table 7.

Participants Expectations, Experiences, and Responses During Job Search (T1 and T2 data)

Participant	Expectations (T1)	Experiences (T2)	Responses
David	Searched through interpersonal contacts (his dad). Expected to spend 7 – 9 hours searching per week, and find a job within 6 months. Expected to submit 10-15 applications. Expected to be rejected from jobs due to a lack of experience but expected finding jobs would be easy. Expected entry-level marketing job, in a hands-on environment. No benefits expectations.	No job at T2 interview. He had several first-round phone interviews and waiting to hear back on whether he advanced. Spent more time job searching per week because he spent about 15 hours per week searching (negative violation). Applied to about 12 jobs to date. Surprised at how much his interpersonal network helped him find and communicate with potential employers (positive violation). Interviewing was harder than expected (negative violation). Received more positive feedback from employers than expected (positive violation). Disappointed that so many employers do not get back to you or let you know the status of application (negative violation).	David decreased his ongoing job search while waiting to hear back from potential employers he interviewed with (reciprocal response). He also enacted reciprocal responses with interpersonal contacts and employers who provided him with positive feedback by thanking them and expressing his appreciation. He used a compensatory response by preparing more for interviews.
Melody	Expected to search online and through networking with new contacts upon moving to OK. Expected to spend about 25 hours per week searching and submit no more than 20 applications. Expected the job search to take 6 months. Expected entry-level job, no expectations regarding benefits. Expected job searching to be very hard because of her relocation to a	Secured a full-time job by T2 interview and started working in September. Found her job within 1 month of job searching (positive violation). Time spent job searching and number of jobs applied to were more than she expected (negative violation). Had positive experiences with potential employers, where one even called her to tell her	Responses to positive violations were reciprocal, she spent less time job searching when she was actively interviewing for positions.

	new, unfamiliar place.	she was not selected for the job but that they liked her a lot and would keep her information on file for future opportunities (positive violation).	
Tom	Primary search strategy was direct application through websites and secondary strategy was networking with interpersonal contacts. Expected to get a job within the next 4 months, unsure how many applications he would submit, expected to spend about 5 hours per week job searching. Expected it to be easy to find and secure a job but hard to wait to hear from potential employers. Expected entry-level but very collaborative job working with others.	No job at T2 interview. Spent an expected amount of time job searching per week but applied to more jobs than he anticipated (negative violation). Said that the job searching process has been "disappointing" and he is "frustrated" that he's not hearing back from employers. However, appreciates when employers send a receipt of application (positive violation).	Has now started to write more descriptive, customized cover letters to employers to better illustrate his skills and fit for the job (compensating response). Says his expectations have changed to better align with reality because he now understands the jobs he is a fit for and has a better sense of what is available. He is spending less time job searching and re-evaluating his goals (reciprocal response)
Tyler	Expected to job search primarily online spending 7-9 hours per week job searching. Expected to submit between 10-20 applications and secure a job within 3-6 months. Expected a lack of experience to be a challenge. Expected entry-level job with potential for growth within one year. Expected salaried job, no benefits expectations because has benefits through military.	No job at T2 interview. Expectations violated because he thought he had a job lined up with his brother but that fell through (negative violation). Now looking for internships using online channels because he hasn't received feedback from other jobs he's applied too (negative violation).	Compensated by applying to internships instead of only entry-level jobs. Planning to start an MBA program within the next year. Ended up spending less time per week job searching and submitting fewer applications than expected, but that's because he stopped his job search when he thought he had opportunity with brother.
Caty	Planned to network using her parent's contacts. Expected an entry-level job with a salary of $60-70k, to get a job	Had a FT job at T2 interview and started working in September (positive violation). Overall, job	Expectations were all positively violated aside from the salary requirement. She admits

	within a month, and not submit any formal applications. Expected the job search to be very competitive and have a lot of rejection. Had negative expectations about finding a job.	searching was easier and faster than she expected. Found her job within 2 weeks through a family friend. Job is entry-level, marketing, salaried but making significantly less than original expectation. Spent less time job searching than expected and submitted fewer applications than expected (positive violation).	that her original expectations about salary were unrealistic. Her communication strategies did not change much but that's likely because her job search was very short. Her expectation of networking was also positively violated because her interpersonal network was even more helpful than she expected. She spent less time job searching than expected and did not formally apply to any jobs including the job she landed.
Jane	Expected to job search primarily online for 2-3 hours per week. Expected to obtain a job within one month. Expected an entry-level job. Expected to hear she does not have enough experience. Expected to apply to about 5 jobs. Expected to work in a relaxed environment. Expected it to be easy to find available jobs she's interested in/qualified for.	No job at T2 interview, very "discouraged" by the job search. Having a very hard time finding jobs she is interested in applying for (negative violation). Disappointed that so many companies do not respond to applications (negative violation). Job search is taking much longer than expected (negative violation). Some jobs gave feedback indicating that she was NOT selected for the job and that was nice for her to hear because she knew it was off the table (positive violation).	Added additional strategy of networking with other professional people and hearing their journeys (compensating response). Spent less time job searching in response to negative violations (reciprocal response) and is re-evaluating job searching strategies and considering starting her own business (compensating response).
Evan	Expected to spend 5-7 hours per week job searching and find a job within 2 months. Expected an entry-level job. Expected interviewing to be easy and time management of	Had a FT job at T2 interview but has not started work yet. Was hired by current (part-time) employer for a FT, management position for the corporate office (positive	Used compensatory responses by executing a more intense job search. When he did not hear back from potential employers he did not try

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	job searching to be hard. Expected the opportunity for growth within organization. Expected to submit as many applications as needed. Expected to search and apply through online channels.	violation). Job search took longer than expected and required more time than expected (negative violation). Had 2 employers provide false information to him or make false promises (negative violation). Found his job through an interpersonal contact (positive violation).	to communicate with them (reciprocal response). Spent less time job searching when he was interviewing for positions (reciprocal response).
Amy	Expected job searching to be very hard. Expected to spend 5 hours per week job searching and apply to 10-20 jobs. Expected to have a job within 3-6 months. Expected an entry-level job in a social environment with the potential for growth. Expected to job search online.	No job at T2 interview. Spending the expected amount of time job searching, but submitting more applications than expected (negative violation). Received false information from a potential employer about setting up an interview (negative violation). An interpersonal contact set her up with an interview when she did not reach out to him originally (positive violation). Interviewer expressed excitement to meet her and talk with her about the opportunity (positive violation).	Relying more on networking to continue job search (compensating response) but spending less time job searching. Started writing more customized cover letters using an active voice (compensating response).
Megan	Expected to job search with career services and online. Expected to find a job within 3 months. Expected to apply for no more than 7 jobs. Expected to spend 2-3 hours per week job searching. Expected to get an entry-level, salaried job.	Had a FT job at T2 interview but has not started work yet. Spent 5 hours per week job searching (negative violation) and submitted 6 job applications. Found a job faster than expected (positive violation). Frustrated with how long companies took to get back to her or when companies did not respond at all (negative violation). Received false information from an employer (negative violation).	Increased the amount of time she spend job searching (compensatory response). Added networking as a strategy (compensatory response). Did not pursue employers who did not contact her, did not follow up with applications she submitted but did not hear info about (reciprocal response).

Adam	Expected job search to take more than 3 months, expected to get a job with Fox Sports where he interned. Expected to spend 2-3 hours per week job searching and was not planning to submit more than 3 applications. Expected to get an entry-level job with potential for fast growth, and salary. Expected to find a job through networking and LinkedIN.	No job at T2 interview and no positions for him at Fox Sports (negative violation). Spent more time job searching and applying for jobs than anticipated. Experienced more rejection and lack of feedback than expected, which was "frustrating" (negative violation). Said he could not think of any positive experiences or violations related to job searching.	Added an additional strategy of searching for jobs and applying to jobs online in addition to networking (compensating response). Spent more time job searching when job opportunities were not present, but said that he was also considering grad school (compensating response). Writing more customized cover letters to better present himself to employers (compensating response).
Rita	Expected to network using her mom's contacts within the advertising industry. Expected job searching to take up to one year. Expected to apply to 10-20 jobs and spend 2-3 hours per week job searching. Expected a job in a social environment, entry-level with growth potential, salaried. Expected a lack of feedback from potential employers to be a challenge.	No job at T2 interview. Spending more time per week job searching than expected (negative violation). Receiving a lot of compliments from potential employers about her personality, experience, etc. (positive violation) but no job offers (negative violation). Frustrated with the lack of responses from potential employers (negative violation) because it's "harder than I thought it would be." Appreciates when potential employers provide her bad news because it reduces uncertainty (positive violation)	Increased time spent job searching (compensating response). Following up via email with employers she does not hear from to check the status (compensating response). Admits that expectations changed to better fit with what is available.
Courtney	Expecting her previous internship (not current internship) to offer her a FT position. Expected to spend 2-3 hours per week job searching, apply to no more	Had a FT job at T2 interview but has not started work yet. Start date has been pushed back 3 months from original agreement (negative violation). Previous	Began job searching again to find an interim job (compensatory response).

	than 5 jobs, and find a job within two months. Primarily searching using online channels. Expected interviewing to be hard. Expected an entry-level job, salaried with benefits, with potential for growth.	internship DID offer her FT position, which is the job she accepted (no violation). Offered a management position (positive violation).	
Kim	Expected to job search via networking, spending more than 20 hours per week searching, applying to over 20 jobs, and to find a job within 3 months. Expected to hear a lack of experience for rejection. Expected it to be hard to find jobs of interest. Expected entry-level job, with a salary with potential for growth.	No job at T2 interview. Interpersonal contact (professor) recommended her for Teach for America (positive violation) and she is pursuing that.	Withdrawn from job searching to pursue Teach for America.
Emily	Expected to job search online. Expected job search to take 1-2 months, apply to 10-20 jobs, and spend 7-9 hours per week job searching. Expected physical location to be a challenge to job searching. Expected entry-level job with benefits and a people-oriented job (social), with potential for growth.	No job at T2 interview. Spending less time job searching per week but applying to expected amount of jobs. However, duration of job search is taking longer than expected (negative violation). Lack of feedback from employers has been "really hard" (negative violation). She got the time wrong for a Skype interview and therefore missed the interview and the interviewer was very rude to her and would not reschedule (negative violation).	Initially changed her applications to be more specific and better demonstrate her skills through her writing. Eventually, withdrew from job search to re-evaluate plans.
Mary	Expected to job search using LinkedIN and through an interpersonal network. Expected to find a job within 3 months, apply to 3-8 jobs, and spend 20-25 hours per week job searching. Expected a lack of experience to be a challenge. Expected an entry-	No job at T2 interview. Received false information from employers when the job posting and actual job were not the same (negative violation). Job search is taking longer than expected (negative violation). Spending more time per	Change in self-presentation through writing (compensating response). Conducted more research about jobs and employers before applying (compensating response). Began using

	level job or even a paid internship. Expected potential for growth.	week job searching and applying to more jobs than expected (negative violation). Rejected for a job but employer recommended her for another position that is a better fit (positive violation).	online channels to job search in addition to LinkedIN and networking (compensating response). Spent more time job searching (compensating response).
Andie	Expected to search using Career Services and LinkedIN. Expected job search to take up to 6 months. Expected to submit 10-20 applications and spend 20-25 hours per week job searching. Expected lack of experience to be a challenge to job searching. Expected a social atmosphere and potential for growth.	No job at T2 interview. Has spent significantly less time job searching than expected and has applied to only 1 job (negative violation). More lack of feedback from employers than expected (negative violation). Received false information from employers (negative violation).	Withdrawn from job search for time being. She did adjust her resume and cover letter by making it more customized to the employer and plans to do that when job search resumes (compensating response).
Lacey	Expected to search via LinkedIN and with career services. Expected job search to take up to 5 months, apply to no more than 5 jobs, and spend 4-6 hours per week job searching. Expects to be under-qualified for a lot of jobs and be rejected for a lack of experience. Expected benefits, potential for growth, salary and expected to work in a friendly environment.	No job at T2 interview. Spent more time job searching per week than expected (negative violation) and applied to more jobs than expected (negative violation). Disappointed with lack of feedback from employers (negative violations). One employer emailed her saying they would set up an interview soon, and two weeks later she has not received more information, despite contacting them twice (negative violation).	Added searching through online channels (compensating response). Changes her cover letter and resume for every application now to "exaggerate" her skills (compensating response). If no job within 1 month from T2 interview, she will withdraw from job search and apply for graduate school (reciprocal response).
Vince	Expected to search online and through personal network. Expected getting a job to be easy because he is "good at talking to people" and expected interviews to be easiest part of job search.	Had several interviews at T2 interview. Spent less time job searching than expected (positive violation) but more time applying and networking (negative violation).	Waiting to hear back from interviewers about advancing to next step or receiving a job offer (reciprocal response).

	Unsure how long job search would take. Expected to spend 20-25 hours per week job searching, and apply to about 4 or 5 jobs.		
Jim	Expected to job search via interpersonal contacts and LinkedIN and therefore unsure of how many applications he would submit. At T1 interview, currently interviewing for an immediate internship with potential for a FT job after internship is completed. Expected to spend about 5 hours per week job searching. Expected job search to take about 3 months. Expected to receive rejection because of a lack of experience. Expected interviewing to be easiest part of job searching.	No job at T2 interview. Internship opportunity did not work out. Job searching has been more time consuming than expected and required more work than expected (negative violation). Has submitted more applications than expected (negative violation). Received positive feedback from a potential employer and was recommended for another position (positive violation).	Added additional job searching strategies of online job searching (compensatory response). Spent more time job searching (compensating response).
Wyatt	Expected to job search via interpersonal networking. Expected job search to last up to 1 year. Expected to apply to as many jobs as needed and spend 20-25 hours per week job searching. Expected lack of feedback to be biggest challenge of job search. Expected applying to be easiest part. Expected a salaried job, no benefits expectations, potential for growth, in a social, casual environment.	Had a FT job at T2 interview but has not started work yet. Spent 4-5 hours per week job searching (positive violation) and submitted 5 job applications and had 4 interviews (positive violation). Accepted a job with his previous internship. Negotiated for higher pay and got it (positive violation). Relied on LinkedIN more than interpersonal networking to identify opportunities. Interviewing was harder than expected (negative violation).	Expectations about salary changed throughout the process as he figured out his living expenses. Added additional job searching strategy (compensating response). Practiced interviewing skills to be more prepared (compensating response). Matched communication style to that of interviewer (reciprocal response)

Figure 1: Expectancy Violations Theory within the context of job searching
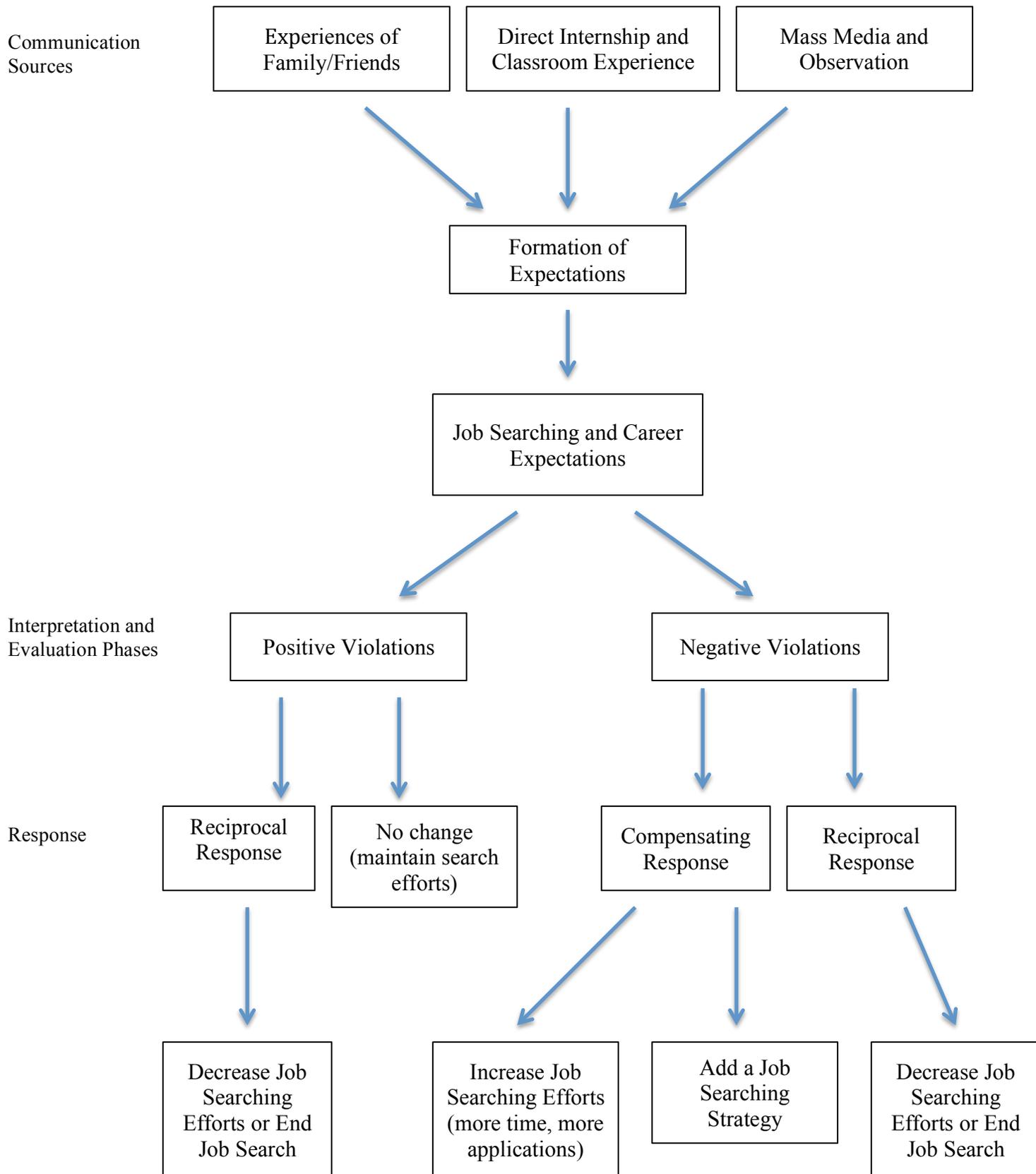
APPENDIX B: PRE INTERVIEW SURVEY

Pre-Interview Survey – administered online via Qualtrics

Please answer the following questions.

What is your name?

How old are you?

When are you planning to graduate?

What is your major?

What is your minor?

Are you male or female?

> Male
> Female

What is your ethnicity?

> Caucasian
> Hispanic
> Black/African American
> Asian/Pacific Islander
> Native American/Alaska Native
> Other
> Choose not to answer

What is your marital status?

> Single
> In a serious relationship
> Married
> Divorced
> Widowed

Within what industry will you be job searching?

> Drop down list with the following options: accounting, advertising,
> aerospace/aviation/automotive, agriculture/forestry/fishing, biotechnology,
> business/professional services, business services (hotels, lodging, places), computers
> (hardware, desktop software), communications, construction/home improvement,
> consulting, education, engineering, entertainment/recreation, finance/banking/insurance,

food service, government/military, healthcare, legal, manufacturing, marketing/public relations, media/printing/publishing, mining, non-profit, pharmaceutical/chemical, research/science, real estate, retail, telecommunications, transportation, utilities, wholesale, other

How many jobs do you intend to apply for?

0-5
6-10
11-15
16-20
21+

How much time do you intend to spend job searching per week?

1-3 hours
4-6 hours
7-9 hours
10+ hours

How long do you think it will take you to find a job?

1-3 weeks
1 month
2-3 months
More than 3 months

Have you searched for jobs before?

Yes
No

How much prior full-time work experience do you have (excluding internships)?

Less than 6 months
6 months – 1 year
1 year – 3 years
More than 3 years

How many previous jobs have you had (excluding internships)?

How many internships have you had?

Were your internships in the same industry that you plan to job search? (Yes, No, N/A)

What is your email address?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Questions (time 1):

Tell me how you're feeling about graduating?

What are your thoughts about finding a job after graduation?

> Probes for this question:
> > -What are you most excited about?
> > -What are you most anxious about?

Have you started job searching?

> Follow up questions/probes:
> > -When did you start job searching?
> > -When do you plan to start?

What is your plan for job searching?

> Probe – how much time will you spend job searching?

Can you talk me through how you (plan to) search for jobs?

> Probe – where will you search for jobs?

How do you (plan to) apply for jobs?

> Probes for this question:
> > -do you usually apply through personal contacts? Websites? In person?

Tell me about the role your friends and family members play in your job search

Tell me about how you network to help find a job

> Probes for this question:
> > Who do you talk to? Where do you network? Why do you network?

How do you communicate with potential employers when applying for jobs?

Tell me a little bit about the expectations you have about job searching.

> Probes:
> - How long do you think it will take you to find a job?
> - What channels/processes will you use?
> - How many jobs do you think you'll need to apply for?

- Challenges you might experience (?)
- Feedback you are expecting (?)

If already job searching, how is job searching easier or harder than you expected?

If not job searching yet, what do you think will be easy about job searching?

What will be hard?

Tell me about how prepared and confident you feel about job searching

What challenges to the job search do you anticipate?

So based on your current qualifications and experience, can you describe the type of job you think you will get?

     -Probes such as job title, job responsibilities, benefits, where do you see yourself, etc. will be asked if needed.

How did you form the expectations you have about searching and finding a job?

What are the expectations your friends have about job searching?

How do your expectations about finding a job align with the expectations that your friends have?

How do the experiences of your friends or family influence your job search?

Do you have other expectations about searching for a job that we haven't discussed that you would like to share?

Do you have other expectations about finding a job and about what your job will be that we haven't discussed that you want to share?

Thank you and wrap-up

Interview Guide (time 2):

How has your job search been going since the last time we talked?

    Probe: have you found a job?

    -If so, tell me about the job you accepted.
        How does it meet your expectations?
        How did you change your expectations throughout your job search?

Can you talk me through the strategies you use/used to search for jobs?

Follow up question – why did you use those strategies? Were they/are they useful?

How have your job searching strategies changed over the last 3 months? (I will remind them of their answer previously if needed)

How was the experience of job searching different than what you were expecting?

Can you tell me about some experiences you had during your job search that were unexpected?

How did you react to those experiences?

How did you change your job searching strategies after any of those experiences?

How did you change your communication after an unexpected experience?

What happened during your job search that was expected or better than expected?

How did those experiences change your job search strategies at all?
What about your communication strategies?

Could you explain how you relied upon communication to overcome challenges throughout your job search?

What aspects of job searching were easier than you expected and why?

What aspects of job searching were harder than you expected and why?

How have your expectations about job searching changed over the last three months?

How have your career expectations changed over the last three months?

Is there anything else about your job searching experience you would like to share with me today?

What do you think is the most important thing to know about the role of expectations and the job search?

Thank you and wrap-up

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