

NEW APPLICANT DECISION MAKING: UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF
SALARY, FAMILY-FRIENDLY AND LIFE-FRIENDLY POLICIES, AND CULTURE
AS INFLUENTIAL ORGANIZATIONAL ATTRIBUTES

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ABSTRACT

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Recruitment of the best personnel is a major challenge for organizations. A neglected concern within this literature is how organizational efforts to improve employees' work-nonwork interfaces might influence applicant decision making. Several important questions related to applicant attraction were addressed in the present study, including: (a) whether family-friendly/life-friendly policies and supportive organizational culture would influence an individual's attraction, (b) how the choice of an organization from a set of options would be made under the influence of these attributes, (c) how the influence of several organizational attributes might differ depending on the stage of an applicant's decision making, (d) how the decision making process may differ depending on an individual's salient identity, and (e) whether the type of policies offered by an organization (either family-friendly or life-friendly) would influence the importance of the number of policies and culture attributes during the decision making process.

Specifically, salary information was combined with an organization's family- and life-friendly policies, and culture, as three potentially significant attractors for young career starters (i.e., college seniors). Utilization of a phased narrowing decision making task made it possible to trace participants' perceptions of organizational attribute importance as they shifted across the decision making stages leading to the final choices of organizations to pursue for employment.

Analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data revealed at least partial support for several of the hypothesized effects, including: (a) differing influence of organizational attributes across stages of decision making and (b) differential impact of the three attributes when

organizations were framed as family-friendly versus life-friendly. No support was found for the hypothesis that life-friendly organizations would be more generally attractive, as indicated by higher intentions to pursue for employment, than family-friendly organizations. The potential importance of the individual difference factor of identity salience in the decision making process was also considered by several exploratory analyses were also conducted. Results suggest this newly developed scale holds promise for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

The decision making process by which applicants successfully narrow an initial set of organizational options to a final choice (or at least a smaller set of options) that they actually intend to pursue, is not well understood. Applicants must consider many different factors when deciding which organization(s) to pursue for employment. Information plays a critical role in the formation of these decisions and many recruitment studies have considered the influence of various organizational attributes in the applicant decision making process. Few attempts however, have been made to trace applicants' decision making process from the beginning of the process (i.e., from the consideration of a large set of options to a final choice). In addition, few studies have considered the influence of organizational "quality" information (e.g., an organization's culture/consideration of employees' nonwork demands) in combination with more traditional organizational attributes (e.g., salary) (but see Greening & Turban, 2000 for a summary of notable exceptions).

Attracting and retaining good talent is a primary challenge for organizations as they compete with one another for survival (Barber, 1998). Because information is an essential element in the applicant decision making process, organizations aggressively market various characteristics to influence prospective applicants' choices. Reactions to recruitment materials are often studied as they relate to applicant attraction. As treated by researchers, attraction is typically measured as an attitude or set of intentions to pursue an organization for employment, with the assumption that these attitudes/intentions will translate into actual behaviors (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001; Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). This idea stems from the theory of reasoned action, which suggests that intentions to act closely precede actual behaviors,

and develop from attitudes toward a given behavior and existing behavioral norms (e.g., Ajzen & Fishbein, 1974; 1977).

Attitudes and intentions toward organizations can be influenced by many organizational attributes. Research along these lines has largely focused on concrete, directly job-related attributes (e.g., salary, promotion opportunities; Bretz & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1994), but these factors have not always demonstrated significant relationships with measures of applicant attraction (e.g., Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997; Posner, 1981). Calls for attention to additional attributes that illustrate more abstract organizational characteristics such as “quality” have been met by studies considering: family-friendly policies (Honeycutt & Rosen); general flexible work arrangements (Cable & Judge; Rau & Hyland, 2002); human resource systems (Bretz & Judge); organizational career paths (Honeycutt & Rosen); and reward structure, centralization, organizational size, and geographical dispersion (e.g., Turban & Keon, 1993).

In the present study a phased narrowing decision making simulation (e.g., Levin & Jasper, 1995) was designed and used to consider the dynamic interplay among a traditional organizational attribute (e.g., salary) and two indicators of organizational quality (e.g., type and number of policies supporting a positive work-family/nonwork interface, and supportiveness of an organization’s culture for those policies). The combination of the phased narrowing and the consideration of organizational quality indicators as potential attractors made it possible to examine the relative importance of each of the attributes as participants narrowed their initial set of options to a final set of organizations they would seriously consider pursuing for employment.

The remainder of this introduction lays the groundwork for the present study. First is a discussion of the theory behind the expectation that abstract, quality-related organizational attributes and concrete organizational attributes will differentially influence the formation of

applicant preferences. Attention is then given to the three organizational attributes manipulated in the present study (i.e., salary, type and number of work-family/nonwork policies, and organizational culture). A brief discussion of existing models of applicant decision making follows. The introduction closes with a summary of the present research goals.

Theory Describing Applicant Reactions to Organizational Attributes

Several existing theories facilitate description and understanding of the processes involved in the present study of applicant decision making. To best support the processes underlying applicant choice, multiple theories need to be considered simultaneously (cf., Ziegert & Ehrhart, 2004). For the present examination of applicant decision making based on abstract (i.e., quality) and concrete organizational attribute information, three separate, but related theories are particularly relevant.

Signaling Theory and applicant attraction. Although initially developed in response to the unequal balance of information between buyers and sellers (i.e., sellers typically know more about their products than buyers do; Nelson, 1970) signaling theory has attracted recent attention from researchers interested in theoretically supporting inquiries into the influence of organizational attributes on applicant reaction formation (e.g., Greening & Turban, 2000; Ziegert & Ehrhart, 2004). The validity of signaling theory within experimental settings has been established (Boulding & Kirmani, 1993), but few studies have incorporated this theory into considerations of the decision making process applicants must navigate when forming their organizational choice(s).

This is surprising, given that the buyer—seller relationship originally described by signaling theory very clearly parallels the new applicant—organization relationship. For example, new applicants often know very little about the organizations they have to choose from

and must take the information given to them by organizations (e.g., recruitment information describing organizational attributes and/or characteristics) as credible signs of organizations' various qualities. Luckily for applicants, such signals *are* likely to be credible because organizations have much to potentially lose if they do not live up to the image they initially portray (i.e., in terms of high rates of turnover, and generally less productive and committed employees). For these reasons, signaling theory is helpful when attempting to predict applicants' reactions to information that signals the quality of an organization under consideration, but it does not offer much in the way of an explanation for how such attraction or preference might develop (cf., Boulding & Kirmani, 1993). This is especially true when multiple signals referencing different organizational qualities are considered together.

Social Identity Theory and applicant attraction. Social Identity Theory (SIT) suggests that perceptions of self are influenced by perceptions of the group(s) with which individuals affiliate. As Ashforth and Mael (1989) note, the social identification that is involved in SIT represents a perception of "oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate" (p. 21). It is through this process of social identification that potential applicants may gain a sense for how they might fit within an organization. This sense of congruence with an organization's existing identity develops when applicants are confronted with information describing (i.e., signaling) organizational norms and/or when general information about an organization is conveyed in recruitment materials. Because people are motivated to maintain positive self-concepts that are characterized by minimal discrepancies between themselves and the situations in which they function, it was expected in the present study that applicants would be more strongly attracted to organizations that presented qualities (including values) similar to those applicants hold and desire to portray in the future.

Person-Organization fit and applicant attraction. Similar to SIT, person-organization (p-o) fit theory suggests that if an applicant is given information indicative of an organization's underlying values, then his or her organizational preferences will likely be influenced by initial perceptions of expected p-o fit. Within the present new applicant-organization relationship, p-o fit refers to congruence between the values of an applicant and the perceived values of an organization (e.g., Chatman, 1989). It has been suggested that perceptions of p-o fit can develop early in the organizational choice process, before or during the Attraction stage of Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection-Attrition model (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Chatman, 1989).

This is important because Judge and Bretz (1992) have shown value congruence between individuals and organizations to be more predictive of job choice than pay or promotion opportunities. In addition, Judge and Cable (1997) found that individuals' perceptions of subjective p-o fit were related to their attraction to specific jobs. From an applicant's standpoint, it was therefore expected that preferences among organizations would develop in favor of those organizations that appear to match an applicant's values (e.g., Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001).

Integrating signaling, SIT, and p-o fit. Within the context of the present study these three theories converge around the notion that applicants will form stronger intentions to pursue organizations that offer them a chance to experience a more complete p-o fit. For new applicants, social-identity and p-o fit perceptions can only develop from their consideration of the information and inherent signals conveyed to them by recruiting organizations. Once applicants have perceived organizations' informational signals, a process of comparison of themselves with the described social norms of the organization are likely to elicit a personal identity with social identity comparison, which if roughly congruent could be expected to translate into stronger

perceptions of expected p-o fit, as indicated by stronger intentions to pursue a particular organization.

Concrete and Abstract Organizational Attributes

Three specific organizational attributes were manipulated in the present study as signals relevant to the development of applicants' expected p-o fit.

Salary. A review of the applicant attraction and recruitment literature suggests that concrete organizational attributes (e.g., salary, promotion opportunities, geographic location) are important to applicants during their decision making process (e.g., Cable & Judge, 1994). Among the many previously studied attributes of this type, salary is one of the most critical, likely because employment is, at the most basic level, a means to providing for oneself and one's dependents and money has become a prerequisite for meeting these goals. Therefore, it can be expected that the goal of earning enough money to meet personal needs will influence new applicants more than any other issue. For this reason, salary was expected to be a very important attribute in the selection of final organizational options.

Type and number of work-family/nonwork interface enhancing policies. Current social and economic conditions have created more opportunities than ever for men and women to benefit from holding multiple work and nonwork roles (e.g., more money, greater life satisfaction, better physical/mental health; Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Unfortunately, multiple role holders also may struggle with the challenges brought on by competition between these roles for scarce personal resources (e.g., time, energy, emotion) and by the spillover of negative emotions and strain from one role to another (e.g., Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Decades ago, when the workforce was mostly male and many families were managed by stay-at-home mothers or other family members, few employers considered their employees' nonwork commitments. For most

organizations, “flexible” scheduling of employee time and working arrangements is a new concept.

Organizational flexibility and recognition of nonwork demands are emerging as desirable attributes to applicants, largely because of research and calls for efforts to create more work-family/nonwork friendly workplaces (e.g., Galinsky, 2001; Galinsky & Bond, 2000; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). In many cases employee flexibility is regulated by organizational policies designed to facilitate a more positive interface between work and nonwork role demands. The influence of two types of such policies as potentially attractive organizational attributes was considered in the present study. Most commonly the flexible scheduling and related benefits options can be collectively categorized as “family-friendly policies”. Few studies have attempted to evaluate the influence of family-friendly organizational attributes on the attraction of new applicants. Even less attention has been given to how this influence might function when other more traditional, concrete organizational attributes (i.e., salary) are also presented.

As such, the attractiveness of family-friendly policies to new applicants has not been clearly demonstrated. While some evidence suggests these policies positively impact familial and non-familial incumbent employees (Galinsky, Bond, & Hill, 2004; Grover & Crooker, 1995; Grzywacz, Almeida, & McDonald, 2002; Honeycutt & Rosen; Thomas & Ganster, 1995), other research suggests family-friendly policies ignore the needs of non-familial persons (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999), engendering a sense of unfairness and increasing the potential for “family-friendly backlash” from such employees (Parker & Allen, 2001, p. 464). This ambiguous influence of family-friendly policies is also likely to appear at the level of new applicants, who

might find such policies interesting, but irrelevant to their current needs (especially among young applicants).

Reconsideration of the larger purpose of family-friendly policies in work organizations (i.e., to help employees more effectively juggle competing work and nonwork roles) suggests that their effectiveness and utilization may be improved if they were framed more broadly. “Family member” is only one of several nonwork roles that any individual may occupy. Whereas family-friendly policies are designed to help employees handle or prevent conflict arising from work interfering with family and family interfering with work, it is important to realize that these two forms of work-family conflict are specific forms of a more general reciprocal form of role conflict that exists for everyone, regardless of marital and family status: conflict between work and nonwork roles.

A more widely applicable set of role-spanning policies (referred to as “life-friendly” in the present study) can be developed to be directly applicable to a wider subset of current and future employees. The presence of life-friendly policies may also signal a more progressive organizational value orientation than family-friendly policies and this may be especially attractive to young applicants. This is especially important when one considers that young career starters may have different needs and values than applicants of their parents’ generation (Loughlin & Barling, 2001). The umbrella of possible life-friendly policies covers many family-friendly policies and benefits, but adapts them to meet the needs of a broader population of employees (see Appendix A for a comparison of both types of policies).

Although simple in its scope, this recommended reframing of policies may allow organizations to better address work-nonwork issues for a larger population of new applicants and incumbent employees. Implementing many of these life-friendly policies will not be as

straightforward as was the case with many initial family-friendly policies (which were often mandated by federal legislation; cf., Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Glass & Finley, 2002).

However, life-friendly policies are conceptually appealing because everyone (not just those with families) can more quickly recognize their usefulness in supporting multiple role involvements across the work-nonwork boundary.

While facilitating multiple role involvements among employees may seem counterintuitive from an organization's perspective, from an occupational health standpoint engagement in multiple life roles can yield many positive outcomes that could benefit individual employees and the organizations for which they work (e.g. Sieber, 1974). Unidimensionality (i.e., total focus on work) increases the risk that failure in the central domain will have serious consequences. When identity is established over multiple roles, this risk is minimized, hence the literature touting the compensatory benefits of multiple role involvement (e.g., Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002). Organizations can express their underlying commitment to employee well-being by actively promoting the comprehensiveness of their family-friendly or life-friendly policies and then living up to the standards they proclaim.

For these reasons, the type of work-nonwork interface enhancing policies (i.e., family-friendly vs. life-friendly) was manipulated in the present decision making simulation. In addition, the number of each type of policies available within an organization was manipulated, with the expectation that applicants would be attracted to organizations offering a greater selection of family- or life-friendly policies than to organizations offering fewer policy options. It was expected that a higher number of policy options (i.e., number of policies) would signal a higher degree of control over one's work and nonwork challenges, which would be desirable because of its particular relevance to new career starters.

Supportiveness of organizational culture. As already mentioned, the presence of family-friendly policies by themselves does not solve the role juggling problems of organizational employees (e.g., Allen, 2001). Policies can only be as effective as they are allowed to be by the culture in which they are embedded. Lack of supervisor and/or co-worker support has been found to be a major barrier to use of family-friendly policies (e.g., Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; Kofodimos, 1995). If an organization's culture does not support flexible options, then policies meant to enhance employee flexibility will fail to improve the work-nonwork interface (cf., Thompson et al., 1999). With regard to traditional family-friendly policies, a possible reason for observed lack of support by an organization's culture is that supervisors, coworkers, and incoming new hires may not find such policies to be particularly useful or relevant.

A definition of "family-friendly" and "life-friendly" culture was developed from an existing definition of "work-family culture", which includes "the shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives" (Thompson et al., 1999, p. 394). Thompson et al. in combination with Allen (2001) further provide four interdependent general components of organizational culture: (1) organizational time demands and expectations, (2) perceived career consequences linked to taking advantage of family-friendly policies or related benefits, (3) level of managerial support and sensitivity to workers' nonwork needs, and (4) level of general organization support for its own policies.

Considering the SIT and p-o fit elements underlying the present study, alignment of these four components of culture in support of family-friendly/life-friendly policy utilization would likely increase incumbent employees' use of such policies. Findings by Thompson et al. (1999) support the relationships between supportive work-family culture and: actual policy or benefit

utilization ($r = .28$), affective commitment ($r = .42$), turnover intentions ($r = -.48$), and work-family conflict ($r = -.55$). It is not clear though, if congruence between culture and policies will be a source of attraction to applicants. The four dimensions of culture described above were considered when manipulating the level of organizational culture support for its family-/life-friendly policies as a second important organizational quality attribute to new applicants.

Models of Applicant Decision Making

Previous attempts to study applicant decision making have employed one of several types of models, including:¹ (1) *rational-economic models* (i.e., applicants form logical choice favoring options of maximum utility to the individual), (2) *rational-psychological models* (i.e., choices based on the perceived value of a job x probability of obtaining the job), (3) *person-organization (p-o) fit models* (i.e., choices based on perceived similarity between applicant's values and perceived organization's values), (4) *individual difference models* (i.e., personality characteristics influence decision making style during recruitment), and (5) *negotiation process models* (i.e., individual and organization build relationship by negotiating during recruitment/selection time, leading up to an applicant choosing that particular organization (e.g., Anderson, Born, & Cunningham-Snell, 2002)).

Many previous studies have been guided by the rational-economic (or expectancy-value) model (e.g., Moss & Frieze, 1993; Posner, 1981), assuming that an applicant's choice of organization is determined by a conscious weighting of job/organization attributes and summing of the weighted terms to yield a desirability index. The consideration of concrete and abstract attributes in the present study called this model into question, as applicants would find it difficult to objectively compare quality-related attributes (an easier task if the only attribute of interest

¹ These models were presented as they apply to job applicants, and in the present study the formation of choices among organizations can be considered the first stage in the job application process.

was salary). Keeping this in mind and with signaling theory, SIT, and p-o fit as guides for understanding applicant decision making in the present study, a critical assumption in the present study was that applicants are “active processors of job-related information” (Moss & Frieze, p. 293). An interactive p-o fit model (e.g., Turban & Keon, 1993) was therefore used to explain applicant decision making in the present study. As such, the present study was designed around the more interactive, p-o fit model (e.g., Turban & Keon, 1993), which assumes that applicants attempt to match themselves to jobs/organizations by comparing job/organizational options against pre-constructed mental prototypes of ideal jobs/organizations (i.e., a sort of “self-to-prototype” comparison approach, as discussed by Moss & Frieze). These pre-constructed prototypes are often influenced by an individual’s values and needs.

Stages in the decision making process. General decision making models often suggest that problem solving or choice making requires people to follow a relatively established sequence of steps. An example of this is found in phase theorem, which suggests that (1) people experience a sense of perplexity/doubt, from which they (2) identify a problem, search for facts, and formulate possible solutions. This is followed by (3) the testing of possible solutions and, if needed, re-analyses of the problem, resulting in (4) a choice and implementation of the “correct” or best solution (e.g., Dewey, 1998 [reprint]; discussed further by Lipshitz & Bar-Ilan, 1996).

An alternative approach is to view choice-making as a process involving the formation of two “sub-decisions” (Beach, 1993). The first involves screening a full set of options to determine whether any are compatible with the decision maker’s decision standards (i.e., the “compatibility test”). The second decision is the actual choice, which is made via a process that varies, depending on circumstance (Beach). This distinction suggests that the importance of particular information to decision makers may vary from step to step in a multistage decision making

process, as the relevant information for initial screening may differ from that used in narrowing to a final choice.

The use (and effectiveness) of inclusion or exclusion of options as a reduction strategy (e.g., Heller, Levin, & Goransson, 2002) depends on the person and the problem being faced (Levin, Huneke, & Jasper, 2000). Levin et al. (2000) and Levin, Jasper, Mittelstaedt, and Gaeth (1993) have demonstrated that individual differences and biases will influence the choice narrowing process and that these biases are developed over the course of life development (also Mortimer, Zimmer-Gembeck, Holmes, & Shanahan, 2002). These biases develop from the source of value formation: personal and vicarious experiences with work- and nonwork-related life (e.g., learning from watching parents' and other family members'). Given the similar origins of decision-affecting biases and personal values, it is easy to see how screening and final choice making can be influenced by applicants' perceptions of congruence or dissimilarity in perceived values between self and organization (i.e., p-o fit perceptions).

Exploratory Issue: The Potential Influence of Identity Salience

The final issue considered in the present study was the potential influence of identity salience on applicant decision making. Although the influence of individuals' values was expected to be evident in the formation of p-o fit perceptions and eventual attraction attitudes, ideally an individual's values relevant to the work-nonwork interface could also be assessed and compared with the values espoused by recruiting organizations to more directly demonstrate congruence or discrepancy between applicant and organization values. As an alternative to a broad-based measure of work-related values, researchers have assessed participants' identity salience as an indicator of underlying values regarding work and nonwork domains (e.g., Lobel & St. Clair, 1992).

Identity salience appears to be a better proxy for more generalized life values than either of the two related, but narrower concepts of job importance/involvement or work centrality. Job importance/involvement has often been conceptualized in terms of one's engagement in job tasks and environment, and work centrality references peoples' belief in the importance of work in their lives (e.g., Paullay, Alliger, & Stone-Romero, 1994). Identity salience is defined as "a readiness to act out an identity as a consequence of the identity's properties as a cognitive structure or schema," and it is believed to be relatively consistent across situations, functioning as a trait-like "personality" characteristic (Stryker & Serpe, 1994, p. 17). Information processing appears to be influenced to support one's salient identity (e.g., Forehand, Deshpande, & Reed, 2002; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997), even when the decisions being made are for future behaviors (e.g., Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Callero, 1985; Charng, Piliavin, & Callero, 1988; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992). For these reasons, identity salience may very well influence new applicants' decision making about organizations.

Goals for the Present Study

The preceding sections have discussed the background necessary for the present hypotheses. In general it was expected that signaling by organizations, SIT, and perceptions of expected p-o fit would jointly influence new applicants' formation of preferences among organizational options. The general issue addressed with tests of the following hypotheses was to better understand how applicants' knowledge of an organization's underlying values toward work and nonwork lives (framed in terms of policies and culture) would play a role in the formation of preference(s) among multiple organizations.

The following hypotheses are easier to understand with a brief summary of the methodology (more details are provided in next chapter). Data were gathered by means of a

structured three-stage, phased narrowing decision making task that forced participants to narrow (i.e., reduce) an initial set of 12 organizational options to a single final choice. Each hypothetical organization was uniquely described in terms of the three organizational attributes already discussed. Upon identification of a final choice (and then a second and third final choice), intentions to pursue each organization for employment were assessed.

Value orientations of applicants and organizations. Congruence between an individual's and an organization's underlying values was expected to result in stronger perceptions of expected p-o fit on the part of applicants. This in turn was expected to guide formation of preferences for specific organizations. Within the present exploratory experimental simulation, it was expected that applicants' values would be most directly visible in the formation of preferences for organizations of specific attribute profiles. For example, individuals who strongly valued their nonwork lives would demonstrate preferences for organizations that offered more family-/life-friendly policies and a more supportive culture for those policies than individuals who valued working hard and being rewarded for their work (these individuals would likely favor organizations offering higher salaries).

Organizational values regarding the work-nonwork interface were made visible through statements of an organization's policies and culture toward those policies. Over and above salary, it was expected that the organizational quality attributes of policy and culture would factor prominently in the decision making of participants. In essence, the question of expected p-o fit is closely related to whether applicants viewed an organization's policies as fully relevant to them in their current situation. Given the situation of young applicants, it was expected that life-friendly policies and culture would be more relevant and therefore more influential in formation of organizational preferences.

Important questions therefore were (a) whether salary, type and number of family-friendly/life-friendly policies, and the supportiveness of and organization's culture would influence an individual's attraction, and (b) whether (and how) the importance of the three attributes would differ from the beginning to the end of the structured decision making simulation and across the two policy type groups (a between-subject variable in the present study). A central assumption was that the importance placed on organizational attributes by individuals would vary from stage to stage during the process of narrowing a large set of options to a final choice. This dynamic process has been observed by several researchers, including the developers of the phased narrowing approach that is central to the present methodology (Levin & Jasper, 1995). As noted in the above discussion of stages of decision making, there is also evidence to suggest applicants may engage in initial screening of organizational options, followed by additional narrowing to a final choice that is qualitatively different from the initial screening (e.g., Beach, 1993). It was expected that more concrete salary information would be focused on in the initial screening and then followed by attention to policies and culture information that would exceed the influence of salary by itself.

This procession from concrete to abstract attributes in decision making is closely mirrored in descriptions of "reflective thought" (e.g., Dewey, 1998). Additional support for the differential influence of organizational attributes across stages of decision making comes from Tversky's (1972) non-compensatory elimination-by-aspects theory, which suggests that people will make an initial elimination of alternatives based on a particular attribute for which a certain minimum level must be reached (e.g., Gilbride & Allenby, 2004; Osborn, 1990). Further narrowing among the remaining options will then require attention to different attributes to form a more defined final selection. Given this dynamic process and the inherent differences between

salary as a concrete attribute and policy and culture information as more abstract, it was expected that:

Hypothesis 1a: Salary information will be most influential at the first stage of decision making.

Hypothesis 1b: The influence of number of policies and culture information will increase across stages two and three of the decision making task.

Even though graduating college students may not typically have family concerns, they are still likely to be attracted to organizations offering life-friendly policies. This idea has been supported (in terms of family-friendly policies) by Honeycutt and Rosen (1997) who demonstrated that most individuals (i.e., family-, career-, and balance-salient men and women, parents and non-parents) are generally strongly attracted to flexible organizations, and that people may be especially attracted by the chance to balance work and nonwork interests and responsibilities, rather than by other commonly identified job-related attractors (e.g., salary). In the Honeycutt and Rosen study however, the strength of this attraction was weak, possibly due to the construal of flexible benefits as *family-friendly* and lacking in relevance to non-familied, young applicants.

As participants in the present study were not expected to have strong familial concerns, it was expected that life-friendly policies would be more strongly perceived as relevant (and therefore influential in decision making) than family-friendly policies:

Hypothesis 2a: The number of life-friendly policies will be more influential than the number of family-friendly policies, across all stages of decision making.

Hypothesis 2b: Policy type (family-friendly vs. life-friendly) will predict intentions to pursue an individual's top organizational choice(s), such that intentions will be stronger toward organizations espousing life-friendly policies.

A secondary and exploratory issue in the present study was to consider the role of identity salience as an individual difference that might be influential in the applicant decision

making process. Given the importance of individual differences in the formation of attraction to jobs and organizations (e.g. Schneider, 1987; Turban, Eyring, & Campion, 1993) and actual utilization of family-friendly policies (e.g., Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997), it was also important to consider the role of identity salience in this decision making process.

Unfortunately, no well-validated or unambiguous measure of this construct exists and of those that are available, none have been designed for college students. This is surprising, given the assertions in the literature that individual differences among applicants largely determine whether specific organizational attributes will match an individual's needs and requirements (e.g., Turban & Keon, 1993, also citing Barnard, 1938). In the present study a newly developed measure of work and nonwork identity salience was initially validated and the relationships between these forms of identity salience and applicant attraction were explored. Related to SIT and p-o fit was the additional expectation that the importance of the three organizational attributes would vary depending on individual differences (e.g., Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997; Judge & Bretz, 1997), therefore it was proposed that:

Exploratory issue: The relative impact of the three organizational attributes is expected to differ across individuals depending on identity salience and regardless of the family-friendly or life-friendly nature of an organization under consideration.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were senior undergraduate students at a medium-sized university in the mid-western United States. Given the scope of the present study, participants were selected from a traditional career-focused population by targeting two senior-level seminars in business policy administration and marketing. The nature of the study was described to all students during their assigned lecture times in the first week of classes. The first class consisted of 135 students studying business policy and strategy. These individuals completed the simulation task at one of several administrations in the evenings and nights over the period of a week. As an incentive they were offered 1% extra credit on their final course grade if they completed phases one (decision making task) and two (demographic information) of the study. Of the initial group, 62 students provided data at both phases.

The second class was an upper-level business-to-business marketing seminar for business administration majors ($n = 41$). No extra credit was available as an incentive, so phase one was administered in-class (students were free to leave if they did not wish to participate). The second phase for these students was attached in paper form to the end of an in-class exam in order to most effectively reach all the students who had completed the phase one simulation (its completion was also voluntary). Of the initial class, 31 students provided data at both phases.

Demographic information suggests the two groups of students did not differ in any substantive fashion. Therefore, data from all respondents were grouped into a single data set for the analyses and the demographic summary presented here represents the full sample ($N = 110$ students, with 93 completing both phases). Of this total group, 48 participants were female and the breakdown in terms of sex across the two classes was proportionately similar. Most

participants were either single or dating and between the ages of 21 and 26 years (with a large percentage between 21 and 23). Content analysis of an open-ended question asking for academic majors revealed four general categories that could be used to summarize these students' career preparation (some individuals fit more than one category): (a) management and administrative degree ($n = 26$), (b) accounting and finance ($n = 15$), (c) information processing and purchasing/supply chain ($n = 10$), and (d) social science-related business discipline (e.g., marketing, human resources; $n = 46$).

All four major categories conform to the initial goal of sampling students headed toward careers within organizations. This was also confirmed by content analysis of responses to the open-ended question "If you could have your ideal job, what would it be like?", which indicated that respondents saw themselves working within largely traditional roles (e.g., sales, marketing, management) within organizations. Respondents from both classes demonstrated a good deal of variance in terms of self-reported grade point average (e.g., GPA = 3.38-3.97 [24.7%], 3.01-3.35 [24.8%], 2.78-3.00 [25.8%], and 2.00-2.75 [24.7%]) and identity salience. Overall, at the time of the decision making simulation, 12.9% of respondents reported not searching for a job, 66.7% reported searching and/or applying and interviewing for jobs, and 20.4% reported already working/holding a job to begin soon.

Measures

Demographic information. For the purposes of describing participants and discussing the generalizability of the findings, the following demographic information was gathered for each participant: (a) academic major(s), (b) ideal job, (c) current job search status, (d) current relationship status, (e) overall GPA, (f) year in college, (g) age, and (h) sex (see Appendix D).

Intentions to pursue an organization for employment. To fully gauge an individual's attraction to an organization Highhouse et al. (2003) recommend that researchers assess general attraction *and* an individual's intentions to pursue employment with an organization. Doing so increases the selectivity of individuals' choices, since attitudes can be held toward many organizations, but intentions tend to be held toward only the top choices. Participants indicated their general attraction and intentions toward their top three organizational choices by responding to five items following each choice, on a five-point, Likert-type scale such that 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree (cf., Highhouse et al. 2003; Turban & Keon, 1993). Observed internal consistencies for this scale in the present study were high for the first, second, and third organizational choices (α s = .93, .91, and .90, respectively). Because the goal was to assess the attractive potential of flexible policies and cultures, this scale also incorporates items addressing initial attitudes toward an organization (as in Highhouse et al., 2003) (items included in materials presented in Appendix C).

Identity salience. Although included as an exploratory issue, applicants' reactions were expected to vary, largely due to individual differences (e.g., Judge & Bretz, 1992). Identity salience is an individual characteristic that could be expected to influence applicant decision making within a p-o fit perspective. Previous measures of this construct (e.g., Lobel & St. Clair, 1992; Lodahl & Kejnar, 1965; Paullay et al., 1994) have not been able to account for the possibility that an individual could be both highly work and nonwork salient at the same time (a condition that could arguably be considered as balance-salient).

A new, 10-item work-nonwork identity salience scale was developed for the present study. Participants indicated their agreement on a five-point, Likert-type scale (items and the factor loadings shown in Table 4). A high score on the work- or nonwork-salience subscales

indicated a high level of this form of identity salience; balance-salience was indicated when the scores of each subscale are roughly equivalent.

Initial reliability and validity of this scale were gauged with a pre-test with students in an introductory psychology course (results discussed below). Pre-test participants responded to the 10 items from four separate perspectives: (1) as themselves, (2) as a work-salient individual, (3) as a nonwork-salient individual, and (4) as a work-nonwork balanced individual (pre-test materials are included in Appendix B). In the full study both work- and nonwork-salience scales demonstrated adequate internal consistency (see Table 4).

Materials

In the actual study all participants responded to paper-based stimuli and measures during the decision making simulation (materials are included in Appendix C). A follow-up questionnaire (Appendix D) assessed demographic information and ratings of identity salience and respondents from the first class completed these via an internet-based survey, while those in the second class responded via an identical paper-based survey that was attached to an in-class exam (with instructions that they were not required to complete the questionnaire, but that it was the final portion of my study). The decision making simulation required participants to make choices among a set of 12 organizational options, each described in terms of three attributes.

Salary was one manipulated attribute, as previously discussed research has shown it to be important in organizational and job choice decisions. *Number of policies* served as an indication of the family-friendly or life-friendly nature of the organization in an administrative sense. The strength of the family- versus life-friendly policy type manipulation was confirmed in a pre-test in which students indicated the degree to which each set of policies (presented separately) represented family-friendly and life-friendly policies (results are discussed in the following

section). Finally, the *supportiveness of an organization's culture* (culture) toward the family-friendly or life-friendly policies was included as a third important attribute considered by job applicants. Figure 1 illustrates how each of the 12 organizational options was described with a unique combination of these three attributes.

The levels of these attributes were ordered in such a way that those who chose based on salary were expected to prefer organizational options that include higher salaries. Similarly, those who were more attracted by the presence of organizational policies (family-friendly policies or life-friendly) were expected to choose organizations that advertised more of these policies. Finally, those who would be swayed by the supportiveness of an organization's culture toward those policies were expected to choose organizations that have a mostly supportive family-friendly or life-friendly culture.

Figure 1. Representation of the 12 Different Organizations, in Terms of Three Attributes (Letters in parentheses correspond to the organizational descriptions in the stimuli, see Appendix C)

		<i>Supportiveness of organization's culture</i>					
		X = Full, Y = Moderate, Z = Low					
<i>Number of family-friendly / life-friendly policies</i>	12	Y (J)		Z (I)			
	10	X(E)			Z (B)		
	8	X (H)		Y(A)			
	6				Y(C)		Z (K)
	4				X (G)		Z (L)
	2				X (F)		Y (D)
		Much less than average	Less than average	Just less than average	Just above average	More than average	Much more than average
		<i>Salary</i>					

Salary information is operationalized in nonspecific terms (as shown along the X-axis in Figure 1) so as to increase the applicability of these scenarios to individuals heading toward careers with varied starting salary levels.

The six levels of family-friendly/life-friendly policies range from 2 to 12 in number and are indicated along the Y-axis in Figure 1. The full lists of possible family-friendly and life-friendly policies are presented with the study materials in Appendix C. Most of the life-friendly policies represent neutrally reframed traditional family-friendly policies. Several additional life-friendly policies are based on issues raised in the popular press and research literature, but not addressed with existing family-friendly policies (i.e., they are new policies that could enhance employees' work and nonwork interface).

Finally, culture was considered in terms of three levels (guided by Allen, 2001; Thompson et al., 1999), as is visible in Figure 1: X = Mostly supportive (e.g., "You've heard that supervisors and coworkers encourage use of these policies; use will not negatively affect your career progress"), Y = Moderately supportive (e.g., "Although these policies are advertised, you've heard that people only occasionally take advantage of them for fear of it affecting their career progress"), and Z = Minimally supportive (e.g., "While these policies exist on paper, you've heard that most individuals in the organization avoid using them for fear of jeopardizing their careers").

The visible relationship in Figure 1 between number of policies and salary is negative, as it is often the case that increases in the number of benefits are accompanied by decreases in overall salary (i.e., the organization's cost for providing benefits has to be recouped elsewhere). The relationship between the attributes of culture and number of

policies was less clearly predicted, as little to no research has examined this relationship.²

This set of options served as the basis for the structured decision making task, during which the purpose was to identify which of the three attributes would be most important at which of the three decision making stages.

Procedure

Previous studies examining the importance of organizational attributes in the job/organization choice process have typically utilized either direct estimation, in which potential applicants directly rank various job or organizational characteristics in terms of their importance (e.g., Lacy, Bokemeier, & Shepard, 1983), or policy capturing, whereby participants must respond to a large number of manipulated descriptions of hypothetical organizations (e.g., Bretz & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1992), with importance being determined by consideration of the attributes in the choices a respondent makes. Both of these techniques have notable limitations (e.g., Barber, 1998; Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001; Slaughter & Highhouse, 2003). To enhance the realism of the decision making process and prevent the fatigue associated with policy-capture designs, the hypotheses outlined in the present study were tested with data gathered via the phased narrowing technique (Levin & Jasper, 1995).

Phased narrowing refers to a structured decision making process by which participants are directed to form a single final choice from among an initial set of multiple options. In the original application of this technique (Levin & Jasper, 1995), participants began with 18 options, and were directed to narrow their options down to six, then to three, and then to a final choice. Despite recommendations to apply phased narrowing to the study of applicant attraction (e.g.,

² With this set of organizational options, logic would suggest the optimal choice to be an organization with a medium level of salary, number of policies, and supportive culture. That such an option might dominate the others (e.g., Slaughter & Highhouse, 2003) is not of great concern however, because the present focus was more explicitly on the process by which a final organizational preference was made.

Barber, 1998; Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001), and although Levin and colleagues have developed and studied multiple applications of this technique (Jasper & Levin, 2001; Levin, Jasper, & Forbes, 1998; Levin, Jasper, & Gaeth, 1996), phased narrowing has not been considered in this context (with the exception of Brooks, 2004; Brooks-Laber, Russell, & Highhouse, 2001).

The procedure for the present study included two separate data collections, reducing the potential for biases often associated with cross-sectional studies. Participants were initially given either a family-friendly ($n = 56$) or life-friendly ($n = 54$) phased narrowing packet (randomly assigned and identical except for the specific policies described in the organization descriptions). Working through this packet took participants approximately 20 minutes. Two weeks after this data collection, participants were then contacted with a brief demographic questionnaire.

The decision making task involved the following steps. First, participants were presented with a list of policies (either family-friendly or life-friendly) and explanations of their purpose. Second, participants reviewed a matrix with descriptions of 12 separate hypothetical organizations, with each organization described in terms of a unique combination of three attributes (using hypothetical organizations permits the manipulation of organizational attributes and has become common in the attraction literature; e.g., Highhouse et al., 2003). On the third step of the decision making simulation participants were instructed to work through a sequence of steps that directed them to narrow down their organizational options from the initial twelve to six, then from those six to three, and then from the remaining three to a single, most preferred choice.

Participants were then informed that their top choice was no longer available and they were asked to select a next most-preferred choice. This process was repeated until a first, second, and third choice of an organization was made. Following each final choice,

participants were also asked to (a) describe their rationale for selecting a particular organization from among the other options and (b) indicate their intentions to pursue their chosen organization for potential employment, were it a real organization.

Analyses

The first round of analyses was directed at data collected during the pre-test. As the purpose of this pre-test was to ensure that the chosen family-friendly policies were perceived as different from the life-friendly policies and to initially validate the identity salience scale, analyses consisted of *t*-tests across identity salience conditions and ratings of policy type. Given the exploratory nature of both the pre-test and the actual study, and the small samples employed in both, effects were considered significant when $p < .05$ and worth considering in an exploratory sense (i.e. marginal) when $.05 < p < .10$, given that in most an effect size greater than .20 may be considered a moderate effect (e.g., Keppel, 1991) worthy of additional consideration, even if it is statistically nonsignificant (which could be due to limited sample size).

The analyses for the data collected in the actual study are based on the principles underlying the phased-narrowing technique developed by Levin and Jasper (1995). The value of the phased-narrowing technique is that it facilitates use of relatively simple analytical techniques. A few operations on the raw data allow a researcher to examine the hypotheses of interest with basic mean comparisons, analysis of variance procedures, and regression analyses. Using these techniques simplifies eventual reporting of results and allows the testing of effects with regard to the powerful *F*-statistic (cf., Jasper & Levin, 2001).

The between subjects manipulation of policy type (i.e., family-friendly vs. life-friendly) permitted a conservative examination of how decision making might differ for those confronted with family-friendly as opposed to life-friendly policies and culture information. This combined

with the within-person nature of the multi-step phased narrowing task yielded information that was useful in testing the hypotheses previously discussed. Three steps were followed when analyzing the phased narrowing data (from Levin & Jasper, 1995, p.4):

- 1) Calculate the mean for each subject on each attribute in stages one and two (the average for stage three will be the final choice).
- 2) Convert these means to centered-mean-standardized scores, based on the *M* and *SD* for each attribute from the original stimulus levels. A score on an attribute indicates the impact of that attribute on that participant's choice in a given stage (e.g., scores above 0 [and in general larger/more positive scores] indicate that a particular attribute was more favorable to the participant and influential at a given decision making stage).
- 3) Test whether the impact of any attribute varies across decision stages and levels (with ANOVA techniques).

Transforming the raw data in such a fashion allows presentation of participants' scores in terms of their relation to the mean level of each of the attributes (i.e., centered-mean-standardized scores at each stage of the decision making process). However, because the participant is working with an increasingly selective set of options, the choices made at one stage are not independent of choices made at previous stages. What is analyzed instead is each attribute's "marginal incremental influence" at each stage (Levin et al., 1996, p. 387).

In other words, if the options selected at stage one are chosen largely on the basis of a primary organizational attribute (e.g., salary), all remaining choices from this narrowed set will continue to be influenced by the importance placed on salary in the initial set of selected options. All of the specified hypotheses were tested using participants' centered-mean-standardized attribute scores across the three stages of the decision making task, as they related to the first final choice, and the average of their

first, second, and third final choices. For the sake of simplicity, from this point forward any mention of participant scores refers to these transformed attribute scores.

Comparisons of attribute scores were made with repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA), multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), and/or *t*-tests targeting each of the hypotheses. Effect sizes for the results of *t*-tests were calculated in terms of Cohen's *d* (using the formula $2t / \sqrt{df}$), an index of the degree to which each null hypothesis is false. The *d* value can be compared against Cohen's (1992) suggested effect sizes of .20, .50, and .80 as an indication of small, medium, and large effects respectively. For the *F*-tests, partial η^2 (using the formula $SS_{\text{effect}} / [SS_{\text{effect}} + SS_{\text{error}}]$) or η^2 (using the formula $SS_{\text{effect}} / SS_{\text{total}}$, when a separate SS_{error} was not available) were calculated as an index of the amount of variance accounted for by a specified effect. Qualitative data were coded by a trained graduate student and the author, with ratings compared for consistency and discrepancies resolved until consensus was reached.

RESULTS

Pre-test

In the pre-test, the policy type manipulations were evaluated for strength and data were gathered regarding the validity of the new work-nonwork identity salience measure. Results indicated that participants could distinguish family-friendly from life-friendly policies when asked to indicate whether a displayed listing of policies represented family-friendly or life-friendly policies, $t(111) = -5.56, p < .01, d = -1.06$. A test of the strength of these policy choices was also performed, with participants rating the degree to which each set of policies represented what could be considered family-friendly policies or life-friendly policies. In both cases these ratings were significantly in favor of the expected set of policies.

Data collected from participants' self-ratings on the identity salience measure were factor analyzed. A fully exploratory factor analysis yielded a three-factor solution with loadings that could not be conceptually justified. A forced two-factor solution was achieved in a second, confirmatory analysis and this supported the initially expected two factor structure, with the first five items loading on the work-salience dimension and the second five loading on the nonwork-salience dimension (items and their loadings are in Table 4). The internal consistencies of both scales were high in this pre-test sample ($\alpha = .82$ and $.79$, respectively).

The results of the previously described discriminant validation procedure suggested that the identity salience scale differentiated between work-, nonwork-, and balance-salient individuals. When asked to respond as a work-salient person, mean scores on the work and nonwork salience scale subdimensions were significantly higher for the

work-salience dimension than the nonwork-salience dimension ($M_s = 19.69$ vs. 12.74), $t(110) = 8.09, p < .01, d = 1.54$. When asked to respond as a nonwork-salient person, the mean scores reflected a significantly higher degree of nonwork salience than to work salience ($M_s = 22.49$ vs. 8.11), $t(110) = -23.56, p < .01, d = 4.49$. Finally, when asked to respond as a balance-salient person, the means reflected a much more similar level on both the work- and nonwork-salient dimension ($M_s = 14.53$ vs. 15.93), even though this difference was significant, $t(106) = -3.74, p < .01, d = .73$. This pattern of results (especially consideration of the mean total scores on the work and nonwork dimensions) suggested that the identity salience scale was functioning as desired and capable of distinguishing between work- and nonwork-salient individuals, while also permitting an indication of balance-salient individuals.

Actual Study

Because of concerns that sex and job search status might influence the decision making of participants, both variables were considered in separate MANOVAs. Results indicated no significant differences between males and females on the attribute scores, suggesting that in the present decision making task, participant's sex did not influence the importance of particular attributes in the decision making process. The possible influence of job search status was also considered, with results indicating that a respondent's status as not searching, searching/applying, already working/set to work did not influence the importance of any particular organizational attribute. Given these findings, the remainder of the analyses proceeded as initially planned, utilizing the full group of participants (cf., Turban et al., 1993).

Hypothesis 1a stated that salary would be the most influential attribute during the first stage of decision making (i.e., the initial screening of organizational options). Hypothesis 1b

suggested that the influence of the number of policies and culture information would increase across the second and third stages of the decision making task, relative to the influence of salary information, as a final choice was made. These hypotheses were supported, as the influence of the attributes clearly differed across different stages of the decision making process.

Paired samples *t*-tests between salary and number of policies and salary and culture at the first stage demonstrated that salary was significantly more influential than number of policies ($M_s = .23$ vs. $-.30$), $t(109) = 7.94$, $p < .01$, $d = .76$. It should be noted however, that the difference between salary and culture at this first stage was not statistically significant, even though the pattern of means was as expected ($M_s = .23$ vs. $.19$), $t(109) = .72$, $p > .10$. Additional support for Hypothesis 1a and 1b was provided by results of a 2 (policy type) x 3 (attributes) x 3 (decision making stage) repeated measures ANOVA, where a significant decision making stage x attribute interaction was observed, $F(2.29, 247.22) = 5.26$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .05$.

A series of post-hoc Helmert contrasts further clarified the nature of this interaction, indicating that (1) the influence of number of policies significantly differed from that of culture when comparing the first decision making stage and later stages, $F(1, 108) = 22.53$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$, and (2) the influence of salary differed significantly from the influence of number of policies and culture considered together for the second stage versus the final choice, $F(1, 108) = 6.05$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. These findings suggest that the influence of the three attributes differed by stage. More specifically, although salary remained a strongly influential factor across all three stages, changes were observed as expected (Hypothesis 1b) for number of policies and culture as respondents moved from the initial set of organizational options to their final choices.

This shifting of attribute importance is readily observable in the attribute scores displayed in Table 1 and Figures 2a, 2b, and 3.

Table 1. Attribute Scores by Stage for FFP and LFP Conditions (1st Final Choice)

Policy Type	Stage 1			Stage 2			Stage 3 (first choice)			Overall Mean		
	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture
FFP (n = 56)	.250	-.300	.170	.390	-.460	.240	.190	-.320	.340	.277	-.360	.250
LFP (n = 54)	.220	-.310	.220	.250	-.430	.440	.170	-.370	.540	.213	-.370	.400
Overall Mean	.230	-.300	.190	.320	-.450	.340	.180	-.350	.440	.243	-.367	.323

Note. FFP = family-friendly policy condition; LFP = life-friendly policy condition. “Stage” refers to decision making stage (1 = narrowing to 6 choices, 2 = narrowing to 3 choices, 3 = final choice). “Policies” = the attribute of the number of either FFP/LFP policies available. Scores represent the average “favorability” of an attribute in the decisions made at each of the three stages in the simulated decision making task. This favorability is in terms of the number of standard deviations above or below the middle level of each attribute (Levin & Jasper, 1995).

Figure 2a. Attribute Scores x Decision Making Stage (Family-Friendly Condition)

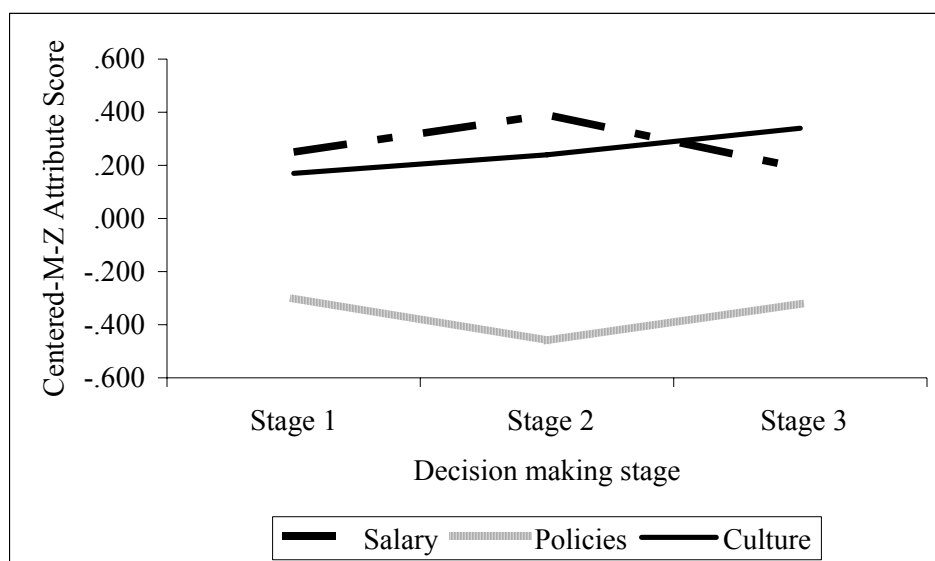


Figure 2b. Attribute Scores x Decision Making Stage (Life-Friendly Condition)

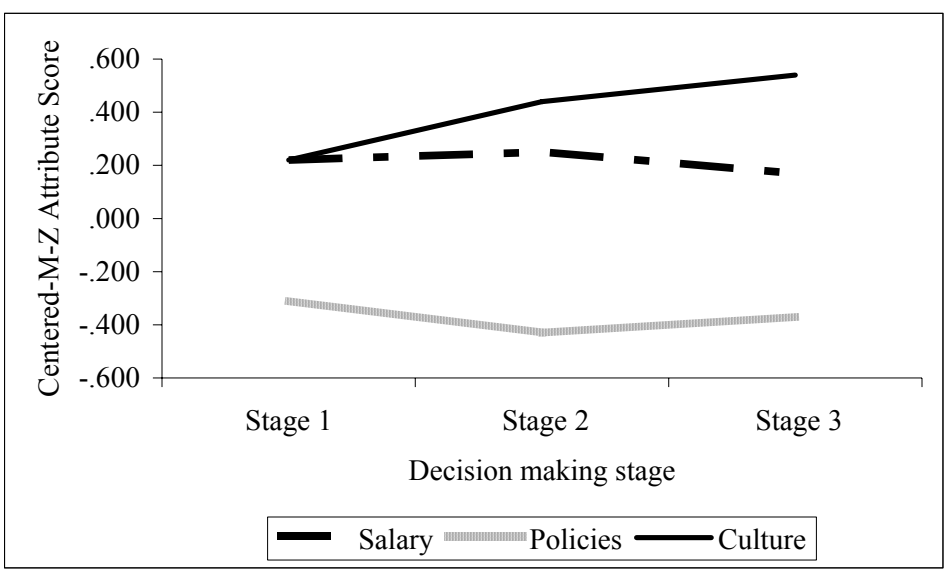
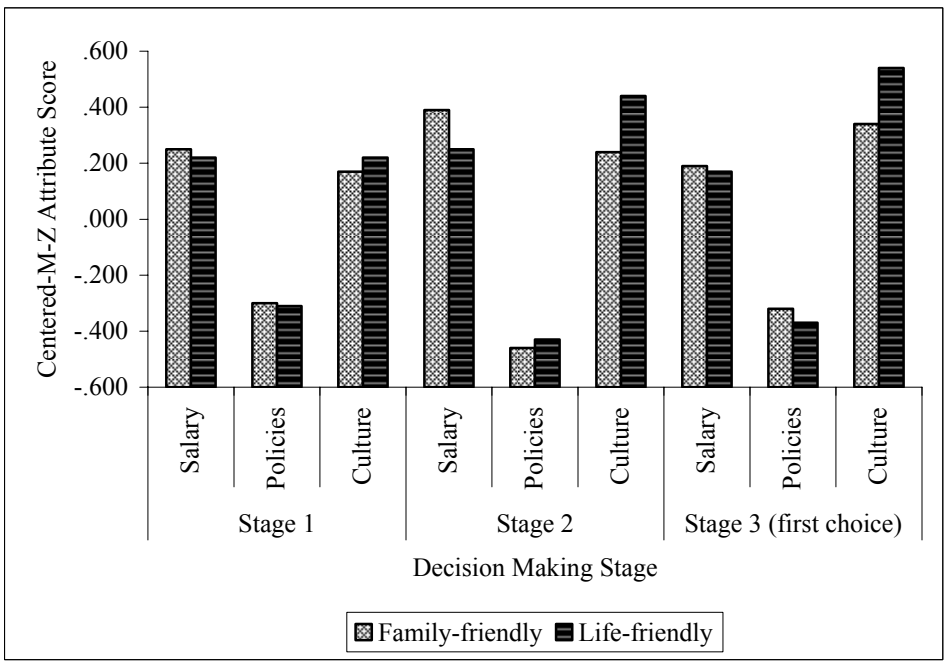


Figure 3. Attribute Scores by Decision Making Stage for Family- and Life-Friendly Conditions (1st Final Choice)



Qualitative evidence also supported Hypotheses 1a and 1b. The open-ended question, “Based on the organizational information you were given, why did you select this organization (i.e., how did you arrive at this choice)?” followed each of the final choices (first, second, and

third) in an attempt to corroborate the pattern of attribute impact identified quantitatively with the rationale described by each participant. Table 2 lists randomly selected actual responses that illustrate different personal emphases in making a final choice. These and the remaining responses to this open-ended question were coded and a ranking of attribute importance was calculated based on their qualitative weight in these responses. Table 3 contrasts these qualitative rankings with rankings computed from the initial attribute scores.

Table 2. Illustrative Examples of Responses to an Open-Ended Item Targeting the Rationale for Making a Final Choice

<i>Based on the organizational information you were given, why did you select this organization (i.e., how did you arrive at this choice)?</i>	Most important attribute
"[This organization] gives me a 'full table' of benefits and encourages me to use them, while paying less than industry average. Balance is very important in everyday life. Some people make large amounts of money and never leave their office."	Policy
"There are many benefits that will help my career progress. Entry level pay coming out of college does not bother me, but not having benefits would."	Policy
"[This organization] pays well compared to the others, and it offers some important family-friendly policies. Most importantly there does not seem to be any negatives for using them. I would not join a company that was in any way deceptive."	Culture
"It is important to have the flexibility in a career and be paid fairly too. In addition, by encouraging the use of these policies illustrates a [genuine] care for employees well-being which is very attractive to me as a job seeker."	Culture
"Higher salary to start out. Again, [I] would most likely not be at the job long enough to use these benefits so it makes sense to take advantage of the higher salary now."	Salary
"Because money is the most important thing for me coming out of college. At this stage in my career I feel all the extra options are unnecessary unless I'm making 'much more' than the industry standard."	Salary

Table 3. Quantitative and Qualitative Rankings of Attribute Importance for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Final Choices

	Policy Type	First final choice			Second final choice			Third final choice		
		Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture
FFP (<i>n</i> = 56)	Quantitatively	2	3	1	1	3	2	1	3	2
	Qualitatively	2	1	3	2	1	3	1	2	3
LFP (<i>n</i> = 54)	Quantitatively	2	3	1	2	3	1	1	3	2
	Qualitatively	2	1	3	2	1	3	1	2	3

Note. FFP = Family-friendly policies, LFP = Life-friendly policies. “Policies” = the attribute of number of FFP/LFP policies available. “Quantitatively” = calculation from the attribute scores from the phased narrowing task, while “Qualitatively” = codings of responses to open-ended question asking for explanation of rationale behind choice.

Figure 4a. Quantitative and Qualitative Rankings of Attribute Importance For 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Final Choices (FFP Condition)

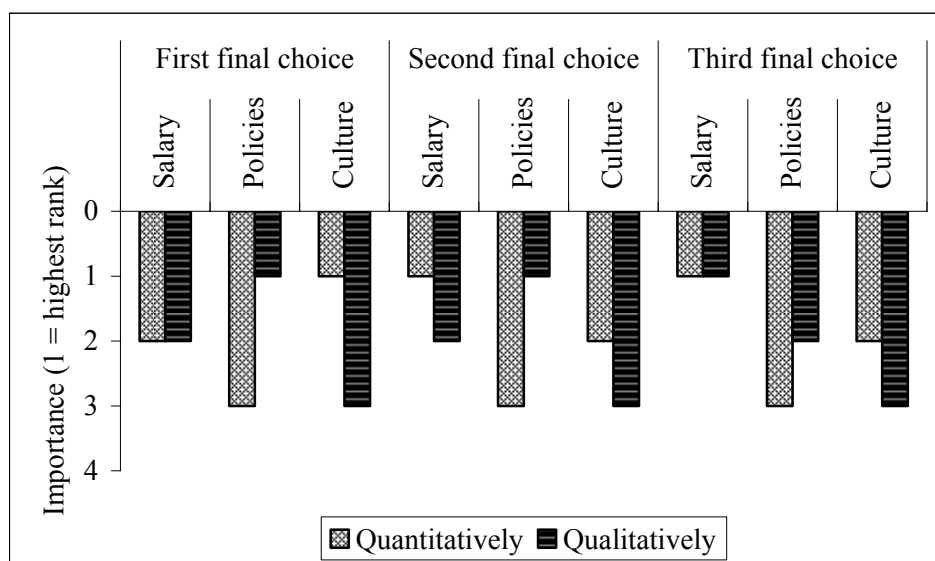
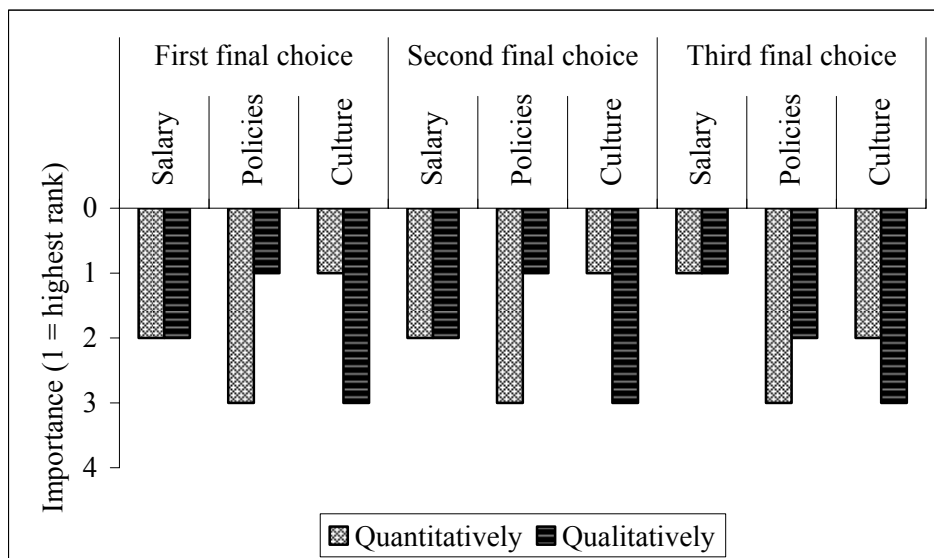


Figure 4b. Quantitative and Qualitative Rankings of Attribute Importance For 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Final Choices (LFP Condition)



From Table 3 and Figures 4a/b it is interesting to note that respondents' perceptions of their decisions did not, on average, reflect the actual decisions that they made (in terms of the three attributes). One additional noteworthy feature is that with the first final choice, depending on the quantitative or qualitative approach, either number of policies or culture were more important than salary, but as participants were forced to select a second and third final choice, their emphasis shifted, resulting in salary being the most important attribute, as indicated by both quantitative and qualitative methods when making the third final choice.

Hypothesis 2a, that life-friendly policies would be more influential than family-friendly policies across all stages of decision making was not statistically supported. An ANOVA comparing attribute scores across all three decision making stages between family-friendly and life-friendly conditions indicated no significant differences between policy type conditions in the influence of number of policies at any of the three stages of decision making. In addition, the calculated attribute scores (e.g., Table 1) suggested that the influence of number of policies as an

attribute was minimal at best for both family-friendly and life-friendly conditions, relative to salary and culture information (reasons for this are discussed in the following section).

Hypothesis 2b stated that policy condition (family-friendly/life-friendly) would predict a person's intentions to pursue his or her top organizational choice(s), such that one's final intentions would be stronger toward organizations espousing life-friendly policies than to organizations with family-friendly policies. This hypothesis was not supported by a MANOVA comparing the average intentions to pursue the first, second, and third final choices for both family- and life-friendly conditions. Thus, there was no support for the expectation that the type of policy would directly influence individuals' intentions to pursue their final organizational choice.

Finally, identity salience was considered for two exploratory purposes: (1) to validate a newly developed scale for facilitating assessment of work-, balance-, and nonwork-salience, and (2) to ascertain whether identity salience is an important individual difference factor in the formation of attitudes and intentions toward organizations. With regards to the first goal, results of a confirmatory factor analysis mirrored those obtained in the pre-test, providing additional support for the two-dimensionality of the new work-nonwork identity salience scale (estimates presented in Table 4). Results from the actual study also confirmed the internal consistency of the identity salience scale as in the pre-test.

Considering the distribution of scores in response to the items on this scale suggested that respondents varied in terms of their levels of work- and nonwork-salience. In order to determine an individual's work-, nonwork-, or balance salience, the difference between individuals' scores on the work- and nonwork-salience dimensions was calculated. This difference was then plotted to examine its distribution. Based on this distribution, respondents were categorized as being: (1)

work-salient (when work-salience - nonwork-salience = -1 to 18; 31.1% of respondents), (2) *balance-salient* (when work-salience – nonwork salience = -6 to -2; 35.6% of respondents), and (3) *nonwork-salient* (when work-salience – nonwork salience = -16 to -7; 33.3% of respondents).

Table 4. Estimates from a Confirmatory Factor Analysis on the Identity Salience Scale

<i>Item</i>	<i>Work-salience</i>	<i>Nonwork-salience</i>
I feel most like myself when I am working.	.73	
Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to work-related experiences and accomplishments.	.86	
My work-related duties come first on my list of priorities, above all other responsibilities.	.79	
I view my work as the most important aspect of my life.	.78	
My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on what I do at work.	.79	
I feel most like myself when I am with family and friends.		.72
Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to experiences and accomplishments outside of work.		.82
My responsibilities outside of work come first on my list of priorities, above all other duties.		.59
I view my activities outside of work as the most important aspects of my life.		.81
My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on what I do outside of work.		.80
Inter-item consistency	.86	.82

Note. These estimates are from a Principal Component Analysis with a Varimax rotation. No cross loadings of similar magnitude were observed, and as such the estimates are included only for the factor on which an item loaded most highly.

To address the exploratory research question of whether and how the relative impact of the three organizational attributes would differ for individuals depending on their identity saliences, attribute scores were broken down by the three identity salience groups (visible in Table 5 and Figure 5). Recall that identity salience was expected to function as an important individual difference variable that could be helpful in understanding preferences for certain organizational attributes (cf., Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997). Due to the limited base of research

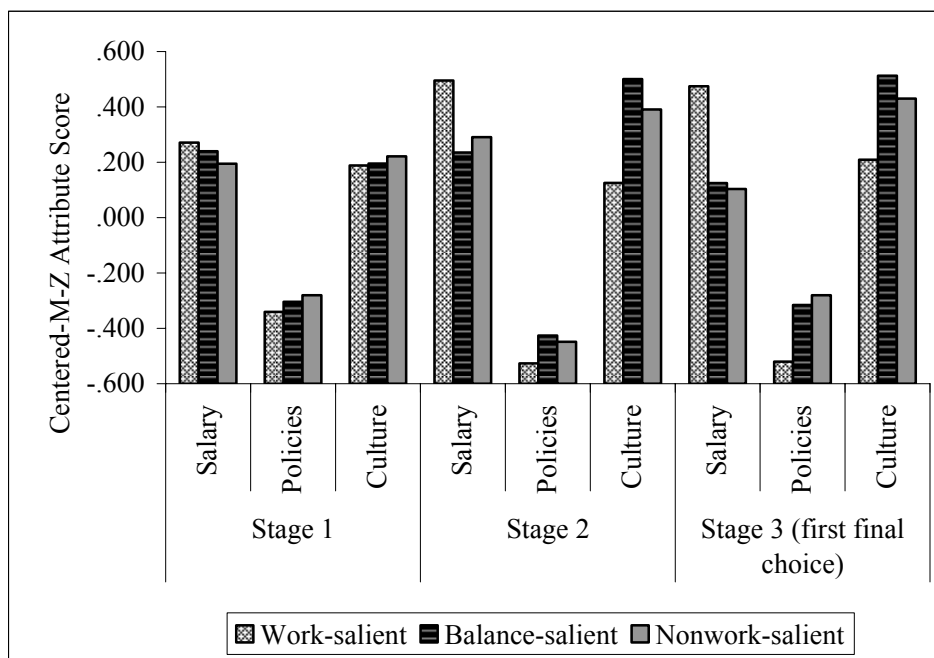
along these lines however, the nature of this expected difference was ambiguous. As such, several expected relationships were examined in a series of comparisons.

Table 5. Attribute Scores by Stage for Work-, Balance-, and Nonwork-Salient Individuals (1st Final Choice)

ID Salience	Stage 1			Stage 2			Stage 3 (first final choice)			Overall Mean		
	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture
WS (<i>n</i> = 28)	.271	-.340	.188	.496	-.527	.126	.475	-.521	.209	.414	-.463	.174
BS (<i>n</i> = 32)	.240	-.304	.195	.235	-.426	.501	.125	-.315	.513	.200	-.348	.403
NWS (<i>n</i> = 30)	.195	-.280	.221	.291	-.448	.391	.103	-.280	.430	.196	-.336	.347
Overall Mean	.235	-.308	.202	.341	-.467	.339	.234	-.372	.384	.270	-.383	.308

Note. WS = Work-salient, BS = Balance-salient, NWS = Nonwork-salient. “Stage” refers to decision making stage (1 = narrowing to 6 choices, 2 = narrowing to 3 choices, 3 = final choice). “Policies” = the attribute of the number of either FFP/LFP policies available. Scores represent the average “favorability” of an attribute in the decisions made at each of the three stages in the simulated decision making task. This favorability is in terms of the number of standard deviations above or below the middle level of each attribute (Levin & Jasper, 1995).

Figure 5. Attribute scores by Stage for Work-, Balance-, and Nonwork-Salient Individuals (1st Final Choice)



Considering Table and Figure 5, notice how the order of attribute importance differed depending work- (salary, culture, number of policies), balance- (culture, salary, number of policies), or nonwork-salience (culture, salary, number of policies). In general, culture appeared

to be the most influential attribute across all stages for both balance- and nonwork-salient individuals, while salary was the most important attribute for work-salient individuals.

Even though the patterns in attribute scores were as expected upon visual examination, this differences were not significant in a statistical sense, as results from a 3 (identity salience, between-subjects) x 3 (decision stage, within subjects) x 3 (attribute, within subjects) repeated measures ANOVA did not support a significant difference between the attribute scores of respondents in the three identity salience groups, between-subjects $F(2,87) = 1.62, p > .10$. A follow-up series of *t*-tests of pairs of means did however suggest that there may be significant differences between the importance of culture and salary among work-, balance-, and nonwork-salient individuals. Given the post-hoc nature of these final comparisons, corrections for familywise error resulted in these differences being nonsignificant by traditional standards.

DISCUSSION

Integrating signaling theory, SIT, and p-o fit, the present study illustrates how applicants form preferences among organizations based on minimal information about organizations. The present application of phased narrowing, combined with qualitative description by respondents, facilitated comparison between peoples' actual decision making actions and perceived decision making strategies. The present study also represents one of only a few attempts to examine the influence of recruiting organizations' support for a positive work-nonwork interface in the formation of applicant reactions (e.g., Bretz & Judge, 1994; Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997; Rau & Hyland, 2002; Rothhausen, Gonzalez, Clarke, & O'Dell, 1998).

In support of Hypothesis 1a, comparison of the centered-mean-standardized attribute scores indicated that salary was significantly more influential than number of policies at the first stage of decision making. This pattern was also observed between salary and culture, but the difference between these two attributes was nonsignificant. These two findings held over both family-friendly and life-friendly conditions.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b were both supported by the results of the three-way repeated measures ANOVA in which the a significant stage x attribute interaction was observed, suggesting that the importance of the attributes was dependent on the stage of decision making in which a participant was functioning. Follow-up contrasts suggested that this interaction was due mainly to significant differences between the influence of number of policies and culture between the first and later stages, and between the influence of salary and that of number of policies and culture considered together for the second stage versus the final choice. These findings suggest that although salary was strongly influential across all stages, the influence of number of policies and culture increased across the latter stages of decision making.

Culture in particular demonstrated increased importance across the second the third decision making stage. Salary was not the critical factor in forming the first final choice and this was confirmed by both quantitative and qualitative data. This supported the expected pattern of attribute importance shifting from concrete to abstract information while narrowing from many to a few options. Interestingly, this shifting was non-uniform across the two policy type groups. In other words, the influence of the attributes was related to whether those attributes were framed in family-friendly or life-friendly terms, with salary being less influential across all decision making stages for respondents in the life-friendly condition. This suggests that the manner in which organizational policies and recruitment messages are framed can have an impact (similar to the effects of the framing of questions in self-report surveys, as noted by Schwarz, 1999).

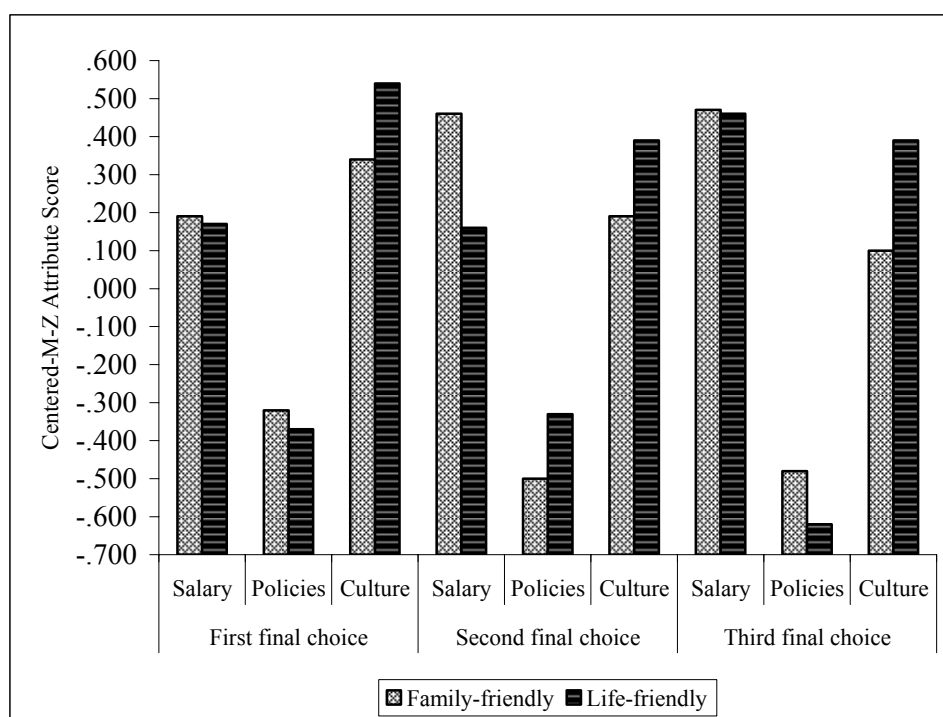
The presentation of attribute scores clarified these statistically highlighted patterns of relationships (see Table 1, Figures 2a, 2b, and 3). In addition, content analysis of qualitative data offered rich supporting information for the expectation that participants would form their first final choice based on a combination of the three attributes, especially factoring in number of policies and culture information. For the second and third final choices (i.e., when participants were told their first, and then second choices were not available), the pattern of attribute importance demonstrated a reversal in indicated attribute importance, such that by the formation of a third final choice, salary had become most important (see Table and Figure 6). This suggests that when forced to settle for something other than a first choice among organizations, applicants may revert to focusing on the most concrete organizational attributes to form a quick secondary choice to meet their basic needs. In this case the need was a sufficient salary, and it appeared to dominate the influence of the other two attributes when second and third choices had to be made.

Table 6. Attribute Scores for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Final Choices

Policy Type	First final choice			Second final choice			Third final choice			Overall Mean		
	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture	Salary	Policies	Culture
FFP (n = 56)	.190	-.320	.340	.460	-.500	.190	.470	-.480	.100	.370	-.430	.220
LFP (n = 54)	.170	-.370	.540	.160	-.330	.390	.460	-.620	.390	.270	-.440	.440
Overall Mean	.180	-.350	.440	.310	-.420	.290	.460	-.550	.250	.320	-.440	.330

Note. FFP = family-friendly policy condition; LFP = life-friendly policy condition. “Stage” refers to decision making stage (1 = narrowing to 6 choices, 2 = narrowing to 3 choices, 3 = final choice). “Policies” = the attribute of the number of either FFP/LFP policies available. Scores represent the average “favorability” of an attribute in the decisions made at each of the three stages in the simulated decision making task. This favorability is in terms of the number of standard deviations above or below the middle level of each attribute (Levin & Jasper, 1995).

Figure 6. Attribute Scores for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Final Choices



Hypothesis 2a was not statistically supported, as there was no evidence that the influence of number of policies differed depending on whether they were framed as family- or life-friendly. However, in examining these differences between number of policies it became apparent that the possible attractiveness of this attribute was likely contingent on the level of

organizational support for those policies (i.e., culture). For this reason, a closer consideration of the influence of culture across the two policy type conditions revealed very interesting findings.

As illustrated in Table 1, for those in the family-friendly policy condition: (a) salary remained the most influential attribute through stages one and two, (b) culture gained in importance, but did not surpass salary until the final choice, and thus (c) across the three stages, the order of attribute importance was salary, culture, number of policies. For those in the life-friendly policy condition the pattern was slightly different, in that: (a) salary and culture were of equal importance in the first stage, (b) culture became most important in stages two and three, and thus (c) the order of importance of attributes across all stages was culture, salary, number of policies. ANOVA results indicated that the importance of culture in stage two was significantly more important for life-friendly policy respondents than family-friendly policy respondents, $F(1, 108) = 4.42, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$. Also, culture was more important for life-friendly policy respondents than family-friendly policy respondents when considering the average importance of the attributes over the final three choices, $F(1, 108) = 4.74, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$.

The importance of these findings is that number of policies by itself did not appear to influence participants' attraction to the organization. Instead, the quality of an organization's culture for supporting its positive work-nonwork interface enhancing policies appeared to be critical. It is suggested therefore, that the number of family-/life-friendly policies offered by an organization may be irrelevant if an organization's culture clearly supports a positive interface between employees' work and nonwork domains. For organizations beginning to develop such a healthy work-nonwork culture however, policy implementation may be a first critical step, followed by targeted recruitment of people who desire to work in such a culture and uphold its tenets. Successful recruitment and retention of these individuals will allow an organization to

develop a critical mass to support its culture change initiatives. The present findings suggest that attracting applicants with policy information alone will not be as successful as including additional information that speaks to the quality of support within the organization for its work-nonwork interface commitment (i.e., culture information; cf., Allen, 2001; Behson, 2002).

The lack of support for Hypothesis 2b, that intentions to pursue an organization would be more strongly felt toward life-friendly as opposed to family-friendly organizations may be explained to some degree by the lack of realism inherent in the present study's simulation. It may have been inappropriate to measure intentions toward hypothetical organizations instead of real organizations, where an actual chance of obtaining a job would exist. Future research along these lines should more fully consider implicit relationships among attributes as a direct indication of applicants' attraction to their final choices (i.e., could high attribute scores = strong attraction).

A related problem associated with the present use of a measure of intentions to pursue is that the range of observed responses on this scale was rather restricted. When rating their first final choice, 63.6% of participants scored higher than 20 (out of 25), indicating a rather skewed distribution of responses. When averaged across the three final choices however, the percentage dropped to 42.3% of participants with scores of 20 or more. This still indicates a skewed distribution and it would behoove researchers to explore other measures that might grant more variability in responses, and therefore a better opportunity at observing a significant effect with intentions to pursue as an outcome variable. Given the present study's instructions however, it is not wholly surprising these scores were so high. Participants' final choices were made from among a larger set of options. It is noteworthy that such a large percentage of respondents so strongly intended to pursue their final choices, which were made on the basis of salary, number of policies, and culture information alone. It would be interesting to see if a similar degree of

range restriction would be observed if different organizational attributes were used to form a choice among multiple hypothetical options.

Finally, the exploratory results regarding the work-nonwork identity salience scale raised several interesting points. In both the pre-test and actual study the brief measure of identity salience developed for this study functioned very well psychometrically (both in terms of discriminant validity and internal consistency). The bi-dimensional nature of this scale presented some challenges when it came to distinguishing among the three forms of identity salience and the scoring method employed in the present study (i.e., trichotomization based on the difference between work- and nonwork-salience scores) is certainly open to revision in future research endeavors (possibly by utilizing alternatives to the present difference score method as outlined by Edwards & Cooper, 1990). The trichotomization into work-, balance-, and nonwork-salience groups however, facilitated the preliminary consideration of how identity salience might play a role in the applicant decision making process.

The changing pattern of organizational attribute importance across the three decision making stages was again observed when comparisons were made across the three identity salience groups. Of particular importance was the finding that the attribute of culture appeared to be the most influential attribute across all stages of decision making for balance- and nonwork-salient individuals. This is logical when one considers that individuals desiring balance and nonwork satisfaction are likely to be attracted to organizations that claim to encourage balance in both work and nonwork roles in terms of policies and in terms of supportive cultures. Although the pattern of means clearly illustrates this precedence of culture as an important attribute, comparisons between the attribute scores for culture and the other attribute scores at the various

stages yielded nonsignificant results, due largely to corrections for statistical significance applied to prevent inflation of Type II error in the running of these post-hoc tests.

Another interesting salience-related finding is that the pattern of attribute scores reflects the different influence of the three attributes as would be expected given the existing theory: Work-salient individuals were guided primarily by the concrete, strongly work-related attribute of salary through all stages, balance-salient individuals were guided initially by salary and culture and then mainly by culture and number of policies at later stages, and nonwork-salient individuals were most strongly influenced by culture information through all stages. There is clearly a need for more attention to be paid to the influence of identity salience and other individual difference characteristics and the role they may play in the recruitment process and in the development of attraction to organizations. With greater power (i.e., the n for these analyses was 89) and theoretically based hypotheses (as opposed to post-hoc exploration), it is likely that future studies will be better able to detect meaningful significant differences across the three identity salience types in terms of attraction toward and preferences for organizational.

Strengths and Limitations

In planning the present study, every effort was made to minimize potential limitations. This included utilizing phased narrowing rather than policy capturing, targeting sampling at a group of students for whom the activity was fully relevant (cf., Cohen-Scali, 2003; Kelloway & Harvey, 1999), splitting data collection over two separate time points, and pre-testing measures and manipulations to ensure their adequate functioning. These efforts developed into several strengths of the present research. First, use of a phased narrowing decision making task reduced the participant fatigue that would have accompanied use of a traditional policy capturing design. Second, consideration of both quantitative and qualitative data supported the use of disguised

methods (e.g., phased narrowing) when trying to ascertain implicit as opposed to self-reports of decision making strategies (see Table 3 and Figures 4a/b). Third, the phased narrowing approach employed in the present study also permitted consideration of applicants' choices at multiple points as preferences among organizations were being formed (i.e., instead of considering only final choices, it was possible to compare sets of organizations chosen at three stages of narrowing during decision making). Finally, the present study was strengthened by the manipulation of multiple organizational attributes that permitted description of organizations in concrete and more abstract/quality-related terms.

Nevertheless, several limitations (in addition to those already mentioned) merit discussion. The first has to do with the difficulty surrounding interpretation of the centered-mean-standardized attribute scores. In particular it is important to highlight that although the number of policies attribute scores were always negative, this does *not* necessarily indicate complete unimportance of this attribute in the formation of preferences among organizations.

Responses to the open-ended rationale question (see Table 2) clearly indicated that number of policies was an important factor to many respondents. However, because of the phased narrowing adjustments called for by Levin and Jasper (1995), the negative attribute scores for number of policies suggest that the organizations being chosen by participants at each stage tended to have fewer than the mean number of policies from the initial levels (which ranged from two to twelve policies, with a mean of seven). As such, number of policies did not appear to be as influential in the formation of final organizational choices as salary and culture.

This is logical, considering that few graduating college students would minimize the importance of salary (a necessary element of any job) in order to attain an extremely diverse benefits package (commonly viewed as a secondary element of a job). Future studies though,

might have better success comparing the tradeoffs made between number of policies and other organizational attributes if fewer levels of number of policies are considered (i.e., a smaller range and therefore lower mean number of policies than in the present study). These efforts may be guided by the knowledge that within the present study, the mean number of policies in chosen organizations across the three decision making stages was around five, and it is possible that 12 policies were simply perceived as redundant (i.e., an organization offering eight policies may have been perceived as equally attractive as an organization offering more than eight policies)

A second limitation is that power to detect significant relationships was limited due to the small sample size. Efforts were made to reduce the impact of low sample size, but the low response rate could not be entirely prevented. Future studies should ensure a larger sample of participants. In defense of the present study however, the present results represent one of the larger-scale applications of phased narrowing for this type of decision making study. It should also be noted that even with low power certain effects identified in the present study suggest that extensions of this work with larger samples may be promising.

A third limitation is that the present results may not generalize to other populations. One particular reason for this is that participants did not have the opportunity to directly contrast family-friendly and life-friendly organizations against one another when forming their final choices. On some level this between subjects manipulation strengthens the present results, by making the observed effects conservative estimates. It is expected that these effects would be even stronger if participants were able to compare and contrast available family- and life-friendly options before making their choices, but only future research will be able to test this assertion with any certainty.

It is also important to highlight that the lack of generalizability of the present findings is not viewed as severely damaging to the present efforts, given that the purpose of this study was to explore the decision making of graduating college students when provided with family- or life-friendly organization information. In addition, the target population for this work was clearly defined. All participants were senior undergraduates in their last semester of study at a large public university. All participants were business students and most were aiming for careers as employees of organizations. Although job applicants may have sought additional information about these organizations if given the chance to do so, it is also true that job applicants must make a decision based on available information. Certainly a necessary extension of this research is to compare the influence of the present set of organizational attributes with additional attributes and within other populations (e.g., students with non-traditional majors, adults changing jobs/careers).

The present sampling strategy was also guided by the lack of recruitment research that has considered the formation, among college students, of intentions to pursue an organization for employment. Much of the research linking organizational attributes to individual attitudes has focused either on individuals who are already employed, or on how certain organizational attributes relate to incumbent employees' work-related attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment). At the same time however, the recruitment literature suggests that organizations seeking to maintain a competitive advantage will need to improve their abilities to attract and retain the best possible talent (e.g., Barber, 1998). In many cases that talent is possessed by graduating college and university students who are equipped with the latest and greatest training in new technologies and related skills. Although student samples have been

studied in the existing research, few researchers have considered the possibility that students' work-nonwork interface concerns might factor into the formation of applicant reactions.

While this may be the case for some young applicants, there is evidence from several different research literatures that the current generation of college graduates does desire to work for organizations that offer some form of support and facilitation of positive work-nonwork interface. Although juggling work and family responsibilities may not be a typically identified concern for members of this cohort, research suggests young career starters will seek to actively handle many similar forms of interrole conflict that can arise between work and nonwork roles (Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Rau & Hyland, 2002). In addition, it can be expected that growing up in dual-earner families and a culture in which work- and nonwork-demands are increasingly in conflict will influence the attitudes held by these individuals toward employing organizations (e.g., Mortimer et al., 2002; Rau & Hyland, 2002).³

The distinctiveness of the current generation of college students needs to be acknowledged if their reactions to organizational recruitment materials are to be understood. It is commonly asserted that work beliefs and attitudes are stable by the time a person nears their college graduation.⁴ Some researchers have suggested the current group of young career starters will enter the workforce with well-established negative beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Barling, Dupre, & Hepburn, 1998) about their ability to experience positive interactions between work and nonwork domains. This phenomenon also appears to transcend American culture, as it has been observed among European students of similar age (e.g., Cohen-Scali, 2003).

Maintaining involvement in multiple life domains is difficult and children learn this lesson vicariously from their parents and family members (Loughlin & Barling, 2001; Kelloway

³ But, it is important to note that Rau & Hyland (2002) cite evidence that this is not an entirely foregone conclusion (citing Feldman & Gainey, 1997; Hill et al., 1998; also Kurland & Bailey, 1999).

⁴ This view is debated, at least when it comes to political attitudes (Krosnick & Alwyn, 1989).

& Harvey, 1999; Piotrkowski, 1979). Research suggests negative experiences in the family environment can negatively impact eventual career decisions (Dickinson & Emler, 1992) and this influence has been demonstrated both quantitatively (Hargrove, Creagh, & Burgess, 2002) and qualitatively (Johnson, Buboltz, & Nichols, 1999; Mortimer et al., 2002). Graduating college students are familiar with the conflict that can arise between work and family and many of these individuals have experienced work and nonwork conflict of their own. For these reasons, achieving a positive work-nonwork interface was expected to be a concern that factors into the formation of college students' preferences among organizations.

Practical Implications and Future Research

The present findings are practically relevant to organizations that have established policies, programs, and cultures in support of a positive work-nonwork interface. Use of salary information by participants in the initial screening of organizations suggests that offering increasing numbers of benefits and touting a fully supportive work-nonwork culture without offering a sufficient salary is not likely to be an effective recruiting strategy for graduating college students. An average or above average salary for the occupation and labor market thus appears to be a necessary precondition that helps to keep a particular organization on a new applicant's "short list" of initially screened organizations worthy of further consideration.

However, participants in the present study were also guided by an organization's number of policies and supportive culture over and above the influence of salary alone when forming their final preferences and intentions toward specific organizations (a noteworthy finding, given that few participants had families of their own). This generalized preference for help in achieving a positive work-nonwork interface is echoed in many recent publications (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2004; Wolk, 2005). More importantly the influence of number of policies and culture was

especially strong for organizations espousing life-friendly as opposed to family-friendly policies. This conforms to findings by Behson (2002) and suggestions by Grover and Crooker (1995) and Hall (1990) that indicate limited value in organizational benefits and policies targeting work-family issues only when the employee base is “non-familied”. As such, the present results support the importance of using attributes other than salary to engender feelings of attraction from applicants. This may help organizations to meet the challenge of attracting/retaining the best employees (e.g., Mellor, Mathieu, Barnes-Farrell, & Rogelberg, 2001).

Given the exploratory nature of the present study, the majority of future-oriented implications are in the realm of options for additional research. The present study demonstrated how integrating signaling, social identity, and p-o fit theories can be helpful in explaining the formation of applicants preferences among multiple organizations based on limited information. Salary offerings clearly signaled important information to participants for use in the initial screening of options, but additional narrowing of options was also influenced strongly by statements of organizational work-nonwork culture. This latter information, abstract as it may have been, was expected to appeal most directly to applicants’ underlying values regarding the importance of work and nonwork roles. All three organizational attributes were considered as participants chose organizations that best matched their needs and values (i.e., providing the best possible p-o fit and allowing them to match the social identity of the organization as a whole).

A major area for future research then will be to more explicitly investigate the functioning of signaling, SIT, and p-o fit within the process of applicant reaction formation to organizational recruitment information. Of central importance will be the explicit measurement of individual and organizational values to facilitate direct testing of the influence of expected and eventual p-o fit. The influence of other organizational signals should also be considered, as well

as whether the source of such signals is a factor (e.g., Wathen & Burkell, 2002). Research will also need to target applicants' concerns with the social identities of potential employers and how the portrayed identity in recruiting matches (or fails to match) what applicants desire and/or need.

It would also be worthwhile to consider how settling for a second or third (as opposed to first and most-preferred) organizational choice might influence perceptions of p-o fit within organization as well as the strength of self-identification with the social identity of the eventual employing organization. This question stems from the present comparison of quantitative and qualitative rank-ordered attribute importance, which demonstrated that as respondents were forced to select a second and then a third final choice (once their first and then second choices were no longer available), the ordering of importance among the attributes changed, ending with salary as the most influential attribute in third final choice, possibly shifting down to basic needs, while in the earlier choices ideal goals tied to policies and culture could be the target.

On a different line of inquiry, research needs to consider the complex effects of parent-child interactions on applicant choice making (e.g., Snell, Stokes, Sands, & McBride, 1994, p. 139), especially given that previous experiences with parents may positively or negatively impact the eventual decision making of applicants when faced with multiple organizational options (e.g., Barling et al., 1998; Whiston & Keller, 2004). One's experiences while growing up also will influence the development of identity salience, which deserves its own attention as a potentially important individual difference factor influencing career-related decisions. Future studies should include students with diverse career goals and individuals from different cohorts.

Additional attention should be given to the value of reframing family-friendly programs as life-friendly programs. It is likely such benefits will be increasingly attractive to the workforce

of today and tomorrow, as supported by evidence pointing to an increased desire for flexibility and facilitation of positive work-nonwork interface for current and future workers (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2004). Likely benefits of doing so would include increased ability to attract applicants from the younger generations (as demonstrated in the present study) and also reduced likelihood of perceptions of unfairness (i.e., “family-friendly backlash”) by employees and applicants who do not have family concerns (e.g., Grover, 1991; Parker & Allen, 2001).

Research along these lines could involve attitude surveys and interview studies to determine desired benefits and also to determine subjective perceptions of an organization’s life-friendliness (extending from Jahn, Thompson, & Kopelman, 2003). In addition, much could be learned from further manipulation studies with incumbent employees and even managers within organizations to evaluate whether they might be more likely to grant their support to life-friendly as opposed to family-friendly policies. Attention should also be paid to the perceived value of specific policies within these larger umbrella categories (as by Casper & Buffardi, 2004). More attention should also be given to understand the tradeoffs made by applicants faced with more traditional organizational attributes such as promotion opportunities and geographic location, especially as they function in the presence of organizational policy and culture information.

Another potential research option is to replicate the present findings with the help of newly emerging techniques for identifying relative importance of single predictors within a larger set of predictors. Although the present study applied the infrequently used phased narrowing technique, newer techniques (e.g., dominance or relative importance analysis) are potentially more promising (well-described by Lebreton, Ingerick, Bowler, & Ployhart, 2005; see also Azen & Budescu, 2003; Behson, 2002; Johnson, 2001). Future studies could employ these

techniques to build on the present findings by more directly considering the relative importance of multiple organizational attributes as predictors of applicant reactions and intentions.

Finally, more attention needs to be given to influence of individual differences in this context (e.g., Casper & Buffardi, 2004). Of particular interest are the individual characteristics of self-efficacy, risk aversion, materialism, collectivism (considered at least in part by Cable & Judge, 1994), positive and negative affect, and support expectations (e.g., Casper & Buffardi, 2004). However, it can be argued that none of these individual characteristics is as closely linked with a person's underlying values as one's identity salience. Given the present results regarding work-, balance-, and nonwork-salience, this is one of the most compelling reasons for continued study of the impact of identity salience in the process of deciding which organizations to pursue for employment. Researchers and practitioners who better understand how individual differences might contribute to different applicant reactions can facilitate proper matching of individuals and organizations. A more complete consideration of the work and nonwork needs of applicants is expected to greatly enhance eventual fit between people and organizations.

Many questions remain to be studied and many applications of the existing knowledge regarding work-nonwork benefits and culture as they relate to applicant reactions remain to be made. The present study begins to fill an interesting void left in the developing literature, as it focuses on the actual process of decision making and how it is influenced by both different types of organizational attributes. When considered in full, the present results support the positive influence of organizational policies and cultures that encourage a positive work-nonwork interface on the formation of preferences among organizations. Future research needs to more fully consider how such considerations can be used by applicants and organizations to ensure a better mutual fit and long-lasting relationship.

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APPENDIX A. POLICIES USED IN ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTIONS

<i>Family-friendly policies</i>	<i>Life-friendly policies</i>
<p>Dependent care options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child-/Elder-care leave - On-site/off-site care - Paid maternity/paternity leave <p>Flexible work arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flextime (core hours = 9:30-4) - Telecommuting (provided with necessary equipment) <p>Personal leave options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time off for vacation - Time off for personal illness <p>Service options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Errand services (e.g., dry cleaning, groceries) - Discounts for dependent care and family-related merchants - After-school programs for employees' children and adolescents <p>Educational opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parenting, child/elder care training - Discussion/support groups for working parents 	<p>Care for others options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leave for extended-family emergencies - Ability to use earned time off to care for neighbors and friends in need <p>Flexible work arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flextime (core hours = 9:30-4) - Telecommuting (provided with necessary equipment) <p>Personal leave options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time off for personal health (e.g., illness, "mental" well-being) - Two-week paid mandatory vacation per year <p>Service options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Errand services (e.g., dry cleaning, groceries) - Discounts at area merchants and service providers relevant to all employees (e.g., fitness clubs, automobile dealers, department stores) - On-site fitness facility <p>Educational opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Career pacing/career track education - Retirement and financial planning - 24-hour benefits hotline (for questions about benefit coverage, usage)

Note: These policies are adapted from those included in Allen (2001); Galinsky (2001); and Glass and Finley (2002).

APPENDIX B. OUTLINE OF INTERNET-BASED PRE-TEST

November 2004

Dear participant:

The study presented here is a pre-test of a couple of aspects of my eventual thesis research toward my doctoral degree in Industrial-Organizational Psychology here at Bowling Green State University. I am studying the differential attractiveness of family-friendly and life-friendly policies to job applicants, and I need your help. In this short study you will be asked to respond to a couple of different types of stimuli.

If you are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief online survey (less than 15 minutes). At the end of this survey you will be asked to type in your full name – this is for purposes of assigning you research credit only. I will not be linking your names with your responses to the survey items, so your confidentiality is assured. Because this is a pre-test of two of my thesis materials, I really need you to respond as honestly and accurately as possible. Please note that by clicking the “Next” button at the bottom of the page, you are indicating your consent to participate in this study.

I appreciate your willingness to participate in this study. After responding to the last item in the questionnaire, make sure to click the “Submit” button once and wait for the browser to finish loading a confirmation page. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this project, feel free to contact me (ccunnin@bgnet.bgsu.edu) or Dr. Steve Jex (sjex@bgnet.bgsu.edu). If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a participant in this research, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or via email at hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Christopher Cunningham
Dr. Steve Jex

***** [page break] *****

Please read through the following list of policies and think about what they represent to you. Then respond to the items that follow it as honestly as possible.

Dependent care options

- Child-/Elder-care leave = time off to care for children or parents
- On-site/off-site care = children/parents can be cared for at care centers either on or off the work-site
- Paid maternity/paternity leave = time off to have a child and to spend time with them for the first couple months

Flexible work arrangements

- Flextime = ability to schedule your work hours as you'd like, as long as you are present at least from 9:30-4:00 each day.
- Telecommuting = working away from the office, provided with all the necessary equipment by your organization

Personal leave options

- Time off for vacation
- Time off for personal illness

Service options

- Errand services = help with accomplishing day-to-day errands (e.g., dry cleaning, groceries)
- Discounts for dependent care and family-related merchants = to help with costs of these items and services
- After-school programs for employees' children and adolescents = to provide security for your children after school

Educational opportunities

- Parenting, child/elder care training = to help you be a better parent and/or caregiver for an aging parent of your own
 - Discussion/support groups for working parents = because sometimes everyone needs support when raising children
-

Important definitions:

“Family-friendly” policies are benefits or programs that an organization has in place to make it easier for employees to juggle and/or balance their work and family roles.

“Life-friendly” policies are benefits or programs within an organization that are meant to assist employees in combining their work and nonwork roles (e.g., as a family, community member, or friend), while still meeting the demands of their work organizations.

In your mind, do these policies represent “family-friendly” or “life-friendly” policies?

To what degree do these policies represent what you would consider “life-friendly” policies?
1 (Not at all Representative) to 5 (Strongly Represent)

To what degree do these policies represent what you would consider “family-friendly” policies?
1 (Not at all Representative) to 5 (Strongly Represent)

***** [page break] *****

Please read through the following list of policies and think about what they represent to you. Then respond to the items that follow it as honestly as possible.

Care for others options

- Leave for extended-family emergencies = to be able to meet needs of your other family members
- Ability to use earned time off to care for neighbors and friends in need = to help you be a good neighbor and friend to those in need

Flexible work arrangements

- Flextime = ability to schedule your work hours as you'd like, as long as you are present at least from 9:30-4:00 each day.
- Telecommuting = working away from the office, provided with all the necessary equipment by your organization

Personal leave options

- Time off for personal health (e.g., illness, "mental" well-being) = sometimes taking a day off is better for everyone
- Two-week paid mandatory vacation per year = all workers need at least two-weeks off per year to recuperate

Service options

- Errand services = to help you accomplish your day-to-day tasks (e.g., dry cleaning, groceries)
- Discounts at area merchants and service providers = to help with the costs of such items and services employees (e.g., fitness clubs, automobile dealers, department stores)
- On-site fitness facility = you can get your exercise at work, for a reduced price, so you don't have to find extra time or money to go to another gym when you are at home

Educational opportunities

- Career pacing/career track education = to help all employees achieve career success
 - Retirement and financial planning = good information for all employees to know
 - 24-hour benefits hotline = to help answer questions about benefit coverage and usage guidelines whenever you need the information
-

Important definitions:

"Family-friendly" policies are benefits or programs that an organization has in place to make it easier for employees to juggle and/or balance their work and family roles.

"Life-friendly" policies are benefits or programs within an organization that are meant to assist employees in combining their work and nonwork roles (e.g., as a family, community member, or friend), while still meeting the demands of their work organizations.

In your mind, do these policies represent "family-friendly" or "life-friendly" policies?

To what degree do these policies represent what you would consider "life-friendly" policies?

1 (Not at all Representative) to 5 (Strongly Represent)

To what degree do these policies represent what you would consider "family-friendly" policies?

1 (Not at all Representative) to 5 (Strongly Represent)

When responding to these items, think of “work” as being anything related to your academic degree progress or to your part- or full-time job(s) and “nonwork” as anything outside of your working role (like family, friends, community). Please respond to these items indicating the degree to which the following statements describe you.

Note. Responses were on a five-point scale. Items 1-5= Work-salient, 6-10 = Nonwork-salient

1. I feel most like myself when I am working.
2. Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to work-related experiences and accomplishments.
3. My work-related duties come first on my list of priorities, above all other responsibilities.
4. I view my work as the most important aspect of my life.
5. My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on my working self.
6. I feel most like myself when I am not working, and when I am with family and friends.
7. Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to nonwork-related experiences and accomplishments.
8. My nonwork-related responsibilities come first on my list of priorities, above all other duties.
9. I view my nonwork involvements as the most important aspects of my life.
10. My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on my nonwork self.

***** [page break] *****

When responding to these items, think of “work” as being anything related to your academic degree progress or to your part- or full-time job(s) and “nonwork” as anything outside of your working role (like family, friends, community). Please respond to these items as if you were an individual who viewed your work responsibilities as the most important and central part of your life and identity. Indicate the degree to which the following statements would describe you from the perspective of this type of person.

Note. Responses were on a five-point scale. Items 1-5= Work-salient, 6-10 = Nonwork-salient

1. I feel most like myself when I am working.
2. Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to work-related experiences and accomplishments.
3. My work-related duties come first on my list of priorities, above all other responsibilities.
4. I view my work as the most important aspect of my life.
5. My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on my working self.
6. I feel most like myself when I am not working, and when I am with family and friends.
7. Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to nonwork-related experiences and accomplishments.
8. My nonwork-related responsibilities come first on my list of priorities, above all other duties.
9. I view my nonwork involvements as the most important aspects of my life.
10. My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on my nonwork self.

When responding to these items, think of “work” as being anything related to your academic degree progress or to your part- or full-time job(s) and “nonwork” as anything outside of your working role (like family, friends, community). Please respond to these items as if you were an individual who viewed your nonwork roles as most important and central to your life and identity. Indicate the degree to which the following statements would describe you from the perspective of this type of person.

Note. Responses were on a five-point scale. Items 1-5= Work-salient, 6-10 = Nonwork-salient

1. I feel most like myself when I am working.
2. Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to work-related experiences and accomplishments.
3. My work-related duties come first on my list of priorities, above all other responsibilities.
4. I view my work as the most important aspect of my life.
5. My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on my working self.
6. I feel most like myself when I am not working, and when I am with family and friends.
7. Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to nonwork-related experiences and accomplishments.
8. My nonwork-related responsibilities come first on my list of priorities, above all other duties.
9. I view my nonwork involvements as the most important aspects of my life.
10. My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on my nonwork self.

***** [page break] *****

When responding to these items, think of “work” as being anything related to your academic degree progress or to your part- or full-time job(s) and “nonwork” as anything outside of your working role (like family, friends, community). Please respond to these items as if you were an individual who viewed your work and nonwork responsibilities and roles as equally important and central to your life and identity. Indicate the degree to which the following statements would describe you from the perspective of this type of person.

Note. Responses were on a five-point scale. Items 1-5= Work-salient, 6-10 = Nonwork-salient

1. I feel most like myself when I am working.
2. Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to work-related experiences and accomplishments.
3. My work-related duties come first on my list of priorities, above all other responsibilities.
4. I view my work as the most important aspect of my life.
5. My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on my working self.
6. I feel most like myself when I am not working, and when I am with family and friends.
7. Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to nonwork-related experiences and accomplishments.
8. My nonwork-related responsibilities come first on my list of priorities, above all other duties.
9. I view my nonwork involvements as the most important aspects of my life.
10. My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on my nonwork self.

APPENDIX C. DECISION MAKING SIMULATION MATERIALS

When introducing my project to the student participants I will cover the following basic points in an effort to respond to anticipated questions from students (in bold italics) and to inform them of their rights as potential participants:

What's this for?

- This research is for my master's thesis, which I must complete before I can continue on in my studies toward a doctoral degree in Industrial-Organizational Psychology here at BGSU.
- My goal with this study is to understand how and why you, as a college junior/senior, might be more attracted to some organizational options over others when given information about organizational policies, culture, and salary.
- If I am able to achieve my expected results, I may be able to help organizations more effectively recruit and retain young workers like yourselves – that's why I need you.

What do I have to do?

- If you are willing to participate in this study I will need approximately 30 minutes of your time within the next week. You will be given a simulated decision making task (paper-based) and guided through a decision making process as you form choices among a set of organizational options.
- Two weeks after completing this paper survey you will be contacted by email to complete a really brief (< 5 minute) web-based demographic survey
- Several opportunities in the next week will be offered for you to come and complete this decision making task.
- Your participation is not mandatory however, and an alternative activity does exist. [this will consist of downloading, reading, summarizing a couple of the pertinent studies I used in designing my own study – it will take students about as long as completing the actual research task and will be education in its own right]

What's in it for me?

- I will provide snacks at the first data collection point. At the end of the entire study I will provide you with a debriefing form that shares more info about this project [for students whose professor has agreed to this: Upon completion of both of these research activities just described, you will also be rewarded with a small amount of course credit].
- Your name will never be associated with your responses, so your confidentiality is assured. When I do collect names I will do so, on a separate piece of paper with the intention of turning this directly in to your professor for entry into the gradebook.

What if I have questions before, during, after? [I'll provide these email addresses on the board or on an overhead]

If at any point in this process you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this project, feel free to contact me (ccunnin@bgnet.bgsu.edu, 419-372-2301) or Dr. Steve Jex (sjex@bgnet.bgsu.edu, 419-372-2132). If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a participant in this research, you may contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at (419) 372-7716 or via email at hsrb@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

Dear participant,

The table that follows defines several policies and benefits that you are going to encounter when completing this brief exercise. Please read through each of these options:

Definitions of potential policies and benefits

Dependent care options

- *Child-/Elder-care leave* = time off to care for children or parents
- *On-site care* = children/parents can be cared for at care centers either on or off the work-site
- *Paid maternity/paternity leave* = time off to have a child and to spend time with them for the first couple months

Flexible work arrangements

- *Flextime* = ability to schedule your work hours as you'd like, as long as you are present at least from 9:30-4:00 each day.
- *Telecommuting* = working away from the office, provided with all the necessary equipment by your organization

Personal leave options

- *Time off for vacation*
- *Time off for personal illness*

Service options

- *Errand services* = help with accomplishing day-to-day errands (e.g., dry cleaning, groceries)
 - *Discounts for dependent care and family-related merchants* = to help with costs of these items and services
 - *After-school programs for employees' children and adolescents* = to provide security for your children after school
-

Educational opportunities

- *Parenting, child/elder care training* = to help you be a better parent and/or caregiver for an aging parent of your own
 - *Discussion/support groups for working parents* = because sometimes everyone needs support when raising children
-

Now, please detach pages 1 and 2 from the rest of the packet and follow the instructions that begin on page 3. When you are done, please make sure you have responded to every item and then please make sure to bring this packet to your class so that it can be collected.

Note. These are the family-friendly organizational options.

<p>In company G you can expect to earn just above the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, and (4) telecommuting. You've heard that supervisors and coworkers encourage use of these policies; use will not negatively affect your career progress.</p>	<p>In company F you can expect to earn more than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave and (2) on-site care. You've heard that supervisors and coworkers encourage use of these policies; use will not negatively affect your career progress.</p>	<p>In company L you can expect to earn much more than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, and (4) telecommuting. While these policies exist on paper, you've heard that most individuals in the organization avoid using them for fear of jeopardizing their careers.</p>	<p>In company D you can expect to earn much more than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave and (2) on-site care. Although these policies are advertised, you've heard that people only occasionally take advantage of them for fear of it affecting their career progress.</p>
<p>In company C you can expect to earn just above the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) paid maternity/paternity leave, and (6) time off for vacation. Although these policies are advertised, you've heard that people only occasionally take advantage of them for fear of it affecting their career progress.</p>	<p>In company H you can expect to earn less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) paid maternity/paternity leave, (6) time off for vacation, (7) errand services, and (8) parent education courses. You've heard that supervisors and coworkers encourage use of these policies; use will not negatively affect your career progress.</p>	<p>In company A you can expect to earn just less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) paid maternity/paternity leave, (6) time off for vacation, (7) errand services, and (8) parent education courses. Although these policies are advertised, you've heard that people only occasionally take advantage of them for fear of it affecting their career progress.</p>	<p>In company K you can expect to earn more than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) paid maternity/paternity leave, and (6) time off for vacation. While these policies exist on paper, you've heard that most individuals in the organization avoid using them for fear of jeopardizing their careers.</p>
<p>In company B you can expect to earn just less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) paid maternity/paternity leave, (6) time off for vacation, (7) errand services, (8) parent education courses, (9) after-school programs for employees' children/adolescents, and (10) discussion/support groups for working parents. While these policies exist on paper, you've heard that most individuals in the organization avoid using them for fear of jeopardizing their careers.</p>	<p>In company I you can expect to earn less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) paid maternity/paternity leave, (6) time off for vacation, (7) errand services, (8) parent education courses, (9) after-school programs for employees' children/adolescents, (10) discussion/ support groups for working parents, (11) discounts for dependent care and family-related merchants, and (12) time off for personal illness. While these policies exist on paper, you've heard that most individuals in the organization avoid using them for fear of jeopardizing their careers.</p>	<p>In company E you can expect to earn much less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) paid maternity/paternity leave, (6) time off for vacation, (7) errand services, (8) parent education courses, (9) after-school programs for employees' children/adolescents, and (10) discussion/support groups for working parents. You've heard that supervisors and coworkers encourage use of these policies; use will not negatively affect your career progress.</p>	<p>In company J you can expect to earn much less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "family-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) child-/elder-care leave, (2) on-site care, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) paid maternity/paternity leave, (6) time off for vacation, (7) errand services, (8) parent education courses, (9) after-school programs for employees' children/adolescents, (10) discussion/support groups for working parents, (11) discounts for dependent care and family-related merchants, and (12) time off for personal illness. Although these policies are advertised, you've heard that people only occasionally take advantage of them for fear of it affecting their career progress.</p>

Note. These are the life-friendly organizational options.

<p>In company G you can expect to earn just above the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, and (4) telecommuting. You've heard that supervisors and coworkers encourage use of these policies; use will not negatively affect your career progress.</p>	<p>In company F you can expect to earn more than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave and (2) time off to care for friends. You've heard that supervisors and coworkers encourage use of these policies; use will not negatively affect your career progress.</p>	<p>In company L you can expect to earn much more than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, and (4) telecommuting. While these policies exist on paper, you've heard that most individuals in the organization avoid using them for fear of jeopardizing their careers.</p>	<p>In company D you can expect to earn much more than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave and (2) time off to care for friends. Although these policies are advertised, you've heard that people only occasionally take advantage of them for fear of it affecting their career progress.</p>
<p>In company C you can expect to earn just above the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) time off for personal health, and (6) two-week mandatory vacation per year. Although these policies are advertised, you've heard that people only occasionally take advantage of them for fear of it affecting their career progress.</p>	<p>In company H you can expect to earn less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) time off for personal health, and (6) two-week mandatory vacation per year, (7) errand services, and (8) career development education. You've heard that supervisors and coworkers encourage use of these policies; use will not negatively affect your career progress.</p>	<p>In company A you can expect to earn just less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) time off for personal health, and (6) two-week mandatory vacation per year, (7) errand services, and (8) career development education. Although these policies are advertised, you've heard that people only occasionally take advantage of them for fear of it affecting their career progress.</p>	<p>In company K you can expect to earn more than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) time off for personal health, and (6) two-week mandatory vacation per year. While these policies exist on paper, you've heard that most individuals in the organization avoid using them for fear of jeopardizing their careers.</p>
<p>In company B you can expect to earn just less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) time off for personal health, and (6) two-week mandatory vacation per year, (7) errand services, (8) career development education, (9) on-site fitness facility, and (10) financial planning help. While these policies exist on paper, you've heard that most individuals in the organization avoid using them for fear of jeopardizing their careers.</p>	<p>In company I you can expect to earn less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) time off for personal health, and (6) two-week mandatory vacation per year, (7) errand services, (8) career development education, (9) on-site fitness facility, and (10) financial planning help, (11) discounts for area merchants, and (12) 24-hour benefits hotline. While these policies exist on paper, you've heard that most individuals in the organization avoid using them for fear of jeopardizing their careers.</p>	<p>In company E you can expect to earn much less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) time off for personal health, and (6) two-week mandatory vacation per year, (7) errand services, (8) career development education, (9) on-site fitness facility, and (10) financial planning help. You've heard that supervisors and coworkers encourage use of these policies; use will not negatively affect your career progress.</p>	<p>In company J you can expect to earn much less than the industry average salary per year. The recruitment materials suggest you'll be able to take advantage of the following "life-friendly" policies if you become an employee: (1) extended-family emergency leave, (2) time off to care for friends, (3) flextime, (4) telecommuting, (5) time off for personal health, and (6) two-week mandatory vacation per year, (7) errand services, (8) career development education, (9) on-site fitness facility, and (10) financial planning help, (11) discounts for area merchants, and (12) 24-hour benefits hotline. Although these policies are advertised, you've heard that people only occasionally take advantage of them for fear of it affecting their career progress.</p>

Participant instructions and worksheets

In order for this study to be successful, I will need to contact you with a few quick follow-up questions (they will take less than 5 minutes of your time to answer). I would like to do this via email, so please write-in your email address here (the one that you check most frequently): _____

Now, having read the definitions on page 1, please take a couple minutes to carefully read through the different organization options described on page 2.

After reading the 12 options, choose the 6 that are most appealing to you as a potential job seeker. Write the letters of these 6 organizations on the lines below:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Please turn over and continue on page 4...

Examine the set of 6 options that you just chose (on page 3) and decide on the three (3) that you would seriously consider applying to if they had job openings for soon-to-be college graduates. Write the letters of these 3 organizations on the lines below:

Please continue on page 5...

From this set of 3 options (on page 4), select the one (1) that you would most like to work for, based on the information you have been given in the organization descriptions. Write its letter below:

Based on the organizational information you were given, why did you select this organization (i.e., how did you arrive at this choice)?

Regarding this number one choice you have made, please respond to the following:

Please rate your agreement with each of these statements on the scale at left by circling the corresponding number for each item.	1 Strongly Disagree	2	3	4	5 Strongly Agree
1. I would be interested in pursuing employment opportunities with this company.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I would sign up for a campus interview with this company.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I would contact this company directly for an interview.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I would be interested in learning how I can apply for a job with this company.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This seems like the kind of company I personally would like to work for	1	2	3	4	5

Please turn over and continue on page 6...

Unfortunately your number one organization is not hiring right now. Please identify your second choice from among all of the 12 potential options (excluding your first choice) and write its letter below:

Based on the organizational information you were given, why did you select this organization (i.e., how did you arrive at this choice)?

Please respond to the following items as they relate to this second choice:

Please rate your agreement with each of these statements on the scale at left by circling the corresponding number for each item.	1	2	3	4	5 Strongly Agree
1. I would be interested in pursuing employment opportunities with this company.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I would sign up for a campus interview with this company.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I would contact this company directly for an interview.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I would be interested in learning how I can apply for a job with this company.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This seems like the kind of company I personally would like to work for	1	2	3	4	5

Please continue on page 7...

This is not your lucky day. The second organization you wanted to work for is now only hiring people with a degree you do not have. What would your top choice be now of the ten remaining options (excluding your first and second choices)?

Please include its letter below:

Based on the organizational information you were given, why did you select this organization (i.e., how did you arrive at this choice)?

Please respond to the following items as they relate to this third choice:

Please rate your agreement with each of these statements on the scale at left by circling the corresponding number for each item.	1	2	3	4	5 Strongly Agree
1. I would be interested in pursuing employment opportunities with this company.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I would sign up for a campus interview with this company.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I would contact this company directly for an interview.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I would be interested in learning how I can apply for a job with this company.	1	2	3	4	5
5. This seems like the kind of company I personally would like to work for	1	2	3	4	5

***Remember to check your email for the last few questions in approximately two weeks.
Thank you for your participation!***

APPENDIX D. DEMOGRAPHIC FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear research participant,

A couple of weeks ago you completed a decision making task in Dr. Rich's class to help me gather data for my master's thesis. I am trying to understand how students like you form choices among multiple potential employers. I am specifically looking at the impact of organizational policies and culture as they may be influential in the decision making process that you follow when faced with such a decision. When you completed my decision making task initially, I mentioned you would be contacted to provide a couple of remaining pieces of information at a later time. That time is now. In order for my research to be meaningful and useful to me and to others in my field, I need to be able to provide a general description of the individuals who participated. I will never be reporting individual names or identities, but I need to gather enough information on all participants to create a demographic profile or snapshot of who my participants were.

To this end, the remaining questions have been included as the last portion of your exam for Dr. Rich. They will take you no more than 5 minutes to complete. It is my hope that my results may be able to someday benefit college seniors like yourself, so your help is greatly appreciated by me now and potentially others later. If you have any questions, please contact me at ccunnin@bgsu.edu. You should know that you are under no obligation to complete this online survey, but your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you for helping a fellow student and good luck to you with the rest of your semester!

Sincerely,

Chris Cunningham

Graduate Student
Industrial-Organizational Psychology
Bowling Green State University

When responding to these items, think of “work” as being anything related to your academic degree progress or to your part- or full-time job(s) and “nonwork” as anything outside of your working role (like family, friends, community).

Please respond to these items indicating the degree to which the following statements describe you personally (fill in the space/box that corresponds with your response to each item).

	Not at all descriptive	Somewhat descriptive	Moderately descriptive	Mostly descriptive	Completely descriptive
I feel most like myself when I am working.	—	—	—	—	—
Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to work-related experiences and accomplishments.	—	—	—	—	—
My work-related duties come first on my list of priorities, above all other responsibilities.	—	—	—	—	—
I view my work as the most important aspect of my life.	—	—	—	—	—
My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on what I do at work.	—	—	—	—	—
I feel most like myself when I am with family and friends.	—	—	—	—	—
Most of the satisfaction I experience in life is due to experiences and accomplishments outside of work.	—	—	—	—	—
My responsibilities outside of work come first on my list of priorities, above all other duties.	—	—	—	—	—
I view my activities outside of work as the most important aspects of my life.	—	—	—	—	—
My identity (e.g., who I am) is most strongly based on what I do outside of work.	—	—	—	—	—

Please respond to the following (<i>write-in or circle a response</i>):	
Please provide your email address (the same one you gave on the paper-based decision making task; the account you frequently check)? <i>This is to link this demographic info with your previous responses; your responses to all items will be kept strictly confidential and no effort will be made to identify your name.</i>	<hr/> <hr/>
What is (are) your current academic major(s)?	
What is your current overall GPA?	
If you could have your ideal job, what would it be like? <i>Please describe in the space provided.</i>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
What is your current job search status?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Not searching b) Searching c) Searching and applying d) Finished searching, applying only e) Interviewing f) Already working/have a job to start soon
Which describes your current status?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Single b) Dating c) Engaged to be married d) Married/living as married e) Other
What is your current year in college?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Freshman b) Sophomore c) Junior d) Senior
Please indicate your age group:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Less than 18 years b) 18-20 years c) 21-23 years d) 24-26 years e) 27-29 years f) 30-32 years g) More than 32 years
Please indicate your gender (sex):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Male b) Female