

# The Role of Personality and Goal Orientation in Student Preferences for Job Attributes

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## Abstract

This study examined the relationships between personality, goal orientation, and the job preferences individuals have early in their careers. This information provides a better understanding of the contributors to individual job preferences early in one's career allowing career counselors and placement centers to better advise individuals in job seeking, and also shows organizations how to target recruitment efforts to enhance applicant acceptance of job offers. Job preferences were divided into four categories, including Long-term Security, Financial Interests, Intrinsic and Personal Interests, and Prestige. A model was tested linking the dispositional variables to the job preferences among 158 participants. Results showed that some dispositional variables can indeed predict individual's job preferences.

Early in one's career, individuals are likely unaware of the characteristics a job should have to better fit their interests and career expectations. Nevertheless, in the process of recruiting employees, even those at the start of their careers, organizations frequently emphasize certain job attributes over others in hopes of presenting a favorable impression of the organization and subsequently attracting desirable applicants (Ashforth, 2001; Ilgen, 1971; Wanous, 1977). However, not all attributes are likely to be valued equally by all individuals. For example, Johnson (2001) proposed individual job choices are based on the extent to which one values internal and external rewards of a specific job within an organization. Therefore, whereby individuals might discard interesting career opportunities

based on the attributes an organization initially emphasizes, organizational recruitment efforts may fall short of expectations for potential applicants. If job preferences, or the importance that individuals place on certain attributes of a particular job or organization, are likely to vary by individuals, some recruitment efforts might attract only applicants with a similar profile because certain applicants might perceive the organization will fulfill their career expectations while others may not and therefore self-select themselves out of the hiring process.

Additionally, individual's job preferences may influence the likelihood of getting a particular applicant to accept a position once offered. This decision might depend on the type of job attributes discussed and negotiated during the hiring process. By knowing what aspects of a job an individual may prefer, an individual can more effectively identify those job requirements that will help him or her more quickly adapt to the organization. Likewise, organizations can tailor their discussions in a manner that, when an offer is made, is more likely to ensure its acceptance. Thus, in order to help individuals in their job seeking efforts and to better understand how organizational recruitment strategies can be most effective, it is important to understand what differences among individuals help in shaping their job preferences.

Understanding the links between individual differences and job preferences are beneficial for individuals seeking career guidance or searching for jobs (such as college students, the focus within the current study) and for organizations seeking to better plan their recruitment and hiring efforts. Career

counselors and placement centers need to better understand the variables that guide individuals in job and career searches. Understanding these links will likely result in more successful matches between individuals and jobs, based on what one really values, and less time and money expended than might be expected without such information. Organizations that invest a considerable amount of resources recruiting the best applicants need to be aware of the type of applicants they will attract when they emphasize certain job attributes in their recruitment efforts, and the type of job attributes that need to be negotiated during their hiring process in order to ensure the applicant's acceptance.

Despite the importance of examining individual differences related to one's job preferences, few researchers have done so. Although numerous researchers have examined areas relating to applicant perspectives in the recruitment context, such as job seeking (Boudreau, Boswell, Judge, & Bretz, 2001; Cable & Graham, 2000; Rau & Hyland, 2002), acceptance intentions (Harris & Fink, 1987; Powell, 1984; Taylor & Bergmann, 1987), and employment decisions (Fisher, Ilgen, & Hoyer, 1979; Turban, Eyring, & Campion, 1993), the focus has traditionally concerned the likelihood of engaging in search behaviors or on job attributes without consideration of the individual differences of applicants that may influence their preference for such attributes. Thus, we contribute to the literature by taking a different perspective and examining the individual differences that contribute to preferences for certain job attributes early in one's career.

There are numerous factors that may help explain the differences people

have regarding job preferences. One's previous work experiences may contribute to subsequent preferences at a later job. For example, Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Glomb, and Ahlburg (2005) found that personal, work-related, and professional critical events can influence whether employees remain working for an organization. These same experiences can also influence employee job preferences should they decide to exit the organization and seek employment elsewhere. For example, an employee who experiences a lay-off (a work-related critical event) may find that job stability is of newfound importance, and thus seek such attributes in future jobs. Additionally, factors other than personal work experience may influence what one prefers in a job or organization. For example, an individual's non-work experiences, such as experiences of family and friends, may influence what attributes are important. Finally, dispositional tendencies may influence what is important. For example, an individual who is highly extraverted may prefer a job that allows for social exchanges rather than one in which solitary work is required.

The focus of the present study is on the differences in job preferences due to dispositional tendencies, specifically the Big Five, a personality taxonomy that includes conscientiousness, emotional stability, agreeableness, openness to experience, and extraversion (Costa & McCrae, 1991, Digman, 1990) and goal orientation, or one's dispositional goal preferences in achievement situations (Dweck, 1986). We examine the role of personality and goal orientation on the job preferences that individuals hold early in their careers. In doing so, we explore antecedents that may be useful for individuals to consider when searching for a job that better fits their career expectations, and for organizations to consider in their recruitment and job selection process.

### Job Preferences

Before proceeding, it is important to explicitly define what we mean by "job preferences." Job preferences, for the purpose of this study, refer to the valence, or importance, that individuals place on certain characteristics, or attributes, of a particular job or organiza-

tion. For example, individuals may prefer a job with a high starting salary (at Organization A) to one with flexible hours (at Organization B). In this case, assuming all else is equal, they place greater importance on salary than they place on flexibility.

### Distinguishing Job Preferences from Similar Constructs

Several distinctions must be made regarding job preferences and similar terms or constructs. In this section we discuss how the concept of job preferences differs from job interests, career anchors, and work preferences as well as why these distinctions are important. The first construct that must be distinguished from job preferences is job (or vocational) interests (e.g., Holland, 1997), which refer less to the attributes of a particular organization and the job at stake (e.g., salary, hours, company size, etc.) and more to activities that distinguish amongst occupations (e.g., heavy lifting, prolonged sitting, creativity requirement, etc.). Job interests, therefore, can be thought of as a proclivity for one occupation over another occupation whereas job preferences represent the inclination to choose one organization and its corresponding outcomes over another organization.

Job preferences and job interests can be further distinguished in terms of their uses. Job interests are oftentimes used to assist in career planning. Interests guide an individual toward a certain field based on the types of things he or she enjoys. For example, based on job interests, an individual may be more attracted to a job in entertainment versus a job in physics. Job preferences, on the other hand, come into play when an applicant is deciding to which organization to apply for a job and from which organization to accept a job offer. This is not to say that the jobs, in the traditional sense, will be the same for each organization. For example, an individual may apply for a job as a dishwasher at Restaurant A and for a job as a cook at Restaurant B. In terms of preferences, job type would play a role, but in part to other factors such as salary, chance for advancement, and so forth. In general, it is assumed interests are known (at least partially) by the time job preferences must be made. In this case the individ-

ual would be, presumably, applying only to jobs he or she has an interest in, so organizational outcomes become the salient issue. Yet, if interests are not established or are irrelevant (e.g., neither job is interesting but instead simply a means to necessary employment), factors other than job type still play a role because now the individual will choose between the best alternative, even if neither is the ideal job.

Another construct that has been proposed in the literature that is similar to both job preferences and job interests is Schein's (1978, 1985) notion of career anchors, or career orientation. Schein (1978) proposed that all the decisions people make regarding the development of their careers, even though sometimes arbitrary, hold a consistent pattern based on their occupational self-concept. For example, the preferences that one has in terms of a job or organization are based, according to Schein, on his or her occupational self-concept. This self-concept, which he termed "*career anchors*," is the pattern of self-perceived talents, motives, and values that serve to guide, constrain, stabilize, and integrate the person's career. Schein proposed it as a broader construct than motivation to work or job values, which are similar to job interests. The construct of career anchors assumes that the choices individuals make regarding their careers are based not only on their job values, but also on other individual differences. An individual's self-perceived talents and abilities, and self-perceived motives and needs, interact with self-perceived attitudes and values to define one's career anchors.

Finally, caution must be taken with the terminology at hand. First, the term job is used colloquially within this paper, in one sense referring to organizations (i.e., as it is used with job preferences), and in the other sense referring to occupations (i.e., as it is used with job interests). Similarly, job preferences should not be confused with Amabile, Hill, Hennessy, and Tighe's (1994) work preferences, which refer to individual differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivational orientations, not to preferences based on importance of organizational outcomes.

These distinctions are important because researchers in the vocational be-

havior literature have long been interested in individual differences and their relationships to job interests (e.g., Berdie, 1944; Darley & Hagenah, 1955; Hansen, 1984; Holland, 1958, 1999; Larson, Rottinghaus, & Borgen, 2002). Researchers interested in preferences between organizational outcomes, however, have only recently acknowledged the importance of individual differences in perceptions of importance of job attributes. This latter issue, in particular, is the focus of the current study.

### Categorizing Job Preferences

Numerous job attributes have been identified and used in studies examining important characteristics for job choice decision-making, but there has yet to be a framework to describe the types of attributes a prospective employee may value. Thus, referring to the extant literature for job attributes, we compiled a list of attributes from Gleuck (1974) and Posner (1981) and divided the typical job characteristics into four categories: Long-term Security, Financial Interests, Intrinsic or Personal Interests, and Prestige. More information on how these factors were confirmed is provided in the Method section.

The first category, Long-term Security, includes preferences for attributes that help plan for and ensure a secure, reliable way of living and working in the future. For example, benefits of little use or value in the present, but which are important over time, as one ages or plans for the future, are in this category. Additionally, individuals preferring long-term security would likely look for a well-established, stable company that has less of a chance of failing or experiencing downsizing compared to relatively new, unstable companies. Specific examples would include preferences for such attributes as good insurance benefits and retirement packages.

The second category of job preferences is Financial Interests. Whereby not all individuals place the same level of importance on money (cf. Mitchell & Mickel, 1999), individuals with preferences primarily in this category tend to value monetary benefits above others. In this manner, they would tend to value a large starting salary, frequent salary increases, and any other incentive or benefit that would lead to acquiring fi-

nancial gains.

The third category is Intrinsic or Personal Interests. Individuals with preferences primarily in this category value freedom in their work and the opportunity to engage in activities they enjoy. Similarly, money and location may not be important, as long as the person is doing what he or she enjoys. These preferences encompass the desire to learn and grow, with the individual valuing learning and challenging tasks.

The fourth category, Prestige, includes preferences that place importance on attributes that help create a positive, desirable image for the individual. Individuals with preferences primarily in this category place a great deal of importance on prestige, job title, and impression management, and are concerned with how others view them and their job or career.

### Individual Differences in Job Preferences

Researchers have begun to examine individual differences in terms of preferences for certain job attributes. Of those studies that have examined individual differences in predicting preferences for organizations with certain types of reward systems, they examined variables such as materialism, self-efficacy, need for achievement, self-esteem, and Type A and Type B personality (Burke & Deszca, 1982; Cable & Judge, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Turban & Keon, 1993). Few studies, however, have examined job preferences with the traditional "Big Five" personality dimensions. Of those that have (e.g., Judge & Cable, 1997; Stevens & Ash, 2001) the studies examined relatively few attributes that would conceivably be important when choosing between jobs (e.g., supervisor-subordinate relationships, team-oriented organizational cultures).

There are several individual differences that would be expected to relate to one's job preferences. In this study, we examined dispositional variables in the form of Big Five personality dimensions and goal orientation. In the section that follows we will examine these variables that are expected to be related to one's job preferences.

### Personality

Personality is often described in terms of the Big Five, a taxonomy that includes conscientiousness, emotional stability, agreeableness, openness to experience, and extraversion (Costa & McCrae, 1991, Digman, 1990). Conscientiousness reflects the drive to accomplish tasks and duties to the best of one's abilities while following specified rules and procedures. Characteristics of conscientiousness include such tendencies as being hard-working, dependable, achievement-striving, careful, and deliberate.

Emotional stability reflects the regulation and management of one's emotions and can be described by feelings of optimism, high self-esteem, and confidence. On the opposite end of the continuum is neuroticism, characterized by anxiety, hostility, feelings of self-consciousness, and vulnerability. Agreeableness reflects the desire to belong with and be liked by others. As such, individuals high on agreeableness are often described as being likeable, cooperative, trustworthy, modest, and helpful. The fourth personality dimension is openness to experience, which is the tendency to be open to new ideas and flexible in thinking, and is characterized by an active imagination, independent judgment, intelligence and success orientation. The final dimension, extraversion, is the basic tendency to be socially active and is characterized by sociability traits such as a preference to work with people, gregariousness, positive emotions, and warmth.

### Goal Orientation

Goal orientation (GO) refers to the type of goals individuals adopt in achievement situations (Dweck, 1986; Eison, 1979, 1981; Nicholls, 1984). Individuals may primarily be either learning or performance oriented (Button, Mathieu, & Zajac, 1996; Dweck, 1986, 1989), although it is possible to be simultaneously high (or low) on both. Individuals with a primarily learning GO wish to develop competence through expanding their abilities by mastering challenging situations. Individuals may also orient toward a second set of goals, termed performance (Button et al., 1996; Dweck, 1986, 1989; Elliot & Church, 1997) goals. Individuals with a

primarily performance GO seek to demonstrate and validate their competence by seeking favorable judgments and avoiding negative judgments.

Although GO was originally conceptualized as a unidimensional construct with learning goals and performance goals on separate ends of a continuum (Dweck, 1986; Eison, 1979), subsequent research (e.g., Button et al., 1996; VandeWalle, 1997) has demonstrated GO is a multidimensional construct where an individual can be simultaneously high on both learning and performance goal dimensions. Researchers have further distinguished GO into a trichotomous framework by differentiating performance goals into prove and avoidance dimensions (Elliot & Church, 1997; VandeWalle, 1997). Individuals with a performance-prove GO focus on demonstrating their competence and gaining judgments from others whereas individuals with a performance-avoid GO focus on avoiding negation of their competence and avoiding negative judgments from others.

### Hypothesized Relationships

As noted, the purpose of this study is to examine individual differences for certain job preferences for individuals early in their careers (i.e., college students who have not yet gained extensive work experience) to assist in guiding their job search efforts. Figure 1 shows the hypothesized model. Rationale for each relationship is provided below.

*Long-term Security.* We propose extraversion will be related to preferences for Long-term Security because extraverted individuals, interested in forming relationships with others (Neustadt, Chamorro-Premuzic, & Furnham 2006) may be more likely to prefer jobs in which they can form long-term relationships. By having security in their job, they may perceive they are better able to build more meaningful and enduring relationships. Also, we propose emotional stability will be negatively related to preferences for Long-term Security because those individuals who are lower on emotional stability will feel more insecure (Neustadt et al., 2006) and have a greater need, or desire, for security in their lives.

*Financial Interests.* Because of the achievement-motivation component of

conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1991, Digman, 1990) and performance-prove GO (VandeWalle, 1997), and the success orientation of openness to experience (Costa & McCrae, 1991, Digman, 1990) we posit that individuals higher on these traits will desire jobs that will likely to lead to achievement. Many individuals equate money with success (Rubinstein, 1981). Consequently, individuals seeking achievement, and in the case of performance-prove GO, seeking to demonstrate to others that they are competent (Dweck, 1986), may prefer jobs with extrinsic rewards, such as clear monetary benefits and prestigious awards.

*Intrinsic or Personal Interests.* Individuals orienting toward learning goals tend to be interested in developing themselves (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984). As such, we would expect them to be more likely to pursue jobs they find personally rewarding, as they may see this as leading to further personal growth. Similarly, individuals holding primarily a performance-prove GO wish to demonstrate their competence and tend to pursue tasks in which they believe they will be successful (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984). Thus, we expect they would be likely to seek jobs that match their personal interests, as they may be better at tasks they find interesting. Conversely, we would expect that individuals who tend to avoid challenge and potential failure, holding primarily a performance-avoid GO (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984), would be less likely to seek challenging jobs, regardless of their personal interest. In terms of agreeableness, we hypothesize a positive relationship with Intrinsic or Personal Interests because individuals higher on this trait have a desire to be liked (Graziano, Habashi, & Sheese, 2007). If these individuals work somewhere they truly enjoy, relating to their personal interests, they are likely to perceive they have things in common with coworkers, and therefore believe they will be liked by them. Finally, we posit that extraverted individuals will prefer intrinsically interesting jobs or organizations because they may believe they will get along with others and be more engaging when working in a place they find personally fulfilling.

*Prestige.* In the same manner that conscientiousness, performance-prove GO, and openness to experience related to financial interests, they are expected to relate to Prestige because of their achievement motivation and success orientation components (Dweck, 1986; Nicholls, 1984). Similarly, in the same manner that agreeable individuals would be less likely to desire financial incentives due to their modesty (Costa & McCrae, 1991), we would expect a negative relationship with preferences for prestige. However, given that individuals with high levels of emotional stability are characterized by their high self-esteem and confidence (Costa & McCrae, 1991), we would expect they would be more likely to desire jobs indicative of prestige.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Participants were 158 undergraduate students (40.5% male) from a large Southwestern university recruited through a psychology subject pool. The average age was 19 ( $SD = 1.88$ ), and the majority of respondents reported their race/ethnicity as White (77.6%), followed by Hispanic (11.4%), Asian (5.1%), Black (2.5%), and the remainder either not reporting their race/ethnicity or reporting their race/ethnicity as something other than those listed. In terms of education level, the number of college hours completed ranged from 0 (first semester students) to 130 hours, with an average of 31.18 ( $SD = 26.59$ ).

In order to reduce the risk of common method variance, participants completed the measures (described below) during two separate sessions. In the first session, participants completed demographic information and questionnaires assessing individual differences, including the Big Five inventory. This session was a group testing session in which participants completed paper-pencil measures. Upon completion of the first session, participants were emailed a link to an online survey assessing goal orientation and job attribute preferences. These measures were completed individually online at their own discretion. Participation in this study resulted in course credit for all participants.

Measures

*Personality.* The Big Five personal-

ity dimensions were assessed with the 40-item Mini-Markers (Saucier, 2002), which requires participants to indicate to what extent they believe certain traits describe themselves on a scale from 1 (*extremely inaccurate*) to 9 (*extremely accurate*). With the exception of openness to experience which obtained an unreliable alpha coefficient of .51, the coefficient alphas ranged from .71 (for agreeableness) to .86 (for conscientiousness). As discussed in greater detail in the Results section, due to the unreliability in the openness to experience scale, no analyses were performed with this variable.

**Goal orientation.** Goal orientation was measured using VandeWalle's (1997) Goal Orientation Inventory. Five items measured learning GO ( $\alpha = .85$ ). A sample item is, "I enjoy challenging and difficult tasks at work where I'll learn new skills." Four items comprised the performance-prove GO scale ( $\alpha = .76$ ). A sample item is, "I try to figure out what it takes to prove my ability to others at work." Also, four items comprised the performance-avoid GO scale ( $\alpha = .73$ ). A sample item is, "I prefer to avoid situations at work where I might perform poorly." Scale response options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

**Job Preferences.** To assess job preferences, we referred to the extant literature for job attributes frequently used when assessing what is important in a job. A list of 17 attributes (shown in Table 1) was obtained, taken from Gleuck (1974) and Posner (1981). Participants were asked to indicate how important each attribute would be in their decision to seek a particular job or accept a job offer on a scale of 1 (*not important at all*) to 5 (*extremely important*).

In order to form the job preferences categories we posited, a confirmatory oblique factor analysis of the 17 attributes hypothesized to load in the four factors was computed and showed marginally good fit ( $\chi^2(111) = 209.41, p < .001, GFI = .86, CFI = .93, NNFI = .91, RMSEA = .08$ ). Modification indices suggested cross loading three items from the Long-term Security and Prestige factors would significantly improve the fit of the model, but we opted for the more parsimonious measurement

model. The four factors were intercorrelated, with Long-term Security showing the highest correlations with the other three factors ( $r = .65$  with Financial Interests,  $.55$  with Prestige, and  $.34$  with Intrinsic and Personal Interests). Similarly, Financial Interests and Prestige were also highly correlated ( $r = .66$ ). However, Intrinsic and Personal Interests showed the lowest correlations with Prestige and Financial Interests ( $r = .22$  and  $.16$ , respectively). The attributes for each factor and the factor loadings are shown in Table 1.

### Results

Table 2 reports descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and reliability estimates (coefficient alphas) for the variables of interest. Five scales obtained a coefficient alpha over .80. However, because statistical evidence suggests that the items are not at least tau-equivalent, Cronbach alpha coefficients should be considered an indicator of the lower bound of scale reliabilities. Openness to experience was particularly problematic, not only because of its low reliability, but because an exploratory factor analysis demonstrated it was not unidimensional. Therefore this scale was removed from further analyses. All remaining scales were retained for analyses.

We chose to test our hypotheses using covariance structural analysis, which allows for the estimation of the relationships of multiple independent and dependent variables while taking into account covariance with other variables. The variables were modeled with LISREL 8.3. Because of sample size limitations, we performed path analysis instead of latent construct structural analysis because path analysis requires a considerably lower number of parameter estimations, which are directly related to sample size requirements. In order to take into account the covariance among independent, as well as among dependent, variables we left free for estimation all paths among the predictors as well as among the predicted variables. In the case of the dependent variables, their inter-relationships were left free, but their reciprocals were constrained to be equal.

The hypothesized model showed appropriate goodness of fit indices ( $\chi^2$

$(15) = 15.00, p = .4515, GFI = .98, CFI = 1.00, NNFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .00$ ), however the modification indices suggested adding a path between extraversion and Prestige would improve the model fit. Because we could rationally explain this link, albeit after the fact, in that extraverted individuals may value job attributes concerning prestige because they may be more apt to equate prestigious organizations or jobs with opportunities for increased social interaction (or opportunities for such interaction), we opted to add this path in the final model.

Additionally, the parameter estimates revealed that some of the hypothesized relationships were not significant. Specifically, although hypothesized to be related, conscientiousness was not related to Financial Interests, extraversion was not related to either Long-term Security or to Intrinsic and Personal Interests, Agreeableness was not related to Prestige, performance-prove GO was not related to Prestige or to Intrinsic and Personal Interests, and performance-avoid GO was not related to Intrinsic and Personal Interests. The final model excluding the non-significant hypothesized paths and an additional path between extraversion and Prestige did not obtain a significantly lower fit ( $\chi^2(35) = 15.25, p = .9985, GFI = .98, CFI = 1.00, NNFI = 1.08, RMSEA = .00$ ). Figure 1 shows the hypothesized relationships and the final standardized coefficients for the retained paths.

As shown in Figure 1, as hypothesized, Prestige was significantly predicted by conscientiousness and emotional stability (as well as by extraversion, though this was not originally hypothesized). Additionally, as expected, preferences for Financial Interests were significantly related to agreeableness and performance-prove GO. Finally, Intrinsic and Personal Interests were significantly related to both agreeableness and learning GO, as hypothesized.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the individual differences related to preferences for job attributes in order to gain a better understanding of the contributors to individual job preferences early in one's career. This infor-

mation provides a better understanding of the ways in which individuals can identify the variables that might guide their job searching efforts and informs organizations on specific ways to target recruitment efforts to enhance applicant acceptance of job offers. This is a topic that, although recommended as worthy of examination (e.g., Gati, 1986; Rynes & Lawler, 1983; Turban et al., 1993), minus a few exceptions, has not been empirically tested.

Results indicated that, at least early in one's career, learning GO is the best predictor of the preference for jobs in which there is an opportunity to learn and develop one's abilities, autonomy is emphasized, and freedom to perform the job is offered. Additionally, our results suggest that people who are organized, systematic, and concerned with details (individuals high on the personality dimension of conscientiousness) tend to value the prestige a job can offer. Similarly, it appears that people who are not stable emotionally (individuals low on the personality dimension of emotional stability) tend to be concerned with job prestige more so than individuals who are more emotionally stable. This is not to say that individuals who are conscientious are also emotionally unstable, yet it is possible as these concepts are conceptually and empirically distinct. That is, it is possible to be simultaneously high (or low) on both personality dimensions or be high on one and low on the other. What this does mean, however, is that it appears that prestige tends to be preferred by individuals high in conscientiousness as well as individuals low on emotional stability (which could be the same individuals or different individuals).

Additional findings indicated that individuals with high levels of performance-prove GO tend to prefer monetary benefits, whereas agreeable people tend to weigh intrinsic and personal interests when assessing employment benefits and tend to de-emphasize monetary benefits. Finally, extraverted persons tend to weigh prestige when thinking about the benefits a job could provide. It is also worth noting that, at least in early career stages, long-term benefits are not predicted by the individual differences we examined.

### Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of the present study suggest that preferences for the types of jobs individuals hold early in their careers are significantly related to stable characteristics such as personality and goal orientation. On one hand, these findings suggest that individual's personality and goal orientation should be considered by career counselors and placement centers when advising individuals in their job searching efforts early in their careers. On the other hand, given that college graduates are a large section of the job applicant pool, and organizations spend millions of dollars recruiting from this population, it would be useful to know how to target these efforts. That is, because individual differences can predict the types of preferences one is likely to have at any given time, this knowledge may be useful when attracting applicants, setting up further interviews, and preparing job offers. In this manner, the organization can emphasize those characteristics that are likely to appeal to targeted applicants, thus heightening the chances for the acceptance of an offer.

Among the relationships found, two are especially relevant: the relationship of learning GO with Intrinsic and Personal Interest and the relationship between conscientiousness and Prestige. The results suggest that career counselors and placement centers should consider that individuals high in learning GO will be more likely to seek and be pleased with jobs in organizations that offer opportunities to learn and develop one's abilities, emphasizing autonomy and freedom to perform. Conversely, individuals high on conscientiousness will likely opt for higher prestige, either in the job or the organization. These results also suggest that in attracting individuals with a high learning GO, it is especially important to offer applicants opportunities to learn and use their abilities. Thus, companies that indicate their commitment to providing these types of opportunities would recruit applicants with higher levels of learning GO than companies that do not. Additionally, once an applicant high in learning GO has been selected to join a company, the likelihood of having this applicant accept the offer

would be increased if the company clearly includes in the offer the training opportunities available for the candidate. Similarly, to recruit and hire individuals high in conscientiousness, it would be more effective to promote the reputation and size of the company along with the prestige of the job.

### Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

Some researchers have noted that what people value in a job can only be determined once the individual has experience. For example, Schein (1985) has noted that the variables influencing job preferences change from the early stages of one's career to later stages, at which time they begin to stabilize. This might mean that the weight of individual differences is stronger or weaker at earlier career stages. If this is the case, what people value in a job should not be very stable at early career stages. Future research needs to address this issue to test whether the communication efforts on the recruitment of individuals with job experience would have an effect on the types of individual the company attracts as applicants, as well as whether hiring efforts should be guided by the selected applicant's individual differences in order to increase the likelihood of offer acceptance.

There are several limitations of this study that should be noted. First, reliability estimates for many of our variables were somewhat low. However, as noted, because the items were not expected to be tau-equivalent, Cronbach Alpha coefficients can be considered an indicator of the lower bound of scale reliabilities. Additionally, the job preferences measures were highly intercorrelated, which could result in biased interpretations. However, this issue was addressed by performing covariance structural analysis to control for the job preference covariance. Future researchers may wish to create job preferences categories that are less related, though the extent to which this is possible has yet to be determined. It is not surprising that preferences for organizational and job attributes would be related to some degree.

Despite its limitations, this study makes several noteworthy contributions to the literature. We contribute to the re-

cruitment and selection literatures by taking an alternative perspective and examining applicants' individual differences that contribute to preferences for certain job attributes. Specifically, we argued that, in order to better understand how organizational recruitment strategies can be most effective, and how to ensure offers will be accepted, it is important to understand what individual differences help shape one's job preferences. We examined two individual differences, Big Five personality variables and goal orientation, and found they were related to different job preferences.

**Table 1**  
**Attributes for Job Preferences scales and their confirmatory factor analysis standardized loadings**

	Long-term Security	Financial Interests	Intrinsic and Personal Interests	Prestige
Job security	.82			
Medical insurance benefits	.87			
Health Services	.82			
Life insurance benefits	.87			
Retirement plans	.88			
Opportunity for rapid adv.		.63		
Salary		.79		
Frequent salary increases		.86		
High beginning base salary		.86		
Bonuses		.82		
Challenging/Interesting job			.65	
Opportunity to use abilities			.79	
Opportunity to learn			.83	
Variety of activities			.60	
Reputation of the company				.55
Job title				.84
Size of company				.66

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics, Correlations and Cronbach Alphas for the Scales**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Conscientiousness	3.56	0.64	(.86)											
2. Agreeableness	3.70	0.58	.07	(.71)										
3. Extraversion	3.52	0.80	.01	.07	(.72)									
4. Emotional Stability	2.92	0.69	-.02	.06	.06	(.75)								
5. Openness to Exp.	3.45	0.45	.03	-.15	.16*	.15	(.51)							
6. Learning GO	3.98	0.69	.29**	.17*	.21**	.12	.23**	(.85)						
7. Performance-prove GO	3.66	0.73	.09	-.05	.07	-.27**	.01	.23**	(.76)					
8. Performance-avoid GO	2.87	0.70	-.12	-.21**	-.22**	-.32**	-.27**	-.38**	.33**	(.73)				
9. Intrinsic Interests	4.21	0.68	.17*	.21**	.13	-.01	.15	.62**	.20*	-.28**	(.81)			
10. Financial Interests	3.98	0.79	.08	-.18*	-.03	-.07	.09	.07	.24**	.04	.23**	(.89)		
11. Prestige	3.50	0.80	.31**	-.09	.11	-.16*	-.02	.16*	.17*	.04	.23**	.57**	(.71)	
12. Long-term Security	4.35	0.80	.13	-.02	-.02	-.06	-.02	.18*	.12	.00	.37**	.68**	.52**	(.94)

Note. *N* = 158. GO = goal orientation. Cronbach alpha coefficients are along the diagonal. \* *p* < .05, \*\* *p* < .01

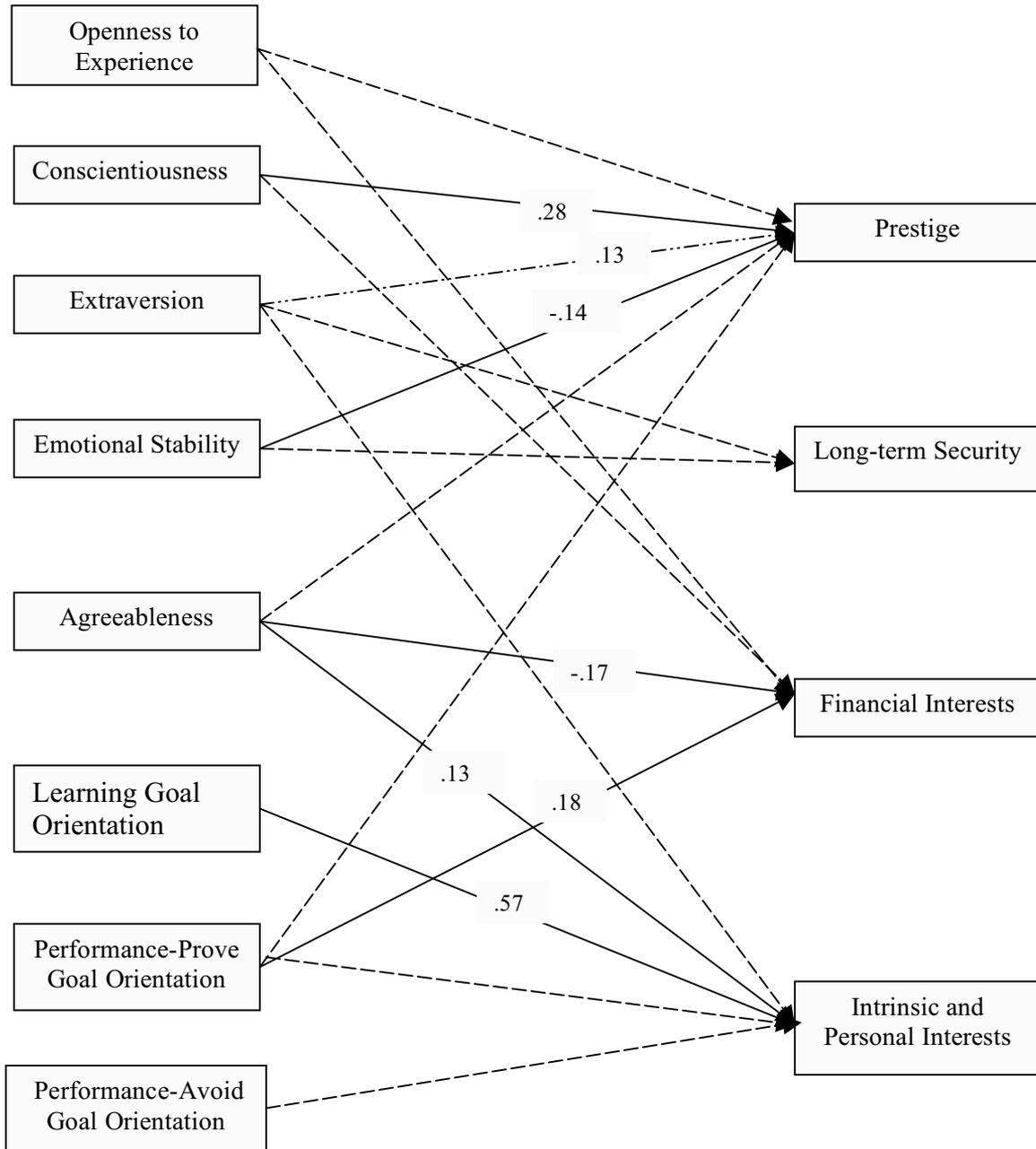


Figure 1. Hypothesized relationships with standardized significant coefficients.

Notes: Dashed lines are the hypothesized but non-significant paths, or in the case of Openness to Experience, hypothesized but not tested. Solid lines are the hypothesized paths significant at a level of 0.05. The dashed and dotted line between extraversion and Prestige is a non-hypothesized but significant relationship obtained from modification indices.

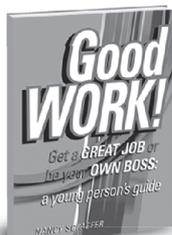
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**- NOTES -**

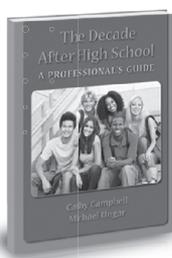
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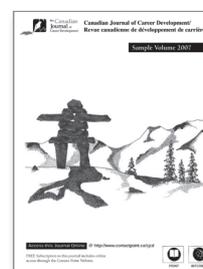
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