

# **Untying the Knot: Do Personal and Organizational Determinants Influence Entrepreneurial Intentions?**

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## Abstract

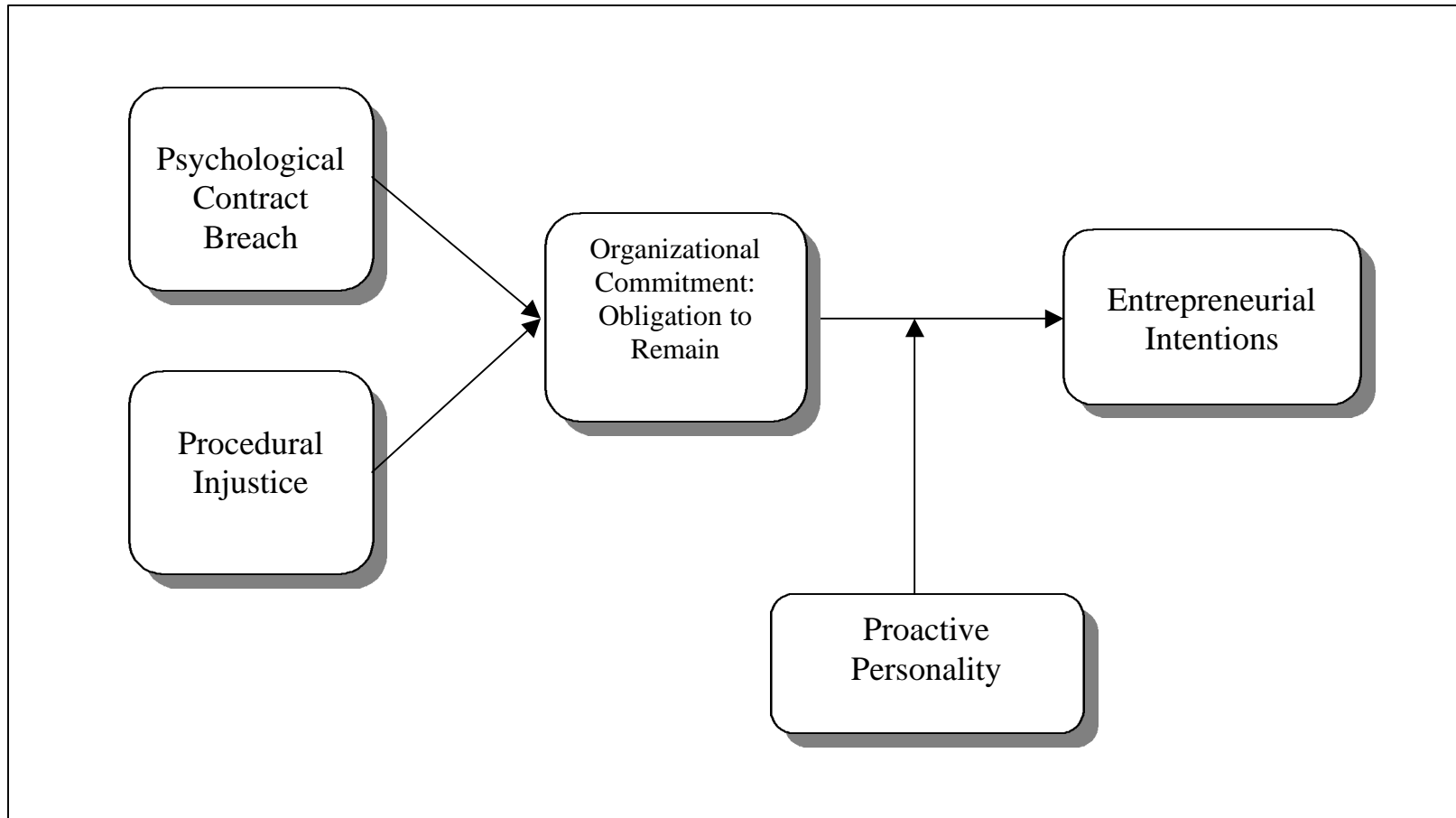
An integrated model of entrepreneurial intentions was proposed and empirically tested. This model investigated the role of personal and organizational factors that influence entrepreneurial intentions. The personal factor examined was an individual's proactive personality whereas the organizational factor included an individual's loyalty (commitment and obligation to remain with the organization) to his/her current employer. It was hypothesized that the interactive effects of both of these factors will affect entrepreneurial intentions. Structural equation analysis with LISREL VIII found support for this interaction. The negative relationship between commitment and entrepreneurial intentions was significant only when proactive personality was high.

## Introduction

The result of entrepreneurial intentions is the creation of one's organization that is derived from personal and contextual factors (Bird, 1988). Past studies have found that the strongest personal factors influencing entrepreneurial intentions are need for achievement, tolerance for ambiguity, locus of control, and risk-taking propensity (Brockhaus, 1982; Brockhaus & Horwitz, 1986). Contextually, Bruno and Tyebjee (1982) have found that availability of resources, government influences, accessibility of customers, suppliers and transportation to be predictive of entrepreneurial intentions. In addition, job displacement, limited advancement opportunities, frustration with current employers' management policies and practices, and changes in markets have also been found to be strong motivational factors for why individuals start their own businesses (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Dubini, 1989; Feinberg, 1984; Hisrich & Brush, 1985).

In contrast to these previous studies, this research study investigates the *combination* of personal-level and contextual-level determinants of entrepreneurial intentions. This study proposes a model that examines the interaction of both "pull" and "push" factors that can have an influence on an individual's desire to create his/her own organization (see Figure 1). An individual's proactive personality represents the personal-level and "pull" factor whereas an individual's commitment and relationship with their current employer represents the contextual or "push" factor investigated in this study. In addition, we also examine the antecedents that may contribute to an employee's commitment and obligation to remain with their current employer. These antecedents include the degree to which an employer has fulfilled their employment promises to their employees (psychological contract) and perceived injustices (procedural injustice) within the workplace.

Figure 1  
Proposed Model of Study



# Personal and Organizational Determinants of Entrepreneurial Intentions

Previous research that has focused on individual attributes and characteristics of entrepreneurship have shown that need for achievement, locus of control, tolerance for ambiguity, risk-taking propensity, and persistence and dominance to be correlated with entrepreneurial intentions and behavior (Brockhaus, 1982; Brockhaus & Horwitz, 1986; Neider, 1987). In a more recent study, Crant (1996) found that proactive personality was positively associated with entrepreneurial intentions. According to Bateman and Crant (1993), individuals with a proactive personality “scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change” (p. 105). This type of personality orientation has been mentioned in the literature by Shapero and Sokol (1982) and Krueger and Brazeal (1994) as an important precursor to entrepreneurial intentions and potential.

In addition to the personal characteristics of the individual, other factors including one’s feelings and commitment to their present organization may also contribute to the decision process of starting a new venture. Dubini (1989) found that one of the motivating forces why individuals begin their own business is from the dissatisfaction with their current employment circumstances and relationship with their organization. That is, entrepreneurship is seen as an “escape” from an undesirable situation such as having an unreasonable supervisor. Other reasons that may motivate individuals toward an entrepreneurial career may also include job discrimination as well as unfavorable career advancement opportunities (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Longnecker, Moore, & Petty, 1997).

Thus, the decision to start a new venture is a complex process that can involve the interaction between the person and his/her relationship with his/her organization. An individual’s current association and loyalty to his/her present organization may also be a contributing factor in deciding to form and develop a new business. More specifically, those individuals who currently feel dissatisfied with their current employment relationship and feel unobligated to remain in their jobs may be more likely to begin the decision-making process of owning their own business. However, this may occur for those individuals who possess a personality that is proactive in initiating change and direction within their own lives and thereby believe in the feasibility of starting a business.

Hypothesis 1: The negative relationship between organizational commitment and entrepreneurial intentions is moderated by an individual’s proactive personality.

## Antecedent to Organizational Commitment: Psychological Contract Breach

Psychological contracts, in general, are the set of beliefs and promises held by an individual employee about the terms of the exchange agreement to which that employee is a party (Rousseau, 1989). For example, the organization may promise an employee competitive salary, training, long-term job security, career development, and sufficient power and

responsibility. In return for these promises, the employee may promise to perform his/her job and remain loyal and committed to the goals of the organization (Rousseau, 1990). When organizations maintain their psychological contract with their employees, it is more likely that employees will attempt to fulfill their contractual obligations to the organization (Rousseau, 1989).

However, when breaches or violations occur within an employee's psychological contract, it can generate a unique form of distributive injustice, as a variety of unfulfilled promises can deprive the employee of desired outcomes and benefits (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Robinson & Morrison, 1995). According to Morrison and Robinson (1997), perceived contract breach "represents a cognitive assessment of contract fulfillment that is based on an employee's perception of what each party has promised and provided to the other" (p. 230). This type of breach can cause the employee to have intense attitudinal and behavioral reactions toward their employer (Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993).

In Robinson and Rousseau's (1994) study, the authors examined the impact that breaches or violations of the psychological contract can have on the employment relationship. Employee trust and satisfaction was negatively related to violations of the psychological contract. In addition, violations were positively related to actual turnover. Robinson (1996) also investigated the role of contract breach on employee attitudes. She found that contract breach was negatively related to employee satisfaction and commitment to the organization.

Thus, when an employee perceives that his/her psychological contract has been breached, the individual feels a sense of both deception and wrongdoing that can have pervasive implications for the relationship and commitment level between the individual and his/her employer (Rousseau, 1989). When organizations are unable to fulfill their promises, employees may decrease their commitment to the organization in order to maintain equity in the exchange relationship.

Hypothesis 2: Psychological contract breach will be negatively related to an individual's present commitment to his/her organization.

## **Antecedent to Organizational Commitment: Procedural Injustice**

According to Thibaut and Walker (1975), procedural justice refers to the fairness of the decision-making processes underlying the allocation of outcomes or the resolution of disputes. Leventhal (1980) has further extended Thibaut and Walker's conceptualization of procedural justice by suggesting that there are at least six procedural rules that individuals use in judging fairness. These six procedural rules include: (1) procedures that are consistent across individuals and over time (consistency); (2) decisions that are grounded on good information and informed opinion (accuracy); (3) opportunities in place that can be used to modify or reverse decisions based on inaccurate information (correctability); (4) allocation processes that represent the concerns of all important subgroups and individuals (representativeness); (5) allocation processes that are compatible with prevailing moral and ethical standards (ethicality); (6) no personal self-

interest and blind allegiance that may narrow preconceptions (bias suppression). Any violation by a decision-maker or an organization can lead to perceptions of procedural injustice.

Bies and his colleagues (Bies & Moag, 1986; Bies, Shapiro, & Cummings, 1988) have also found that showing respect for individuals and following social norms of politeness are part of an individual's interpretation of procedural justice. More formally, the second form of procedural justice that deals with how an individual was treated during the enactment of procedures is commonly referred to as interactional justice (Bies & Moag, 1986). This form of justice includes: (1) whether individuals believe that the reasons underlying a resource allocation decision were clearly and adequately explained to them (Bies, Shapiro, & Cummings, 1988); and (2) whether those responsible for implementing a decision actually treated them with both respect and dignity (Bies & Moag, 1986; Shapiro, Buttner, & Barry, 1995).

Recent research on procedural justice has found that perceptions of procedural justice to be related to organizational commitment. McFarlin and Sweeney (1992) and Sweeney and McFarlin (1993) found that procedural justice had an influence on organizational-level evaluations, specifically an employee's loyalty and commitment to his/her organization. Similar results were also found by Tang and Sarsfield-Baldwin (1996) and Martin and Bennett (1996). Both studies found that commitment was determined by the perceived fairness of procedures and treatment received by the organization. Martin and Bennett (1996) reasoned that employees would not necessarily be committed to their employers if they do not perceive the employer to be fair in their policies and interaction with their employees.

Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of procedural injustice will be negatively related to an individual's present commitment to his/her organization.

## **Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

Participants were 260 employees who were enrolled in a part-time MBA (Master of Business Administration) program at a large, midwestern university. Employees recruited came from a variety of organizations and occupational fields including: finance and banking, sales and marketing, computer science, human resources and staffing, accounting, engineering, and organizational consulting. Of the 260 participants, 53.1% were male and 46.9% were female and the average age was 32.05 years. The average tenure of each employee within the respective organizations was 5.14. Participants had worked in an average of 3.10 organizations before joining their current employer. Over 33% of the respondents were in supervisory positions. The average age of the organizations was 56.36 years with a mean size of 14,417 employees.

All participants were given a questionnaire and were asked to provide their beliefs about the promises their organization has made to them (assessment of their psychological contract), their perceptions of organizational procedures and how they are treated by their employer (procedural justice), and their commitment to the organization. In addition, employees also completed measures regarding their personality (proactive personality) and entrepreneurial intentions.

## Measures

In order to measure psychological contract breach, participants were asked to indicate those obligations that the organization has provided to them (see Appendix). These set of items are adopted from Kickul, Parker, & Young (1998) and include the sample promises: competitive salary, health care benefits, challenging and interesting work, job training, opportunities for promotion and advancement, and increasing responsibilities. Many of these items have been found by Rousseau (1990) to be the most common promises mentioned by employers during the recruitment process from interviews with human resource managers from 13 engineering, accounting, and manufacturing organizations.

After specifying the promises that the organization has made to them, respondents were asked to indicate how well their organizations' have fulfilled each of those promises. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which their employer has fulfilled each of the marked promises. They rated these promises using a five-point Likert scale (1 = 'not at all fulfilled'; 5 = 'very well fulfilled'). All rated items were then reverse coded in order to represent psychological contract breach. In order to assess the internal consistency of this breach measure, a pairwise correlation matrix was computed. Information from this matrix was used to calculate a Cronbach's alpha. The alpha of the psychological contract breach measure was .90.

The measure for procedural justice was from a questionnaire developed by Niehoff and Moorman (1993). Sample items include: "All job decisions are applied consistently across all affected employees"; "My organization clarifies decisions and provides additional information when requested by employees." Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree with the work-related statements using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = 'strongly disagree'; 7 = 'strongly agree'). The internal consistency of this measure (Cronbach's alpha) was .95. In order to represent procedural injustice, reverse scoring was conducted for all items included in the scale.

The normative commitment subscale from Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) were used to measure organizational commitment. Sample items include, "Even if it were to my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to leave my organization now," "I would not leave my organization now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it," and "This organization deserves my loyalty." Responses were indicated on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = 'strongly disagree'; 7 = 'strongly agree'). This six-item measure had a Cronbach's Alpha of .70

To assess proactive personality, we used Bateman and Crant's (1993) scale. Items included in the measure: "I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life," "Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality," "I excel at identifying opportunities," and "I can spot a good opportunity long before others can." Participants rated these items on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = 'strongly disagree'; 7 = 'strongly agree'). This 17-item scale had an internal reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of .89.

Two items from Crant (1996) were used to measure entrepreneurial intentions: "I will probably own my own business one day," and "It is likely that I will personally own a small business in the relatively near future." Moreover, two additional items specifically designed for this study were also used: "Being 'my own boss' is an important goal of mine," and "I often think of having my own business." Responses to these items were indicated on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = 'strongly disagree'; 7 = 'strongly agree'). Cronbach's alpha of this 4-item entrepreneurial intentions scale was .90.

## **Structural Equation Analysis**

The data and model proposed was analyzed using structural equation modeling. In order to test the moderating influence of proactive personality, we divided the sample into two groups based on observation on the upper and lower one-half of the sample (e.g., median-split). We then tested a sequence of "multiple group" models that examined the moderating effects of proactive personality on the relationship (path) between organizational commitment and entrepreneurial intentions. Once an overall measure of goodness of fit for both high and low proactive personality were assessed (i.e., first model tested), equality constraints were then imposed on this path to determine if such a constraint would adversely affect the overall fit of the model. If there is no interaction effect and the path coefficients are equal, then the constraint should not adversely influence the fit of the first model. The significance of the individual paths in the proposed model was assessed to demonstrate which structural paths described the associations found in the model.

A covariance matrix was used as input for estimation of our model. LISREL VIII (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1993) was utilized to compare the fit of the structural models. Aggregation was conducted for each common construct in order to have unidimensional composite scales. In order to adjust for measurement error in the scale scores, the path from the latent variable to its indicator was set equal to the product of the square root of the scale's internal reliability. The error variance was set equal to the variance of the scale score multiplied by 1 minus the reliability. This approach has been explained by Joreskog and Sorbom (1993), and has been demonstrated as a reasonable approximation in determining error variance (Netemeyer, Johnston, & Burton, 1990).

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities for our constructs are reported in Table 1. The reliabilities of the measures used were all at or over the .70 minimum established by Nunnally (1978).

## Analyses of Structural Model

Structural model comparisons were conducted to examine the hypothesized model and the moderating effects of proactive personality. The results of these model analyses are reported in Table 2. In order to test the interaction effect of proactive personality, two steps were required. For the first step, a “multiple group” solution is calculated in which LISREL VIII derives estimates for both low and high proactive personality separately. A measure of goodness of fit for these two groups together are also estimated (i.e., pooling of the fit measures from both low and high proactive personality). This overall model (Model A) had a  $\chi^2$  of 7.07 with 4 degrees of freedom (NFI=.94; CFI=.97). In the second step, we re-estimated the model by imposing equality constraints on the solution (Model B). Specifically, we imposed constraints on the path between organizational commitment and entrepreneurial intentions. The results of this constrained model were then compared to the unconstrained model that was conducted in the first step. This model had a  $\chi^2$  of 14.00 with 5 degrees of freedom (NFI=.88; CFI=.92). The chi-square difference between the structural model without equality constraints (Model A) and the structural model with equality constraints (Model B) was significant ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 6.93$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.01$ ). Therefore, an interaction effect is present since making the assumption of no interaction (i.e., equal slopes for both high and low proactive personality groups) significantly affects model fit.

**Table 1**  
**Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities**

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Psychological Contract Breach	2.33	.59	(.90)				
2. Procedural Injustice	4.25	1.17	.35**	(.95)			
3. Organizational Commitment	3.56	1.48	-.27**	-.42**	(.70)		
4. Entrepreneurial Intentions	4.51	1.61	.13*	.10	-.17**	(.90)	
5. Proactive Personality	5.22	.70	-.08	.00	-.01	.49**	(.89)

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Note: N = 260. Internal Consistency Provided Along the Diagonal.

Table 2  
Entrepreneurial Intentions Model Analyses

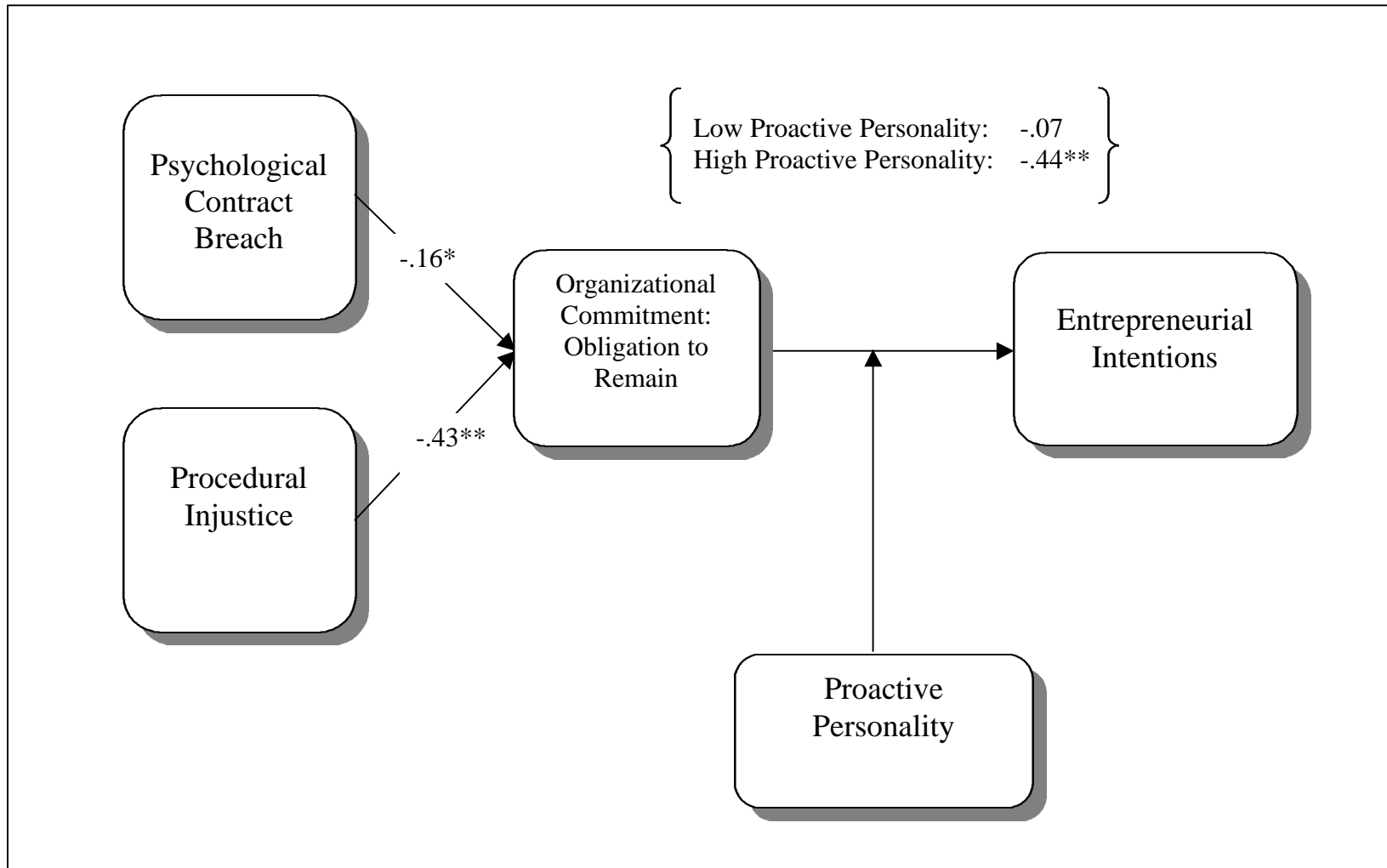
Model	$\chi^2$	p	df	NFI	CFI	$\chi^2$ difference <sup>a</sup>	
						$\chi^2$	df
A: Unconstrained Model	7.07	.13	4	.94	.97		
B: Constrained Model (e.g., Commitment→Entrepreneurial Intentions)	14.00	.02	5	.88	.92	6.93**	1
Structural Null Model	83.98	.00	10	.29	.31	-----	-----

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01

<sup>a</sup>If difference in model fit is statistically significant, an interaction effect is present since making the assumption of no interaction (i.e., equal slopes for high and low proactive personalities) significantly adversely affects model fit.

Note: NFI = Normed Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index.

Figure 2  
Standardized Parameter Estimates of Model



\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

## Significance of Individual Paths

The model comparisons discussed above were conducted to test the aggregate, and not the individual relationships depicted in Figure 1. Figure 2 demonstrates these relationships in the proposed model. For the path between organizational commitment and entrepreneurial intentions, standardized parameter estimates are shown for both low and high proactive personality. That is, when proactive personality is high, the negative relationship between organizational commitment and entrepreneurial intentions is significant ( $b_{std.} = -.44, p < .01$ ). However, when proactive personality is low, this association is not significant ( $b_{std.} = -.07, p > .05$ ). For the other paths included in the model, the negative relationships between psychological contract breach and organizational commitment and between procedural injustice and organizational commitment were significant ( $b_{std.} = -.16, p < .05$  and  $b_{std.} = -.43, p < .01$ , respectively).

## Discussion

The overall research objective was to test an integrated model of entrepreneurial intentions. This proposed model incorporated individual characteristics along with organizational influences in examining one's intention to embark on the new venture process. This study found support for the interactive effects of personal and organizational factors in determining one's judgement of starting and owning a business. These results extend and are consonant with the recent literature and research on entrepreneurial intentions.

More specifically, results revealed that the combination of both "push" and "pull" factors had an influence on entrepreneurial intentions. Those individuals who did not feel obligated to stay with their present organization and had a proactive personality were more likely to think about starting their own business. That is, because of certain organizational injustices (psychological contract breach and procedural injustice) present in the workplace that can influence an employee's loyalty and commitment to the organization, proactive individuals had a strong inclination about beginning an entrepreneurial career. It is these types of individuals who feel propelled to alter and change the surrounding circumstances (Bateman and Crant, 1993). Instead of remaining within an organization in which they have minimal organizational ties, proactive individuals tend to envision an alternative situation such as starting their own venture that will further allow them to take advantage of their character.

Although intentions are a vital first step in the entrepreneurial process (Bird, 1988, 1992), future research should concentrate on other factors specific to actual entrepreneurial behavior. For example, empirical work should investigate those factors that may moderate the association between intention and behavior. These may include an individual's (or the management team's) skills and abilities, the context of the opportunity, and the availability of resources necessary for the implementation of a business idea and concept into a new venture.

One of the limitations of this study is that the relationship between the predictors (contract breach, procedural injustice, organizational commitment, proactive personality) and behavioral intentions included common method variance. These predictors and beliefs were

taken from one source (the employee). These associations could, therefore, be attributed to a response bias on the part of the employee. Moreover, the study was a cross-sectional study, yet the hypothesized model and relationships suggests causal direction. Causal inferences created from cross-sectional designs are only inferences (Spector, 1981). Future work such as a longitudinal study is needed to establish causal direction among the relationships investigated in this study.

Entrepreneurial intentions are central in helping researchers understand the process of entrepreneurship and new venture initiation. By uncovering some of the reasons behind an individual's thought process in starting a business, consultants to small business owners considering entrepreneurship would better understand their clients' motivation, needs, and aspirations. Thus, consultants may also be able to assist the future owner in making better-informed decisions regarding the strategic direction and goals of the entrepreneur's new business.

## APPENDIX

Employees and their employers develop agreements, promising to provide certain things for each other. *We are interested in what you believe your organization has promised to provide to you.* After reading the following list of twenty-six obligations, please place a 'X' in the box of those obligations that your organization has communicated to you.

	<u>Rating</u>		<u>Rating</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Competitive Salary	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Meaningful work	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Pay & bonuses tied to performance	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Participation in decision-making	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Vacation benefits	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Freedom to be creative	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Retirement benefits	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> A job that provides autonomy & control	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Health care benefits	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for personal growth	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Job security	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Continual professional training	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Flexible work schedule	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Career guidance and mentoring	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Adequate equipment to perform job	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Job training	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Enough resources to do the job	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Tuition reimbursement	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Well-defined job responsibilities	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Recognition of my accomplishments	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> A reasonable workload	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity to develop new skills	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Safe work environment	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Increasing responsibilities	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Challenging & interesting work	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for promotion & Advancement	_____

Although organizations make promises to their employees to maintain an employment relationship, the extent to which some of these promises are actually fulfilled can vary from one organization to another. We are now interested in how well your organization has fulfilled their promises to you. Using the scale below, please indicate the extent to which your employer has fulfilled the promises above that you have marked with a 'X'. Place this rating to the right of each of the marked promises.

Not at all Fulfilled 1	2	Somewhat Fulfilled 3	4	Very Fulfilled 5
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