

JOB ATTRIBUTE PREFERENCES IN A DOWNWARD ECONOMY

A Thesis

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## **Abstract**

The current study is a partial replication of Jurgensen (1978) and Johnson (2008) studies that examined job attribute preferences. The reasoning for a replication so soon after Johnson (2008) study is research how the current economic environment may influence these variables. The job attributes variables that are being studied are type of work, pay, insurance, job security, opportunity for advancement, time off, the company, location, coworkers, supervisor, flexible hours, retirement, and the presence of a career mentor. Each participant ranked their personal preference for each of these attributes and then were asked to rank the same items but for what they perceive their peers to prefer. It is hypothesized that negative changes in the economy will result in a reordering of preferences for job security, benefits, pay, and type of work. The rankings for both sets of data were calculated and then, using independent t tests, the data was compared to Johnson's (2008) result to measure the changes in attribute preferences. The results from independent t-tests showed that there were no significant changes for the preference of job attributes but there were significant changes in perceived peer preferences.

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## **Introduction**

Previous studies have examined how job attribute preferences are influenced by demographic variables including the sex, marital and family status, and age of the applicant (Corrigan, 2008; Johnson, 2001; Jurgensen, 1978; Konrad, Yang, Goldberg, & Sullivan, 2005; Lieb, 2003). In their discussion these studies suggest how changes to job attribute preferences could be impart due to politics, a change in the societal norms, and the economy. The present study focuses on the job attribute preferences of college aged students in the presence of a constricted economy.

### **Organizational Image and Initial Job Choice**

It is crucial that an employer understand which attributes an applicant desires from a company. One method of attraction is to offer job attributes that are the most appealing to top level talent (Barney & Wright, 1998). Armed with this knowledge companies are able to improve the attributes that are offered and tailor their recruiting strategy accordingly (Rynes & Barber, 1990).

A good business strategy and outstanding efforts at recruitment are lost on applicants if a company has a negative image or has no media presence (Rynes & Barber, 1990). Gatewood, Gowan, and Lautenschlager (1993) studied how a job choice process begins when a potential applicant is exposed to information about the company from different recruitment material. Questions centered on how the participant viewed the company based on their public perception of the company, the image that the company projected and the publicly accepted company image. After rating the companies, the participants were asked if they would consider applying for the company and pursuing employment there. The companies that were listed in the Fortune

500 had a high correlation between corporate image and reputation ratings (Gatewood, et. al.). These results suggest that being part of a prestigious list such as the Fortune 500 is a way for a company to gain recognition and clout. Potential employees associate a company's presence on the list with potential self success. They also found that name recognition and positive association of a company increased the initial job choice of an applicant. Being well known and part of main stream society increased potential employees wanting to work there. A great example is the growth in forensic science and FBI cadets that is partially due to both careers being featured favorably in many popular television shows. Image is formed by not only what the company does and how it recruits but how it is viewed in public opinion (Gatewood, et. al.).

#### Organizational Fit, Person Fit, and Starting pay

Having expressed initial interest in the job the next step for potential employees is to analyze whether analyzing if the company will meet their needs and requirements. For a job seeker to become an applicant they must receive information that matches their criterion. The closer a company comes to meeting the desires of the applicant, the more the applicant will be attracted to the company. The matching of desires is not one sided. As Schneider's (1987) Attraction- Selection- Attrition (ASA) model suggests, as an employer is studying the potential new hire the prospective employee is also attempting to determine whether the company would be a good fit for them. According to Mitchell and Mickel (1990), starting pay is an increasingly important factor in determining fit: starting pay is the most important consideration when similar companies compete for the same top level talent. Although pay traditionally is not ranked highly on job attribute preferences (Jurgensen, 1978), recent studies of attribute preference have shown a steady increase in its importance (Corrigan, 2008; Johnson, 2001; Konrad, et al., 2005; Lieb, 2003).

## Sex, marriage, and growing old

In a longitudinal study of job attribute preferences spanning thirty years (1947-1977), Jurgensen (1978) found that men and women place different importance on particular job attributes. All participants received the same survey, but the results varied significantly based on sex, marital status, and age. Men ranked job security as the most important attribute for the first nineteen years (N = 56,621, M= 4.5) after that time period the attribute type of work began to increase in importance (N = 56,621, M=1.4). Another attribute whose importance changed with the times was the steadily decreasing importance of working conditions. Jurgensen (1978) found that women considered type of work to be the most important attribute (N = 56,621 M= 1.5). The other attributes showed little variance in ranked importance. Both sexes, when asked to rank perceived preferences for their co-workers, ranked pay (N = 56,621 M= 2.1 for Women and M = 2.1 for Men), as the most important attribute and co-workers as being the least important (N = 56,621 M = 7.3 for Women and M= 7.7 for Men). Attribute Preferences shifter over the thirty years of research. Noticeably men began to rank the attribute of security as being less important and both men and women began to show an increase in the importance of pay and benefits. Although Jurgensen found a shift as the employee aged, he did not find a shift in attribute preferences related to an employee's marital status or family life.

Recent studies on job attribute preferences support those of Jurgensen (1978) for single employees, but not for those who are married or have children (Corrigal, 2008). Corrigall (2008) found that married women with children placed a higher importance on income and opportunity for advancement. Single women without children, however ranked type of work more important.

Marital and family status also appears to influence preferences for men. Married men

with children evaluated income as more important than married men without children, while married men ranked work flexibility as more important than single men without children.

Corrigan (2008) may have found marital status and family life have an influence on attributes because the modern work environment has become more gender neutral and many households consist of dual earning couples (Konrad, et al., 2005). According to Konrad, et al. historically there were masculine jobs and feminine jobs and men were expected to be the sole provider for the family. As jobs have become more gender neutral, the gender preferences have begun to dissipate. Women still evaluate work environment and working conditions as being more important than men, but both sexes rank the importance of salary, intrinsic job qualities, and opportunity for advancement as the most important attributes (Konrad, et al.). Similarly to Corrigan

(2008), Konrad et al. found that family obligations and family support influenced attribute preference; this was especially evident in women. A working married woman with young children was found to desire more flexibility and place a higher importance on it as well as hours to be worked. If she is a sole provider for her family income and benefits increase in importance. If she has a partner that also is a pay earner than importance of pay decreases for the mother but increases for the partner. When both men and women are young and mobile they place a great importance on pay and advancement but as they age shorter work hours and job security become the more important attributes (Konrad, et al.).

To study how age specifically affected job attribute preference, in a longitudinal study Konrad, et al. (2005) mailed surveys to MBA students at a local university. The same survey was sent to the participants who returned the survey four years prior. A reduced sample size of 171 of participants completed the same survey. They used attribute preferences as a predication tool for

future satisfaction in the work place. Konrad, et al. speculated that this trend in attribute preferences could be due to when they first ranked pay as the most important attribute the participants made money the focus of their career goals also as MBA students the students had a perception that they were entering a well paid field of study. Expectation of high pay would have increased its preference over another master degree student who was entering a not as lucrative field. Cognitive readjustment would also have an influence since it makes it so that if original preferences are not available then there eventually is an acceptance of the current status even if that attribute is still ranked highly.

#### Historical Influence on Job Preferences

Jurgensen (1978) reported that age, sex, and family status of an individual were internal effectors of how the preferences will shift. But he also claimed that large external events can cause a shift of the attributes that are preferred at a particular time. The largest external event that effected his longitudinal study was that The United States of America entered the Second World War in 1941 and essentially ended the Great Depression that had ravaged the United States from 1929. While his study did not begin until after the war, his participants were still freshly affected by both the war and the depression. His findings show that these workers were concerned about benefits, the pay, and the type of work that was to be done. The type of work may have been effected by the presence of more women in the workplace. When the attribute preferences from the participants of 1946-1950 were compared to participants' from 1971-1975, there was a dramatic shift in select attribute preferences. The most noticeable was the decrease of importance in benefits, a decrease in the importance of pay, an increase in job security preference, and a decrease in the preference of type of work. Jurgensen predicted that these shifts were not only due to the increasing presence of Unions but to the background that the workers grew up in. He

noticed that the first set of workers grew up with Depression mentality where they wanted a job and had little concern for the working conditions or the possibility for advancement. Job security was not an important attribute to these early participants, Jurgensen (1978) thought this was because of the plentiful jobs that were open after the war as well as the price control that was in place during the War that would have enhanced the value of benefits in relation to the pay attribute.

#### Current Economic Climate

The NACE (nace.com) predictions of 2008 for an improvement in hiring of entry level applicants had no way of foreseeing the economic distress that currently has business and countries in economic turmoil. The economic trouble began to show signs of distress in late 2007 and economists predicted that it was merely a slump. The slump now is resulting in businesses going bankrupt, trillion dollar government bailouts for both banks and large American companies, housing foreclosures, and a loss of savings and retirement funds that were tied to either the stock market, bonds, or in company retirement plans. In its entirety the United States of America is facing economic indicators that are rather bleak, as of close of day on February 2010 inflation had increased 0.2%, Gross Domestic Product growth was -6.50% for the year, with a national unemployment level of 9.7%. Part of the NACE reasoning for the surge in employment for entry level applicants was that the baby boomers were of the typical age of retirement, but in the current environment they are not retiring as planned. The mixture of baby boomers being unable to retire, companies closing and downsizing, and more college graduates attempting to enter the workforce all will effect which attributes will be preferred by job applicants. There are four main attributes that are being affected by the current economic conditions: job security, benefits, starting pay, and type of work, and it is predicted that these

elements will result in a change in the level or preference for certain attributes. Each of these elements are popular topics in the daily press and has at some level touched all individuals. The purpose of the present study is to measure the attribute preference changes in comparison to those attribute preferences of a similar pool that was collected in 2008 when the job market was more promising.

### Job Security

While the presence of an experienced work force is daunting to job applicants, baby boomers are not solely responsible for the high unemployment rate. Because of the current financial issues they cannot afford to retire. With the current financial environment being problematic the baby boomers have lost the money they placed in “reliable” financial institutions and lost the funds that were set aside funding for their retirement. Those that still have some funds are no longer sure that the money that is saved will be enough to cover their expenses.

What has resulted from the continued presence of an experienced work force and a high national unemployment rate of 9.7% the supposed surge of entry level jobs has actually resulted global and national hiring freezes (Department of Labor Statistics, 2010). If companies are not having hiring freezes they are undergoing large layoffs. Since December 2007, 5.1 million jobs have been removed with roughly 2.75 million of those jobs being lost from December 2008-March 2009. Payroll employment is also down over 3.6 million since December 2007 (udl.gov & bls.gov).

From March 2009 to January 2010 over 694,000 people became unemployed bringing the national total to over 13.2 million people being unemployed (9.7% unemployment rate) These 13.2 million people are competing for 3.0 million jobs that are available (bls.gov). February 2010 began to see slight improvement in the number of unemployed who found jobs. Regionally the

south has encountered an average 5% increase in agriculturally adjusted unemployment rates. This agricultural adjusted rate is critical when examining unemployment rates for agricultural focused regions since it discounts the normal employment fluctuations that are due to crop picking workers and workers that are only hired for specific short time farm work durations. Even with the adjusted unemployment rate in February 2010 Tennessee had an unemployment rate of 10.7% (bls.gov).

Johnson's (2008) study of 149 college seniors and graduate students participated in a ranking survey identical to the survey that Jurgensen utilized for the 30 years of his data collection. Because the job market appeared promising, the type of work and starting salary were considered the most important attributes to the students. When asked if the most important attributes were lacking in a potential company, the participants significantly ( $\chi^2 = 30.96, p < .001$ ) responded that they would be somewhat likely to not at all likely to accept the job (Johnson 2008). But with unemployment rates increasing and a lack of entry level positions opening, it is likely there will be an effect of the attribute preference for job security.

Hypothesis 1:

In a downward economy, job security will be ranked as the most important attribute to participants.

Benefits:

Another attribute that is predicted to have increased in importance is benefits. Healthcare is a major cost to the individual and businesses and was predicted to increase 6.9% in the year 2008. This increase in health insurance costs was twice the estimated increase in inflation.

According to the National Center for Health Care in 2007, healthcare spending reached \$2.3 trillion dollars and is projected to reach \$3 trillion by 2011. The cost for employment based

healthcare has increased 100 percent since 2001 with the average individual spending an estimated \$9,000 dollars on health related spending. The individual spending for annual premium family coverage eclipses the gross earnings for a full time minimum-wage worker (nchc.org). The threat of not being covered for medical services has a detrimental side effect to other aspects to the economic environment and to the individual. One of the culprits of the disturbance for the banking system is the fall of the housing market. A recent NCHC survey found that 25% of those polled claimed that the housing market failure was due to people having to decide between paying their medical insurance and bills and their house note. Harvard University found similar results in research concerning health care costs and bankruptcy. According to NCHC Harvard's research indicated that 50% of all bankruptcy filings were due to medical costs and every 30 seconds in the United States someone must declare bankruptcy following a serious health problem (nchc.org).

Companies spend \$1.5 trillion annually on a combination of benefits and of that \$1.5 trillion \$623.1 billion is spent on health insurance. This investment in their employees is beneficial in that it can strengthen the bond that an employee may feel to the organization. But the investment and presence of benefits, especially health insurance, has caused job lock within organizations. Burke and Weathington (2008) describe job lock as when an employee would normally have positive turnover but, due to their benefits package they feel unable to make changes in their employment status. Companies now face unmotivated and unproductive employees who only remain to retain their benefits. The government has programs in place that are there to cover employees as they change jobs, but these government options are often expensive and are rarely utilized. With the rising cost of health insurance and other benefits the job attribute has gained notoriety of its importance and has become a factor to younger

employees.

Hypothesis 2:

In a downward economy, insurance will be ranked higher than it was ranked in better economic conditions.

Pay- Starting Salary

Despite NACE (2007) predictions about increasing salaries, pay for incoming employees in multiple different fields have received slight to no increases since early 2008 (NACE, 2009). Starting salaries for 2009 bachelor degree graduates can predict to earn \$49,353 compared to equivalent graduates predicating starting salary of \$49,300 a year. While there is has been an increase in salary amounts the steady increasing CPI (Consumer price index) and inflation rates effect buying power (as of February the CPI had maintained the+.2% from January 2010, which followed an increase in the inflation rate of +.02 since March 2009, bls.gov). The increase in inflation along with an increase in CPI means that while the numeric figure of the salary as barely increased its buying ability has steeply decreased. Daily necessity items and health insurance are becoming more expensive than the pay scale is increasing. These factors could influence how the attribute is preferred.

Hypothesis 3:

In a downward economy there will be a decrease in the ranked importance of pay when compared to its ranking in better economic conditions.

Type of work:

Both Jurgensen (1978) and Johnson (2008) found that participants routinely ranked the attribute of type of work as one of the top three attributes. With current unemployment trends and a lack of jobs that are generally available there are some jobs that are currently hiring. Most

of these jobs are in the customer service or the medical field (bls.gov). One of the few places that are still hiring large amounts of employees is within the federal government. In the previous studies there was a lack of pressure on a job candidate to have job security, obtain and maintain benefits, and try to make enough money to meet the raising CPI and inflation rates. These pressures combined with the probable chance of not entering into a number one choice of careers should influence how type of work is perceived by the participant.

Hypothesis 4:

In a downward economy the ranked position of type of work will significantly differ from its ranking during better economic conditions.

With employment becoming scarce the importance of health care is increasing (nchc.org). A replication of Jurgensen (1978) will be conducted to measure if there is a change of attribute preference for seniors in college or graduate school students. These data will then be compared to Johnson's 2008 data that were collected from the same category of students before the economic recession.

## II. METHOD

### Participants

One hundred students from The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga participated in the Fall semester of 2009 and the Spring semester of 2010. Of the Participants 70% (N = 70) were Undergraduate Seniors, 24% (N = 100) were Graduate Students, and 6% of participants were classified as other. Of these students 68% (N = 68) were Psychology Students and 11% (N = 100) were majoring in a Business field. 81.5% (N = 100) of participants were single and never married while 18.4% (N = 100) were currently married. Also the majority of the participants 90.8% (N = 100) were without children

### Job Attribute Preference Scale

As a replication study of Johnson's 2008 thesis, the same modified Jurgensen (1978) attribute scale will be used (table 1). The original attribute scale by Jurgensen (1978) consisted of ten factors that at the time were considered to be the most important factors. The new attribute scale that was used by Johnson 2008 includes opportunity for advancement, flexible hours, and availability of a career mentor in addition to the ten attributes that were studied by Jurgensen (1978)( see table 1). These factors were added as recent research has shown that these are factors that are important to modern workers (Bundy & Norris, 1992; Harris & Fink, 1987; Lieb, 2003). Another change Johnson (2008) made to Jurgensen's (1978) scale was a split of the benefit category into two sections: insurance and a retirement plan. In the same fashion as the original survey, the participants first ranked the sixteen items according to their personally preference. Then the participants were asked to rank those same items but in how they perceive that their peers would rank the importance of those attributes. Combining Jurgensen's scale and Konrad et

al. affection for the Likert scale the participants were then asked to rate the probability of accepting a job that did not offer their top three attributes. The scale is a 7 point Likert scale (1 = not at all likely to 7 = Very likely).

#### Procedure

A list of students' e-mails will be collected from a pool of students that have registered with the Student Placement Center at The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. These students will be either seniors in undergraduate degree courses or second year graduate students. Students, who met the criteria of being either seniors or second year graduate students, were e-mailed a link inviting them to participate in a research study that was hosted on surveymonkey.com. The survey on surveymonkey.com contained an informed consent statement, the adapted job attribute preference scale (figure 1), and a demographics form. Privacy and anonymity were maintained by the lack of identifying information and IP address being deleted after the data was collected and analyzed. If the student wanted to be debriefed then they were welcome to e-mail the researcher. Incentive to participate was in the format that if the participant wished so then they could email the researcher with their name in order to be entered in a drawing for a gas card equaling \$25.00. Even though the participants provided their identifying information it was impossible for the researcher to connect the participant's identity with their corresponding data.

### III. Results

The first portion of this study was a within subjects design. Each participant ranked their personal preference for the 13 job attributes. Table 1 has the mean and standard deviations for the self ranked attributes under the column Deason 2010. The three most important self ranked attributes listed in Table 1 are: type of work (M =3.633, SD = 3.773), pay (M = 5.592, SD = 3.558), and insurance (M=5.653, SD= 3.407). The presence of a career mentor was the least important attribute (M= 9.979, SD= 3.394) for self ranked preferences in Deason 2010.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the peer ratings of the same attributes. Within these parameters the top three rated attributes of Deason 2010 are: pay (M= 2.138, SD=3.484), job security (M = 4.413, SD= 3.876), and type of work (M =5.000, SD=4.458). The least important attribute that the participants perceived for their peers was also the presence of a career mentor (M = 8.532, SD= 5.227).

#### Correlations

A Pearson's Correlation was conducted in order to see how the variables correlated with one another when they were either self ranked job attributes or peer perceived job attribute preferences. When self ranked data was correlated with itself there were limited significant relationships (Table 3). The two most significant relationships existed between Supervisor and Coworkers  $r(106) = .619$ ,  $p < .01$  and Career mentor and Supervisor  $r(106) = .600$ ,  $p < .01$ . Peer perceived preferences were also correlated to examine if relationship existed. In this scenario there were multiple significant correlations between variables. The strongest correlations were between: Retirement and Insurance  $r(106) = .691$ ,  $p < .01$ , Company and Time off  $r(106) = .$

798,  $p < .01$ , and between Coworkers and Flexible hours  $r(106) = .646$ ,  $p < .01$  (Table 4). Self ranked data was correlated with peer perceived preferences. The strongest significant relationship was between the self ranked attribute of Insurance and the peer perceived attribute of Insurance  $r(106) = .536$ ,  $p < .01$ . Another significant positive relationship was between the self ranked attribute of Time Off and the peer perceived attribute of Coworkers  $r(106) = .490$ ,  $p < .01$ . The self ranked attribute Flexible Hours significantly and positively correlated with the peer perceived attribute of Career Mentor  $r(106) = .499$ ,  $p < .01$  and the self ranked attribute of Job Security significantly and positively correlated with the peer perceived attribute of Job Security  $r(106) = .499$ ,  $p < .01$ .

#### Independent Samples t-Test

Following descriptive statistical and correlation analysis independent samples t-test were conducted on both sets of data, self and peer perceived preference, to compare the 2010 data, that was collected during a downward and economy, to Johnson's 2008 data, that was collected in a more promising economic climate. The data from these tests were used to provide support to the hypothesis. Hypothesis 1 predicted that Job security would be ranked as the most important attributes to the participants. Table 1 shows the ranking of the self reported job attribute preferences. Job security's mean score placed it as the fourth most important attribute ( $M=5.969$ ,  $SD = 3.585$ ). Thus Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Post hoc tests were conducted in order to compare the self ranking of job security between the 2008 data and the 2010 data. The independent t-test (Table 6) indicated that there was no significant difference in the self ranking of this attribute  $t(241) = -1.765$ ,  $p = .079$ .

Hypothesis 2 predicted that benefits/ insurance would be ranked higher in the present study then it was ranked in Johnson (2008). In the present study this attribute was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>

( $M=5.653$ ,  $SD= 3.407$ ) in Johnson (2008) insurance was ranked 4<sup>th</sup> ( $M= 6.490$ ,  $SD= 3.678$ ) (Table 1). Using an independent t-test (Table 6) the data was compared and it was found that while their ranking was different in the two years the difference was not significant  $t(241) = -1.791$ ,  $p = .075$  therefore not supporting hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that pay in the 2010 data would have decreased in importance when compared to Johnson 2008. In both years pay was ranked as being the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important attribute. An independent t-test confirmed the lack of significant change in the ranking of importance (Table 6)  $t(241) = -.018$ ,  $p = .986$ . These results did not support hypothesis 3 that there is a difference in the ranking of pay between the two studies.

Hypothesis 4 was a prediction that they ranking of type of work would significantly differ from Johnson's (2008) data. The participants in both the present study and Johnson's 2008 study both ranked type of work as the most important job attribute. An independent t-test indicates that the importance of this attribute did not significantly differ between the two studies (Table 6)  $t(241) = -.717$ ,  $p = .474$  therefore Hypothesis 4 were not supported.

#### Additional analysis

The findings of the analysis indicate that there was no significant differences between the self reported job attribute preferences for Johnson's 2008 data and the current 2010 data (Table 6). This trend continued for all the attributes that were tested for but not hypothesized about their changes. Significant changes were found during post hoc testing of the peer perceived rankings of the attributes. In these post hoc tests, independent t-tests were conducted between the current data and Johnson 2008 data. Significant changes in peer perceived job attribute preferences from 2008 to 2010 (Table 7) include Job Security  $t(256) = -4.978$ ,  $p = 000$ , Supervisor  $t(256) = -2.866$ ,  $p = .005$ , and Location  $t(256) = -2.683$ ,  $p = 008$ ).

#### **IV. Discussion**

A possible explanation for the lack of support for the hypotheses is that despite the changes the economy the participant population similarities of age, sex, and education level leveled out the job attribute preferences. Konrad, et al's, 2005 article they wrote about that career choices and youth both were contributing factors to job attribute preferences. In the present study there was a mix of student in terms of ages but the majority of the participants were graduating undergraduate students there was also a concentration of Psychology. Both of these factors according to Konrad, et al. (2005) would affect which attributes were ranked as being the most important.

Besides pioneering job attribute preference research Jurgensen (1978) also inspired job attribute research how being married and having children effected job attribute preferences. In the present study 81.5% of participants were single and never married while 18.4% were currently married. The majority of the participants (90.8%) also were without children. According to Corrigan (2008) changes in the percentage of either one of these factors would have lead to changes in the importance of pay, type of work, insurance, and work flexibility. The lack of changes in these self rated preferences is an indicator that the two participant populations were very similar in both Johnson 2008 and the current study.

Corrigan (2008) offers theories of attribute preferences as being a reflection of age, marital status, and the presence of children, this explains why there was no statistical changes in the rankings of self reported job attribute preferences because the participant populations were very similar. Based off of demographic information collected in the present study a possible explanation for the changes in the perceived peer preferences could be due to the fact that the current economic environment is a non-factor for 25.3% of participants who already had a job

lined up for post graduation in their field of study and 34.5% of the participants felt that their degree was in a stable safe job market. These participants would not be worried about their job security because they already have a job that they feel is secure. With so many participants already having jobs in their field of study the type of work would naturally be the most important attribute because they do not have to look for a job.

The impact of the economic environment may not have been a variable in self reported preferences but with a 10.5% unemployment rate in Tennessee (80% participants consider Tennessee to be home) there is worry about job security ( $p=.000$ ) of others. The items that significantly changed in rankings were all items that could be considered perks of a job, example time off, location, and a career mentor. The peer perception data from 2010 was supportive of the hypotheses stated previously.

#### Limitations

The nature of this study and the variables introduced create limitations within the study as well as in the findings. One variable that the study was unable was to control the economic climate during the study's time period. Unemployment continued to increase but the cost of living began to stabilize and the shock of the situation began to become normal. Another factor that could have influenced participants response about certain attributes, especially insurance is that during the studies time frame President Barak Obama passed a National Health Care Reform. This act nationalizes health care which may have decreased the importance of job provided insurance. The third main limitation is due in part to the recession and decrease in available jobs and that is that the number of applicant and entering graduate school students. According to the New York Times on January 10, 2010 the number of applicants to Master's level programs and Law schools has increased as much as 44%. The number of individuals who

took the Graduate Record Examination rose 13% from 2009 to 2010. This option of continuing education could have had an influence also on the job attribute preferences of participants since there is a high probability that these participants will enter a graduate program instead of the work force.

#### Implications and Direction for Future Research

Future research should either work towards controlling for these variables or manipulating them in order to test the impact that they have on job attribute preferences. Other approaches that would add to the literature on job attribute preferences would be to study how the economic conditions have effected older employees who are currently out of work and are actively seeking new employment. One limitation of the current study was that the participant population was too homogenous; to avoid this issue future research should include employees or potential employees with a variety of work fields and include more cultural differences.

The current findings carry implications for companies that are hiring in this environment. Since there were no significant changes in self ranked attribute preferences recruiters should continue to stress the important attributes to attract the individual. This research also has implications personalizing benefits packages for each employee. In order to cut costs companies have utilized this type of survey within departments to cut what each department felt was surplus. This scenario could be used for companies that have to make budgetary cuts.

<b><u>Job Attribute</u></b>	<b><u>Descriptions and examples of attribute</u></b>
Opportunity for Advancement	The likelihood of being promoted
Retirement Plan	401K, Pension
Insurance	Medical, Dental, Life, Eye, etc.
Time Off	Vacation days, sick time
Company	Employment by a company for which you are proud to work
Co-Workers	Fellow workers are pleasant, agreeable, and good working companions
Flexible hours	Alternative schedules of starting and stopping work varying from the traditional work day. (May include working from home)
Pay	A large starting salary or income
Job Security	Steady work, no lay-offs, and sureness of being able to keep your job
Supervisor	A good boss who is considerate and fair
Career Mentor	A leader with extensive knowledge or experience to assist you
Location	A satisfactory city/town to work in
Type of Work	Work in which you are interested and enjoy

Figure 1

Legend for the Johnson 2008 Job Attribute Preference Scale used in Deason 2010

Table 1

A Comparison of Johnson 2008 and Deason 2010 Rankings of Self Reported Job Attribute Preferences

Ranking of importance	Johnson 2008	Deason 2010
First	Type of Work (x = 3.9931, SD = 3.8935)	Type of Work (x = 3.6327, SD = 3.7729)
Second	Pay (x = 5.6000, SD = 3.5442)	Pay (x = 5.5918, SD = 3.5576)
Third	Opportunity for Adv (x = 6.4690, SD = 3.8171)	Insurance (x = 5.6531, SD = 3.4074)
Fourth	Insurance (x = 6.4897, SD = 3.6782)	Job Security (x = 5.9694, SD = 3.5854)
Fifth	Job Security (x = 6.7655, SD = 3.3541)	Opportunity for Adv (x = 6.8260, SD = 3.6813)
Sixth	Location (x = 7.0690, SD = 3.9505)	Time off (x = 7.3980, SD = 2.8457)
Seventh	Supervisor (x = 7.1517, SD = 3.1232)	Company (x = 7.5408, SD = 3.3894)
Eighth	Company (x = 7.4069, SD = 3.3881)	Location (x = 7.6122, SD = 3.8089)
Ninth	Time off (x = 7.5034, SD = 3.1094)	Coworkers (x = 7.6939, SD = 3.2281)
Tenth	Coworkers (x = 7.5310, SD = 3.3439)	Supervisor (x = 7.8265, SD = 2.8969)
Eleventh	Flexible hours (x = 7.6069, SD = 3.7626)	Flexible hours (x = 7.8367, SD = 3.8253)
Twelfth	Retirement (x = 8.1862, SD = 3.4520)	Retirement (x = 8.0204, SD = 3.4878)
Thirteenth	Career Mentor (x = 9.2276, SD = 3.6377)	Career Mentor (x = 9.9794, SD = 3.3942)
Note: Johnson 2008 N = 149 and Deason 2010 N = 109		

Table 2

A comparison of Johnson 2008 and Deason 2010 Rankings of Peer Perceived Job Attribute Preferences

Ranking of importance	Johnson 2008	Deason 2010
First	Pay (x = 2.7248, SD = 3.2463)	Pay (x = 2.1376, SD = 3.4840)
Second	Opportunity for Adv (x = 5.2867, SD = 3.0893)	Job Security (x = 4.4128, SD = 3.8759)
Third	Insurance (x = 5.7133, SD = 3.4445)	Type of Work (x = 5.0000, SD = 4.4576)
Fourth	Time off (x = 6.0559, SD = 3.0042)	Opportunity For Adv (x = 5.6705, SD = 3.4465)
Fifth	Type of Work (x = 6.1946, SD = 4.3924)	Insurance (x = 5.6818, SD = 3.0944)
Sixth	Job Security (x = 6.7785, SD = 3.6923)	Location (x = 5.7431, SD = 4.5039)
Seventh	Retirement (x = 6.9510, SD = 3.7026)	Supervisor (x = 6.2110, SD = 4.2121)
Eighth	Location (x = 7.1879, SD = 4.0941)	Flexible hours (x = 6.4495, SD = 4.5572)
Ninth	Supervisor (x = 7.5235, SD = 3.1442)	Coworkers (x = 6.7064, SD = 4.7205)
Tenth	Flexible hours (x = 7.5570, SD = 3.5610)	Time off (x = 6.7727, SD = 3.3174)
Eleventh	Coworkers (x = 7.8255, SD = 3.3505)	Retirement (x = 6.9510, SD = 3.5654)
Twelfth	Company (x = 8.5594, SD = 2.9897)	Company (x = 8.1932, SD = 3.5682)
Thirteenth	Career Mentor (x = 9.9664, SD = 3.8387)	Career Mentor (x = 8.5321, SD = 5.2274)
Note: Johnson 2008 N = 149 and Deason 2010 N = 109		

Table 3

Pearson Correlations of Job Attribute Preferences for Self Ranking Data- Deason 2010

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Opportunity for Adv	1												
2. Retirement	.120	1											
3. Insurance	.201*	.360**	1										
4. Time Off	.126	.124	.156	1									
5. Company	.075	-.094	-.005	-.166	1								
6. Coworkers	-.037	-.183	-.123	.074	.242*	1							
7. Flexible hours	-.312**	-.184	-.035	.270**	-.190	.023	1						
8. Pay	.244*	-.061	.066	.060	-.182	-.169	.039	1					
9. Job Security	-.007	-.040	.111	-.088	.023	-.201*	-.130	.014	1				
10. Supervisor	-.216*	-.148	-.065	-.263**	.047	.303**	.006	-.148	.011	1			
11. Career Mentor	-.268**	-.121	-.229*	-.107	.103	.138	-.151	-.492**	-.158	.259*	1		
12. Location	-.071	-.179	-.095	-.156	.031	-.031	-.069	.074	.021	.013	-.189	1	
13. Type of Work	-.215*	-.114	-.097	-.368**	.121	.050	-.071	.021	.133	.263**	.037	.160	1
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).      ** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).      N = 98													

Table 4

Pearson Correlations of Peer Perceived Job Attribute Preferences for Deason 2010

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.Opportunity for Adv	1												
2. Retirement	.645**	1											
3. Insurance	.528**	.691**	1										
4. Time Off	.440**	.581**	.563**	1									
5. Company	.467**	.454**	.451**	.498**	1								
6. Coworkers	.372**	.484**	.408**	.551**	.623**	1							
7. Flexible hours	.495**	.479**	.522**	.607**	.566**	.646**	1						
8. Pay	.322**	.233*	.386**	.409**	.200*	.111	.393**	1					
9. Job Security	.359**	.418**	.500**	.409**	.339**	.547**	.562**	.382**	1				
10. Supervisor	.413**	.542**	.497**	.558**	.559**	.729**	.593**	.319**	.537**	1			
11. Career Mentor	.477**	.570**	.524**	.581**	.666**	.776**	.710**	.219*	.599**	.819**	1		
12. Location	.361**	.311**	.332**	.462**	.545**	.593**	.612**	.376**	.460**	.620**	.647**	1	
13. Type of Work	.373**	.243*	.307**	.195*	.561**	.562**	.450**	.160	.479**	.585**	.635**	.641**	1

Table 5

Pearson Correlations between Self Ranked Job Attributes and Peer Perceived Job Attribute Preferences for Deason 2010

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14. Peer Opportunity for Adv	.092	.202*	.383**	.308**	.230*	.322**	.350**	.124	.153	.390**	.336**	.315**	.159
15. Peer Retirement	.111	.363**	.421**	.384**	.285**	.406**	.347**	.078	.183	.343**	.380**	.297**	.054
17. Peer Time off	.006	.368**	.410**	.433**	.284**	.283**	.317**	.244*	.343**	.254**	.387**	.253**	.006
18. Peer Company	.026	.342**	.277**	.394**	.463**	.347**	.347**	.198*	.215*	.286**	.364**	.332**	.073
19. Peer Coworkers	- .025	.445**	.294**	.490**	.382**	.415**	.396**	.187	.391**	.360**	.413**	.410**	.040
20. Peer Flexible Hours	.047	.389**	.391**	.474**	.388**	.340**	.482**	.319**	.302**	.352**	.411**	.346**	.091
21. Peer Pay	.089	.007	.128	.132	.164	.202*	.221*	.342**	.266**	.203*	.172	.218*	.321**
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).													

Self Ranked Attributes: 1- Opportunity for Adv, 2- Retirement, 3-Insurance, 4-Time Off, 5- Time Off, 6- Coworkers, 7- Flexible, 8- Pay, 9- Job Security, 10- Supervisor, 11- Career Mentor, 12- Location, 13- Type of Work

Table 5 Continued

Pearson Correlations between Self Ranked Job Attributes and Peer Perceived Job Attribute Preferences for Deason 2010

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
22. Peer Job Security	.171	.248**	.295**	.439**	.318**	.288**	.327**	.217*	.499**	.341**	.359**	.314**	.132
23. Peer Supervisor	.003	.411**	.299**	.444**	.307**	.407**	.457**	.233*	.350**	.418**	.416**	.333**	.045
24. Peer Career Mentor	.022	.386**	.373**	.482**	.438**	.438**	.499**	.147	.344**	.404**	.531**	.360**	.006
25. Peer Location	.008	.278**	.279**	.346**	.408**	.319**	.333**	.295**	.276**	.290**	.339**	.451**	.139
26. Peer Type of work	-.062	.255**	.288**	.331**	.389**	.326**	.347**	.166	.241*	.302**	.292**	.383**	.211*
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).													

Self Ranked Attributes: 1- Opportunity for Adv, 2- Retirement, 3-Insurance, 4-Time Off, 5- Time Off, 6- Coworkers, 7- Flexible, 8- Pay, 9- Job Security, 10- Supervisor, 11- Career Mentor, 12- Location, 13- Type of Work

Table 6

Independent t-Test Comparing Self Reported Job Attribute Preferences for Johnson 2008 and Deason 2010

	t	df	Significance
Opportunity for Adv	.732	242	.465
Retirement	-.366	241	.715
Insurance	-1.791	241	.075
Time Off	-.268	241	.789
Company	.302	241	.763
Coworkers	.378	241	.706
Flexible Hours	.464	241	.643
Pay	-.018	241	.986
Job Security	-1.765	241	.079
Supervisor	1.701	241	.090
Career Mentor	1.670	241	.096
Location	1.067	241	.287
Type of Work	-.717	241	.474

Table 7

Independent t-Test Comparing Peer Perceived Job Attribute Preferences for Johnson 2008 and Deason 2010

	t	df	Significance
Opportunity for Adv	.877	229	.381
Retirement	.053	229	.958
Insurance	-.070	229	.944
Time Off	1.692	229	.092
Company	-.839	229	.402
Coworkers	-2.091	225	.038
Flexible Hours	-2.190	256	.029
Pay	-1.391	256	.165
Job Security	-4.978	256	.000
Supervisor	-2.866	256	.005
Career Mentor	-2.542	256	.012
Location	-2.683	256	.008
Type of Work	-2.144	256	.033

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## Vita

Anna Deason was born March 7, 1983 in Birmingham, Alabama. She attended high school at Jefferson County International Baccalaureate High School in Irondale, Alabama. Anna then continued her education by obtaining her Bachelors of Science at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama in 2005. In 2008 Anna began the Masters of Science in Industrial Organizational Psychology at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. She earned her Master degree in the summer of 2010.