

**Job Choice Under Uncertainty: The Mediating Roles of Prospective Job and Organization  
Fit**

by

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## Abstract

Better fitting work environments lead to elevated performance, greater organizational commitment, and higher levels of job satisfaction. As evidence of these and other desirable workplace outcomes, applicants and organizations often base their job choices and hiring decisions on future fit. Drawing from signaling and impression management theories, applicants experience varying levels of uncertainty surrounding job prospects due to limited information and time in the job search process. This research experimentally investigated how uncertainty affects job prospect evaluations by testing a model of job choice under uncertainty. Applicants were hypothesized to evaluate job-organizational attraction as a function of their prospective person-job and person-organization fit; judgments of future fit given the limited knowledge of the future work environment. Greater job prospect uncertainty was theorized to lead to less attractive evaluations due to the greater variability of outcomes and inherent greater risk. Results provided evidence that greater uncertainty leads applicants to evaluate job prospects as less attractive, but only when the job prospect's characteristics are framed positively to applicants (i.e., offering a higher salary or better-fitting job). Furthermore, results showed that prospective person-job and person-organization strongly predicted job-organizational attraction regardless of job prospects characteristics were framed.

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## Job Choice Under Uncertainty: The Mediating Roles of Prospective Job and Organization Fit

How do applicants evaluate job prospects in an uncertain world? When searching for new employment opportunities, applicants often evaluate multiple job prospects to reach a final decision. They seek answers to questions such as: How much money will I make? When and where will I be working? Is there room for me to grow? Will I like the work I do? Will I fit into this organization? Research indicates that these are meaningful questions to ask in one's search; they cannot be answered with absolute certainty (Cable & Judge, 1996; Kristof, 1996; Rynes, 1991). Organizations change, jobs often prove to be different than expected, and today's work environment is more fluid than ever (Barley, Bechky & Milliken, 2017; Lyons, Ng, & Schweitzer, 2014; Salas, Kozlowski, & Chen, 2017).

By seeking answers to these questions, applicants inform their evaluations of job-organizational attraction. Job-organizational attraction is the subjective degree of appeal an applicant attributes to a job prospect (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin & Jones, 2005). Applicants form attraction evaluations based on a composite of their liking of assessed job-organizational characteristics (Cable & Judge, 1994; Chapman et al., 2005; Holland, 1985; Iyengar, Wells, & Schwartz, 2006; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Judge & Kristof-Brown 2004; Vroom, 1966). Although applicants evaluate job prospects to the best of their ability, their evaluations are prone to misjudgment due to uncertainty (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Job-organizational attraction is, therefore, critical to examine as a judgment rendered under uncertainty because job-organizational attraction often leads to applicant final job choice (Chapman et al., 2005).

Uncertainty is present in job choice due to the limited time in the job search, and from the incomplete information, applicants gather regarding job prospects. One cannot know for certain the positive or negative outcomes associated with choosing a job prospect. Research supports



that the uncertainty surrounding a choice affects the decision process of individuals (Dow & Werlang, 1992; Ellsberg, 1961; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1983; 1992). Applicants encounter risk by enduring the consequences of their job choice and face varying levels of uncertainty from evaluating probable outcomes associated with job prospects. Uncertainty refers to the presence or lack of information in assessing risk, whereas risk is concerned with how much a decision maker stands to gain or lose as a consequence of their decision (Tversky & Kahneman, 1992).

This study aimed to investigate how job prospect uncertainty affects applicant evaluations of job-organizational attraction. We theorized that job prospects with higher levels of uncertainty would be evaluated as less attractive by job seekers due to uncertainty aversion, the tendency to choose the known alternative over the unknown (Dow & Werlang, 1992; Ellsberg, 1961). The job prospect uncertainty-attraction relationship was tested by experimentally manipulating the amount of information concerning the job-organizational characteristics under consideration. We proposed a theoretical model describing how applicants render attractiveness evaluations through assessments of future fit between the applicant, the job, and the organization under consideration. Additionally, this study distinguished prospective fit as a future assessment of fit to emphasize the difference in fit ratings pre and post organizational entry. Before examining the relationship between uncertainty and job-organizational attraction, it is important to review the process for which organizations come to be and the process for which individuals select themselves into organizations.

### **Personnel Selection & Job Choice**

Personnel selection and job choice is a mutual search and evaluative process involving two parties: the hiring organization and the applicant. The goal of the organization is to hire

suitable employees, whereas the goal of the applicant is to receive and accept a good job offer. Organizations benefit from recruiting talent employees in the form of a competitive edge whereas employees can fulfill a variety of lower-level needs and higher-level desires with a good job (Aguinis, Joo, Gotfredson, 2013; Cable & Judge, 1994; Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004; Lado & Wilson, 1994; Locke, 1969; Pfeffer, 1994). To reach their goal, organizations evaluate applicants using personnel selection techniques such as interviews, intelligence, and personality tests to determine suitability to perform a specific job in an organizational environment (Colom, Martinez-Molina, Shih, & Santacreu, 2010; Lang, Kersting, Hulscheher, & Lang, 2010; Le, Oh, Robbins, Ilies, Holland, & Westrick 2011; Newman, Joseph, & MacCann, 2010; Van Iddekinge, Roth, Putka, & Lanivich, 2011b). Predicting employee task performance, turnover risk, prosocial and counterproductive workplace behaviors are regarded as a priority for many organizations (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2009; Cook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, & Ketchen, 2011; Maltarich, Nyberg, & Reilly, 2010; O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks & McDaniel, 2012). Once the organization reaches a hiring decision, the applicant must decide to accept or reject the organization's offer.

To secure a good job offer, applicants engage in the job choice process whereby applicants evaluate characteristics of job prospects (Chapman et al., 2005). Research indicates that applicants are attracted to and choose jobs based on impending outcomes including job satisfaction, professional development, and economic prosperity (Aguinis et al., 2013; Cable & Judge, 1994; Lado & Wilson, 1994; Egan et al., 2004; Locke, 1969). The attraction, selection, attrition (ASA) model demonstrates that applicants are attracted to organizational environments that fit themselves (Barnard, 1938; Schneider, 1987; Tom, 1971; Vroom, 1966). Self-selecting into a well-fitting organization is complex and theorized to be a function of an individual's

personality, vocational interests, and decision making styles (Cable & Judge, 1994; Chapman et al., 2005; Holland, 1985; Iyengar, Wells, & Schwartz, 2006; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Judge & Kristof-Brown 2004; Vroom, 1966). Employees that do not fit often leave, which results in organizations containing a homogenous group of people as a product of the ASA cycle (Behling, Labovitz, & Gainer 1968; Barnard, 1938; Schneider, 1987; Tom, 1971). Many person-environment fit and job-organization attraction theories establish themselves based on the ASA model (Cable & Judge, 1994; 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Although the goal of the organization to hire suitable employees is prominent across most organizations, the applicant's goal of finding a good job is highly subjective (Guion, 2011; Ryan & Polyhart, 2014). Applicants are diverse in what they regard as attractive in a job and organization (Cable & Judge, 1994; 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Holland, 1985; Schneider, 1987 Vroom, 1966).

### **Job-Organizational Attraction**

Evaluating job prospect attraction is a deliberative process where applicants prioritize and assess characteristics of job and organization. Job-organizational attraction is the degree of appeal an applicant attributes to performing a job in a corresponding organization (Chapman et al., 2005). Three facets comprise job-organizational attraction wherein the first two facets applicants evaluate the job and the organization (Chapman et al., 2005). Job attraction refers to performing the job tasks whereas organizational attraction is the degree to which an organization meets the needs of employees (Macan & Dipboye, 1990; Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings, 2009; Saks, Weisner, & Summers, 1994). The third facet is objective organizational attraction where applicants evaluate the reputation of an organization (Lievens, Van Hoye, & Anseel, 2007; Lievens, 2017; Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Perlman, & Stoffey, 1993). The processes by which

applicants form attractiveness evaluations are crucial to examine because these criteria are considered by applicants when making their final job choice (Chapman et al., 2005).

Job and organizational characteristics play an important role when applicants evaluate the attractiveness of a job prospect. Job-organizational characteristics are conceptualized into two broad categories: externalized and internalized (O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1980; Chapman et al., 2005). Externalized job-organizational characteristics are easily conceptualized, compared, and are often not subject to change post job choice. These include salary, benefits, and location. In contrast, internalized job-organization characteristics are conceived within the individual and require inferential judgments to assess a future state (Arthur et al., 2006; Chapman et al., 2005; O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1980). These include perceptions of person-environment fit, organizational culture, values, and social norms (Chatman, 1989; Pervin, 1989). Although some job-organizational characteristics are globally desirable, the characteristics applicants prioritize when evaluating job-organizational attraction is highly subjective. The values, goals, and preferences of individuals determine what job-organizational characteristics applicants prioritize (Kahneman & Tversky, 1974; 1983; Holland, 1985; Schneider; 1987; Tversky & Kahneman, 1980; 1992; Vroom, 1966).

Job-organizational attraction is, therefore, a subjective evaluation concerning the future state of accepting a job. In forming these judgments, applicants evaluate job-organizational characteristics to calculate a subjective utility of a job prospect (Chapman et al., 2005; Hastie & Dawes, 2000; Kahneman & Tversky, 1983; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; 1992). Applicants will weigh job-organizational characteristics according to individual preference then calculate a total subjective utility, or value, for each job prospect to determine attraction (Chapman et al., 2005; Hastie & Dawes, 2000; Kahneman & Tversky, 1974; 1983; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; 1992).

If two applicants evaluate the same job prospect, the attractiveness level may differ as it is dependent on preference (Cable & Judge, 1994; Chapman et al., 2005; Holland, 1985; Iyengar, Wells, & Schwartz, 2006; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Judge & Kristof-Brown, 2004; Vroom, 1966). Evaluating job-organizational attraction is difficult and often inaccurate. Attractiveness evaluations are merely calculated assumptions of a future state and are, therefore, prone to misjudgment (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; 1980). This process is difficult for applicants because of the uncertainty inherent in evaluating job prospects. It is highly unlikely that applicants will know the exact conditions of all the job-organizational characteristics under consideration. Rather, applicants render attractiveness evaluations under varying levels of uncertainty due to incomplete information regarding job prospects. Therefore, uncertainty is critical to examine in the job choice process because it affects how applicants evaluate job prospects.

### **Job Choice Uncertainty**

Uncertainty is present in the job choice context due to the limited time applicants have to accept a job and from the incomplete information, applicants gather regarding job prospects. Applicants and organizations strive to reduce uncertainty to make the most informative decision possible given enduring outcomes associated with employment decisions (Aguinis et al., 2013; Cable & Judge, 1994; Egan, Yang, & Bartlett, 2004; Lado & Wilson, 1994; Locke, 1969; O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1980; Pfeffer, 1994; Turban, 2001; Wille & De Fruyt, 2014). The interview is the most commonly used selection tool for informing employment decisions and reducing uncertainty for both the organization and individual (Bangeter et al., 2012; Ryan & Polyhart, 2014). However, interviews provide limited information about each party (Ryan & Ployhart, 2014). Applicants are motivated to impress organizations and organizations want to

impress applicants. The divergent goals of the organization and applicant incentivize impression management, which introduces greater uncertainty in the job choice process. Impression management, the tactics individuals use to present themselves as suitable during high risk and reward situations, leads to incomplete and distorted information during the personnel selection process (Bangeter et al., 2012; Swider et al., 2011). According to signaling theory, each party has a motivation to engage in impression management behaviors for their direct benefit (Bangeter et al., 2012). For example, an applicant may intentionally omit a low-grade point average from a resume to increase their chance of getting the position. Likewise, an organization may not reveal to the applicant that their potential supervisor is temperamental. In both cases, each party withholds relevant information, and these omissions may artificially increase the attraction between the applicant and the organizations (Bangeter et al., 2012, Spence, 1973).

The uncertainty surrounding a choice greatly affects the decision process of individuals when faced with a complex choice because uncertain alternatives incur more risk (Dow & Werlang, 1992). Individuals stand to lose more when choosing alternatives with greater uncertainty in contrast to alternatives where the outcome is known. When information is absent, incomplete, or subject to change, uncertainty is increased. When information about an attribute is present, uncertainty is reduced. Uncertainty aversion is the tendency to choose a known alternative in contrast to an unknown alternative (Dow & Werlang, 1992; Ellsberg, 1961; Epstein, 1999; Nau, 2006). This tendency minimizes uncertainty and minimizes risk, and potential losses (Dow & Werlang, 1992; Ellsberg, 1961; Epstein, 1999; Nau, 2006). Therefore, job prospects containing greater levels of uncertainty will be evaluated as less attractive by job seekers due to uncertainty aversion.

As evident from the job choice literature, the attractiveness of a job prospect is dependent on the evaluation of the known and unknown attributes of the job and organization. Since applicants consider these attributes to be job-organizational characteristics (Chapman et al., 2005), the less an applicant knows about each job-organizational characteristic under consideration, the more uncertainty they will attribute to the job prospect. Following uncertainty aversion, applicants will rate job prospects as less attractive by the mere absence of information regarding job-organization characteristics. The bias against lesser-known characteristics will occur due to a higher probability of exposing one's self to greater risk. Therefore, a high level of uncertainty concerning a job prospect will be negatively related to ratings of job-organization attraction.

*Hypothesis 1 (H1):* Greater uncertainty is negatively related to job-organizational attraction.

Applicants evaluate many job-organizational characteristics to determine attraction, however, applicants largely are evaluating future-fit (Cable & Judge, 1994; Chapman et al., 2005; O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1980). Future evaluations of fit are especially prone to uncertainty aversion due to the difficulty of the evaluation. Future fit is challenging to assess because it requires inferential judgments regarding a future state of congruence between the applicant, the job, and organization under consideration. While other characteristics are prone to uncertainty aversion, future-fit is important to examine given the individual and organization implications of fit or misfit (Cable & Judge, 1994; Chapman et al., 2005; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; O'Reilly & Caldwell, 1980).

## **Prospective Person-Environment Fit**

Fit has been extensively examined by both scholars and practitioners (Judge & Kristof-Brown, 2004; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011, Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Fit is important in the evaluation of attractiveness because it provides a meaningful way of assessing how work environments influence employee attitudes and behaviors (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Swider, Barick, Harris, & Stoverink, 2015). Defined as congruence between a person their work environment characteristics, person-environment (P-E) fit is critical to consider in the hiring process because it is associated with desirable outcomes for individuals and organizations. P-E fit is multifaceted and complex and often includes specific types of fit such as person-job fit, person-organization fit, person-vocation fit, person-group fit, and person-individual fit (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This study focuses on person-job (P-J) fit and person-organization fit (P-O) because of their previously theorized role in job choice (Cable & Judge, 1994; 1996; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). P-J fit is the compatibility between the person and job tasks, whereas P-O fit is the match of values and goals between the person and organization (Boon & Biron, 2016; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

The person-environment literature has linked both fit and misfit to a variety of individual and organization outcomes. Person-job fit and job satisfaction are positively associated with one another, while person-organization fit is positively related to organizational commitment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). Increased individual performance, greater levels of organizational commitment, and higher rates of job satisfaction are all associated with a high congruence between a person and their work environment (Arthur et al., 2006; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Verquer, Beehr, Wagner 2003). Misfit and employee dissatisfaction are strongly associated and



lead to voluntary turnover (Griffeth et al., 2000; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Schneider et al., 1995) Based on these findings and the notion that applicants evaluate fit in hopes of future satisfaction, judgments of fit must be explored more in-depth to avoid poor fit and unnecessary turnover as it is an expensive outcome for both parties because of the wasted time and resources (Egan et al., 2004; Griffeth et al., 2000).

Fit is commonly assessed within organizations whereby the characteristics of the person and environment are compared (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Kristof, 1996; Liu, Liu, & Hu, 2010; Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer, Sablynski 2007). However, it is necessary to distinguish between fit before job choice and post organizational entry (Boon & Biron, 2016). Person-environment fit is theoretically distinctive between employees within an organization and applicants who anticipate themselves in the organization. Applicants cannot directly perceive the fit of a prospective work environment as they have yet to enter the organization and be fully immersed in the environment. Although it is challenging to assess fit as a forecast into the future before entering an organization, it is necessary to consider pre-entry fit perceptions for these evaluations often affect how applicants evaluate job-organizational attraction (Carless, 2011; Judge & Cable 1996; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Therefore, prospective fit is defined as the subjective evaluation of a future fit for a specific job and respective organization rendered by an applicant. Prospective fit is not a direct measure of congruence between the applicant and prospective work environment, but rather is the applicant's perception of congruence between themselves and an anticipated work environment.

Evaluations of prospective fit are more likely to contain higher levels of uncertainty as one may not fully know the conditions of the future work environment. It is difficult to form accurate judgments of prospective fit when deciding to join an organization because the

judgment of fit involves the prediction of an uncertainty future state occurring; it improbable one will know the one's level of fit before becoming part of the organization (Baron, 2000; Ellsberg, 1961; Schoemaker, 2004). Schneider and others have theorized that applicant fit misjudgment during the attraction stage is part of the underlying reason attrition occurs in organizations (Schneider, 1987; Wanous, 1980). Rather than applicants accepting job offers anticipating potential misfit, instead, applicants misjudge a potential misfitting job prospect to be fitting (Schneider, 1987). Type 1 error in evaluations of prospective fit, the misjudgment of a bad fit of a prospective job, often leads to poor fit after starting employment.

Prospective fit is important because these perceptions are strong predictors of accepting a job (Chapman et al., 2005). Given the emphasis applicants place on future-fit when evaluating job prospect attraction, prospective person-job (PP-J) fit and prospective person-organization (PP-O) fit will influence evaluations of job prospect attraction (Chapman et al., 2005).

Applicants will rate PP-J and PP-O fit lower when faced with greater uncertainty because it increases the difficulty of making the complex evaluation of a future state. Following the uncertainty aversion principle, the absence of complete information regarding evaluations of PP-J and PP-O fit will account for applicants rating PP-J and PP-O fit as less attractive. Therefore, the following hypotheses explain the relationship between job prospect uncertainty with PP-J and PP-O fit.

*Hypothesis 2a (H2a):* Greater uncertainty is negatively related to prospective person-job fit.

*Hypothesis 2b (H2b):* Greater uncertainty is negatively related to prospective person-organization fit.

Consistent with the findings in the job organization attraction literature, an applicant's evaluation of job prospect attractiveness will be based on evaluating job-organizational characteristics. Because P-J and P-O fit perceptions are strong predictors of job-organizational attraction (Chapman et al., 2005), PP-J and PP-O fit should be positively related to the evaluation of the attractiveness of a job prospect. Higher ratings of PP-J and PP-O fit will lead to higher ratings of attractiveness of the job prospect under consideration.

*Hypothesis 3a (H3a):* Prospective person-job fit is positively associated with job-organizational attraction.

*Hypothesis 3b (H3b):* Prospective person-organization fit is positively associated with job-organizational attraction.

Therefore, job-organizational attraction evaluations are formed through the assessments of prospective person-job and person-organization fit. A theoretical model posits the relationship between job prospect uncertainty and job-organizational attraction whereby this central relationship will be explained through prospective person-job and prospective person-organization fit. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed theoretical mediation of PP-J and PP-O fit explaining the hypothesized job prospect uncertainty and job-organizational attraction relationship.

### **Individual Risk-Taking Propensity**

Job choice is a process that is characterized by risk. Risk is the extent of cumulative gains or losses when incurring a probable outcome (March & Shapira, 1987; Stewart & Roth, 2001). However, individuals do not treat risk equally. Risk-taking propensity is the predisposition of an individual to seek or avoid risk (Bromiley & Curley, 1992; Mishra & Lalumière, 2010; Sitkin & Weingart, 1995; Stewart & Roth, 2001). Individual risk-taking propensity is a trait theorized to

affect how individuals form subjective evaluations and decide upon risky alternatives (Mount & Barrick, 1995; Sitkin & Weingart, 1995). Individuals low in risk-taking propensity (e.g., risk-averse individuals) are more likely to minimize risk when making decisions. In contrast, individuals high on risk-taking propensity (e.g., risk-seeking individuals) are inversely more likely to choose riskier alternatives (Stewart & Roth, 1995).

In the case of job choice, applicants may treat job prospect uncertainty differently depending on their risk-taking propensity. Prospective fit is especially challenging to evaluate in high uncertainty job prospects because one does not know the conditions of the future work environment. Knowing less about the conditions of the work environment imposes more variance in evaluating prospective fit outcomes. In high uncertainty job prospects, outcomes of person-environment fit are subject to a wide range of possible congruence levels. In contrast, low uncertainty job prospects contain a narrower range of assessed congruence levels because one knows more about the conditions of their future work environment. As such, high uncertainty job prospect contains greater risk due to increased variance in evaluated fit outcomes.

Therefore, risk-taking propensity will affect how applicants evaluate PP-J and PP-O fit, given varying levels of uncertainty. Applicants who are risk-seeking, in contrast to those who are risk-averse, are more likely to tolerate greater levels of uncertainty in evaluating prospective fit. Job prospect uncertainty will affect evaluations of PP-J and PP-O fit for risk-seeking individuals to a lesser extent than risk-averse individuals. The following moderation hypotheses are proposed:

*Hypothesis 4a (H4a):* Higher risk taking propensity moderates the negative relationship between uncertainty and prospective person-job fit. This relationship will be stronger for risk averse individuals.

*Hypothesis 4b (H4b):* Higher risk taking propensity moderates the negative relationship between uncertainty and prospective person-organization fit. This relationship will be stronger for risk averse individuals.

Risk-averse individuals will rate prospects with higher levels of uncertainty as less attractive compared to risk-seeking individuals due to the great level of risk associated with greater levels of uncertainty.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of Psychology's Research Participation System were recruited for the study. Participants ( $N=248$ ) completed the online study via Qualtrics and received extra credit for their participation. Demographically, participants ages ranged from 18-25 years ( $M_{age} = 19.99$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ) whereby 79.4% of participants were female ( $N=197$ ). Most participants (76.6%) were non-psychology majors. Participants' class standing comprised of 32.5% freshmen, 18.5% sophomores, 18.5% juniors, and 27.0% seniors. Most participants indicated (94.5%) that they had previous full-time or part-time work experience. Participants indicated that 35.9% were currently employed, 21.3% were applying for jobs, 26.2% were thinking about applying to jobs while 27.3% were not applying to jobs. The participants who indicated they were currently employed averaged working ( $M = 14.75$ ,  $SD = 11.48$ ) hours per week. During data collection, the COVID-19 pandemic caused Auburn University to transition to remote instruction, and 146 participants completed the study during the COVID-19 pandemic. We used this distinction to examine if any differences arose between the pre and during COVID-19 participants in their responses.

## Design

A 2x2 within-subjects experimental design was utilized whereby the level of uncertainty (higher or lower) was crossed with job-organizational characteristics frame (positive or negative) to create 4 scenarios. The scenarios were: low uncertainty positive condition (LP), high uncertainty positive condition (HP), low uncertainty negative condition (LN), high uncertainty negative condition (HN). The dependent variable was job-organizational attraction, the level of uncertainty was the predictor variable, and PP-J and PP-J were the mediating variables.

## Materials

**Job Prospect Evaluation Task (JPET).** The job prospect evaluation task (JPET) was scenario-based. Participants were instructed to imagine that they were searching for their first job after graduation and were trying to determine which job will be best for them. Each JPET contained the same eight job-organizational characteristics for consideration: salary, benefits, location, job fit, organization fit, work-life balance, career advancement, and professional development. These characteristics served as the attributes or cues for participants to judge when evaluating job-organizational attraction. For each JPET, uncertainty and framing of job-organizational characteristics were manipulated such that high and low uncertainty and positive and negative frames were crossed to create 4 unique JPETs. Table 1 summarizes the manipulation for each of the eight JPET characteristics. The low uncertainty scenarios had the characteristics described with clear information to the participant so that a subjectivity utility of the characteristic was easily discernable. The high uncertainty scenario described five (e.g., job fit, organization fit, work-life balance, career advancement, professional development) of the eight attributes as ambiguous so the utility of each attribute was more difficult to discern. In positively framed characteristics in the JPETs, the job-organizational characteristics were framed

as offering the applicant better salary and benefits, closer to one's hometown, a job directly related to college major, and a collaborative and supportive environment. In the negatively framed characteristics in the JPETs, these characteristics were less desirable (e.g., lower salary, poorer benefits, further away from hometown, job unrelated to major, and less supportive environment). Appendix 1 contains each of the four JPETs as presented to participants in this study.

## **Measures**

*Uncertainty.* The amount of uncertainty applicants attributed to a job prospect was measured using five items. Sample items include “I would like to know more about this job before accepting an offer.” and “I would like to know more about this organization before accepting an offer”. A 5-point Likert scale with 1 representing *Strongly disagree* and 5 representing *Strongly agree* was used with higher scores indicating greater uncertainty ( $\alpha = .83, .76, .76$  and  $.80$ ) for the low uncertainty positive condition (LP), high uncertainty positive condition (HP), low uncertainty negative condition (LN) and high uncertainty negative condition (HN), respectively). See Appendix 2 for all items.

*Job-Organizational Attraction.* The subjective level of attraction for the job prospect was assessed using six items. Sample items include “I think this job would make good use of my abilities and skills.” and “I would like to work for this company.” These items were adapted from previous studies measure job-organizational attraction (Saks, Wiesner, & Summers, 1994; Macan & Dipboye, 1990). 5-point Likert scale with 1 representing *Strongly disagree* and 5 representing *Strongly agree* was used with higher scores indicating higher levels of attractiveness ( $\alpha = .87, .82, .91$ , and  $.91$  for each condition LP, HP, LN, HN, respectively). See Appendix 3 for all items.

*Prospective Person-Job Fit.* Applicant subjective evaluations of a future-fit between themselves and the evaluated job were measured with four items adapted from Saks and Ashforth (1997). A sample item is “This job will enable me to do the kind of work I like”. Using a 5-point Likert scale with 1 representing *Strongly disagree* and 5 representing *Strongly agree* with higher scores indicating the perception of a better fitting job ( $\alpha = .89, .81, .88, \text{ and } .87$  for each condition LP, HP, LN, HN, respectively). See Appendix 4 for all items.

*Prospective Person-Organizational Fit.* Applicant subjective evaluations of a future-fit between themselves and the evaluated organization were measured with four items adapted from Cable and Judge (1996, 1997). A sample item is “My values will match those of current employees in this organization.” Using a 5-point Likert scale with 1 representing *Strongly disagree* and 5 representing *Strongly agree* with higher scores indicating the perception of a better fitting organization ( $\alpha = .59, .26, .74 \text{ and } .70$  for each condition LP, HP, LN, HN, respectively). The reliability of this measure was low for the positively framed JPETs and may, therefore, subvert the results of the positively framed characteristics JPETs analyses. See Appendix 5 for all items.

*General Risk Propensity Scale (GRiPS).* Participants completed the 8 item General Risk Propensity Scale to measure risk-taking propensity (Zhang et al., 2019). The GRiPS is a unidimensional, self-report measure of domain-general risk-taking propensity. Using a 5-point Likert scale with 1 representing *Strongly disagree* and 5 representing *Strongly agree* with higher scores indicating higher risk seeking propensity. A sample item is “I am a believer of taking chances” ( $\alpha = .92$ ). See Appendix 6 for the complete scale.

*Demographic Questionnaire.* Participants answered 7 demographic items about their age, gender, college major, how many hours they work per week, how many jobs they have held in



the past, what type of jobs they have held in the past, and if they are currently looking for a job  
See Appendix for the complete list of demographic questions.

## **Procedure**

Once participants consented to participate in the study, participants received all four JPETs in random order. They read and evaluated each JPET individually. After reading a JPET, they immediately assessed their perceived uncertainty, PP-J fit, PP-O fit, and job organization attraction of the given JPET. Participants completed this process for each JPET, and then they completed the risk-taking propensity scale and the demographic questions (e.g., age, class standing, work experience, currently employed, currently seeking employment).

## **Results**

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and intercorrelations for study variables per JPET are presented in Table 2. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate a path diagram with plotted regression coefficients for both the positively and negatively framed characteristics models respectively.

## **Manipulation Check**

To ensure the manipulation of uncertainty (higher vs. lower) and the characteristics framing (positive vs. negative) worked as intended, a 2X2X2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The level of uncertainty and characteristics framing were the within-subjects variables and the participant sample (pre and during COVID-19) was the between-subjects factor. The dependent measure was uncertainty ratings. Both main effects for the manipulated variables were significant: level of uncertainty,  $F(1, 236) = 251.57, p < .00, \eta_p^2 = .516$  and characteristics framing,  $F(1, 236) = 86.43, p < .00, \eta_p^2 = .27$  In the positively framed characteristics JPETs, participants attributed greater uncertainty to the higher uncertainty JPET ( $M = 3.97, SD = 0.67$ ) compared to the lower uncertainty JPET ( $M = 2.91, SD = .81$ ). Similarly,

in the negatively framed characteristics JPETs, participants attributed greater uncertainty for the higher uncertainty JPET ( $M = 4.15, SD = .81$ ) in contrast to the lower uncertainty JPET ( $M = 3.66, SD = .86$ ). There was a significant interaction between the characteristics framing and uncertainty manipulations  $F(1, 236) = 43.53, p < .00, \eta_p^2 = .16$ . The interaction is due to a larger difference between higher and lower uncertainty in the positive JPETs compared to the negative JPETs. There was no significant difference between pre and during COVID-19 participants,  $F(1, 236) = 0.08, p = .77, \eta_p^2 = .00$ , and none of the interactions with the between-subjects factor were significant. This result indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic did not cause any significant effect on uncertainty ratings in the JPETs.

### **Within-Participant Mediation Analysis**

Effects were estimated as the mean differences in M and Y following the path analytic framework for within-participant mediation analyses as delineated by Judd and colleagues (Judd, Kenny, & McClelland, 2001). MEMORE, an SPSS application for within-participant mediation analyses, was utilized to test hypotheses H1, H2a, and H2b, whereby the differences in M and Y were computed by subtracting lower uncertainty from higher uncertainty,  $Y_2 - Y_1$ , and  $M_2 - M_1$  (Montoya & Hayes, 2017). H3a and H3b were analyzed using ordinal least squares regression (OLS). Two separate analyses were conducted for the positive and negatively framed characteristics scenarios in which higher and lower uncertainty conditions were compared by holding uncertainty constant in the model. Indirect effects were estimated by calculating difference scores between mediators ( $M_2 - M_1$ ) and outcomes ( $Y_2 - Y_1$ ) in which lower uncertainty condition was subtracted from higher uncertainty conditions. As such, the analyzed mediators were the difference scores between measurements of M and the outcome was the difference between measurements of Y between higher and lower uncertainty conditions

(Montoya & Hayes, 2017). All confidence intervals for the estimates of the indirect effects of the model were estimated using a bootstrapping procedure derived from 10,000 samples.

### **Positively framed model**

**Uncertainty.** Hypothesis 1 proposed that greater uncertainty is negatively related to job-organizational attraction. Results indicated that greater uncertainty lead participants to evaluate job-organizational attraction as overall less desirable ( $c' = -0.19, p < .00$ ). Participants rated the lower uncertainty JPET ( $M = 4.51, SD = .50$ ) as more attractive than the higher uncertainty JPET ( $M = 3.61, SD = .56$ ),  $t(237) = 20.13, p < .00, d = 1.70$ ). Hypothesis 1 was supported for the positively framed model. Greater job prospect uncertainty was negatively related to job-organizational attraction.

**Prospective Person-Job Fit.** Hypothesis 2a proposed that greater uncertainty is negatively related to PP-J fit. Results indicated that greater uncertainty lead participants to evaluate PP-J fit ( $a_1 = -0.92, p < .00$ ) as less fitting. Participants evaluated PP-J fit as higher for the lower uncertainty JPET ( $M = 4.54, SD = .55$ ) in contrast to the higher uncertainty JPET ( $M = 3.62, SD = .65$ ),  $t(237) = 19.10, p < .00, d = 1.53$ . Hypothesis 2a was supported for the positively framed model. Greater job prospect uncertainty was negatively related to PP-J fit evaluations.

Hypothesis 3a proposed that PP-J fit is positively associated with job-organizational attraction. Results showed that participants evaluations of PP-J fit were positively related to their job-organizational attraction evaluations ( $b_1 = 0.50, p < .00$ ). Hypothesis 3a was supported for the positively framed model. PP-J fit ratings were positively related to job-organizational attractiveness evaluations.

**Prospective Person-Organization Fit.** Hypothesis 2b proposed that greater uncertainty is negatively related to PP-O fit. Likewise, results indicated that greater uncertainty leads

participants to evaluate PP-O fit as less fitting ( $a_2 = -0.79, p < .00$ ). Participants evaluated PP-O fit higher for the lower uncertainty JPET ( $M = 4.10, SD = .62$ ) in contrast to the higher uncertainty JPET ( $M = 3.30, SD = .53$ ),  $t(237) = 16.28, p < .00, d = 1.39$ . Hypothesis 2b was supported for the positively framed model. Greater job prospect uncertainty was negatively related to PP-O fit evaluations.

Hypothesis 3b proposed that PP-O fit is positively associated with job-organizational attraction. Results indicated that participants evaluations of PP-O fit were positively related to their job-organizational attraction evaluations ( $b_1 = 0.50, p < .00$ ). Hypothesis 3b was supported for the positively framed model in that PP-O fit ratings were positively related to job-organizational attractiveness evaluations.

**Risk Taking Propensity.** Hypotheses 4a and 4b proposed that higher risk taking propensity is positively related to both PP-J and PP-O fit. As such, risk-averse individuals were proposed to evaluate high uncertainty job prospects as less attractive compared to risk-seeking individuals. Results indicated that risk taking propensity did not significantly interact with uncertainty and PP-J fit  $R^2 < .00, F(1,208) = .38, p = .54$ . Likewise, ratings of PP-O fit did not significantly differ depending on risk taking propensity for both the positively framed JPETs  $R^2 < .00, F(1,208) = .38, p = .54$ . Therefore, Hypotheses 4a and 4b were not supported. Higher risk taking propensity was not positively related to either PP-J or PP-O fit.

**Indirect Effects.** Both indirect effects of job prospect uncertainty through P-PJ and PP-O fit were significant  $a_1b_1 = -0.46, a_2b_2 = -0.24$  with respective 95% bootstrap confidence intervals [-0.56, -0.36], [-0.31, -0.17] indicating that uncertainty negatively affected how participants evaluated job-organizational attraction through PP-J and PP-O fit. The total indirect effect of both P-PP and PP-O was estimated at -0.70 with a 95% confidence interval of [-0.81, -0.59]

while the total effect is estimated at -0.89 with a 95% confidence interval [-0.98, -0.81].

Additionally, a pairwise test between indirect effects  $a_1b_1 - a_2b_2 = -0.22$  with a 95% bootstrapped CI [-0.36, -0.08] showed that the indirect effect of uncertainty on job-organization attraction through PP-J fit was more substantial than the indirect effect of uncertainty on job-organizational attraction through PP-O fit.

### **Negatively framed model**

**Uncertainty.** Results of the negatively framed JPET model indicated that greater uncertainty did not lead participants to directly evaluate job-organizational attraction as less attractive ( $c' = -0.02, p = .57$ ). No significant difference was observed for job-organizational attraction for the higher ( $M = 1.97, SD = .89$ ) and lower uncertainty JPETs ( $M = 2.07, SD = .82$ ),  $t(239) = -1.68, p = .10, d = .11$ . Contrary to the positively framed model, Hypothesis 1, that greater uncertainty would be negatively related to job-organizational attraction, was not supported in the negatively framed JPETs model.

**Prospective Person-Job Fit.** Hypothesis 2a proposed that greater uncertainty is negatively related to PP-J fit, was tested again in the positively framed model. Results showed that greater uncertainty did not lead participants to evaluate PP-J fit as less fitting ( $a_1 = 0.08, p = .19$ ). The negatively framed characteristics JPETs yielded no significant differences in participants evaluating PP-J fit for the higher ( $M = 2.15, SD = .87$ ) and lower ( $M = 2.07, SD = .92$ ) uncertainty JPETs,  $t(239) = -1.31, p = .190, d = 0.09$ . Hypothesis 2a was not supported for the negatively framed model. Job prospect uncertainty did affect participant ratings of PP-J fit.

Hypothesis 3a proposed that PP-J fit is positively associated with job-organizational attraction. Results showed that participants evaluations of PP-J fit were positively related to their job-organizational attraction evaluations ( $b_1 = 0.58, p < .00$ ). Hypothesis 3a was supported for

the negatively framed model. PP-J fit ratings were positively related to job-organizational attractiveness evaluations.

**Prospective Person-Organization Fit.** Hypothesis 2b proposed that greater uncertainty is negatively related to PP-O fit. Results showed greater uncertainty lead participants to rate P-PO fit as better fitting ( $a_2 = 0.23, p < .00$ ). For the negatively framed JPETs, participants evaluated PP-O fit higher in the higher uncertainty JPET ( $M = 2.32, SD = .75$ ) compared to the lower uncertainty JPET ( $M = 2.10, SD = .81$ ),  $t(239) = -4.11, p < .00, d = .17$ . Hypothesis 2b was not supported in the negatively framed model. Contrary to the hypothesis, greater uncertainty lead participants to evaluate PP-O fit as more fitting.

Hypothesis 3b proposed that PP-O fit is positively associated with job-organizational attraction. Results provided evidence of the positive relationship between PP-O fit rating and job-organizational attraction ( $b_2 = 0.30, p < .00$ ). Hypothesis 3b was supported for the negatively framed model. PP-O fit ratings were positively related to job-organizational attractiveness evaluations.

**Risk Taking Propensity.** Hypotheses 4a and 4b proposed that higher risk taking propensity is positively related to both PP-J and PP-O fit. Similarly to the positively framed model, risk taking propensity did not significantly interact with uncertainty and PP-J fit,  $R^2 = .01, F(1,210) = 1.48, p = .23$  or interact with uncertainty and PP-O fit  $R^2 = .00, F(1,208) = 0.09, p = .76$ . Hypotheses 4a and 4b were not supported in the negatively framed model.

**Indirect effects.** The indirect effect of uncertainty on job-organizational attraction through PP-J was not significant as estimated  $a_1b_1 = .05$  with a 95% bootstrap confidence interval [-0.02, 0.11]. However, the indirect effect uncertainty on job-organizational attraction through PP-O fit,  $a_2b_2 = 0.07$  was significant at a 95% bootstrapped confidence interval [0.03,

0.13]. Greater uncertainty did not affect how participants evaluated job-organizational attraction through PP-J fit but did positively affect job-organizational attraction evaluations through PP-O fit. The total indirect effect of both PP-J and PP-O was significant as estimated at .12 with a 95% bootstrapped confidence interval [0.02, 0.21] whereas the total effect was not significant at .09 with a 95% bootstrapped confidence interval [-.02, .21].

## **Discussion**

Uncertainty is ever-present in the world and will always be present in job choice due to our cognitive limitations and the limited time to gather knowledge on known alternatives (Simon, 1955, 1956). While applicants will strive to gather as much knowledge as possible to reduce uncertainty, uncertainty cannot be eliminated from complex decision processes like job choice. Given the impact of job choice and other complex decisions have on individuals and organizations, studies examining how uncertainty on our decision processes are important because of how uncertainty can affect our judgment and decisions (Dow & Werlang, 1992; Ellsberg, 1961; Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Tversky & Kahneman, 1983; 1992). The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between job prospect uncertainty and job-organizational attraction through the mechanisms of prospective person-job and person-organization fit. Prospective fit was proposed as an anticipated judgment of future fit to explain how applicants evaluate prospective work environments without directly assessing the job or organization. Prospective fit was distinguished from other types of person-environment fit to underscore the emphasis that applicants place on future work environment when evaluating and choosing jobs. The findings of this study support the importance of prospective fit in applicant job choice. In both positive and negative framed JPETs, participants consistently evaluated job prospect attraction with how they rated their PP-J and PP-O fit. When participants evaluated

their PP-J and PP-O fit as well-fitting, they evaluated the job prospect as more attractive. While this study provides evidence prospective fit is important to how applicants evaluate job prospects, it is just as important for organizations to consider applicant prospective fit to better appeal to the most talented employees.

The results concerning the proposed uncertainty job-organizational attraction were mixed. In the negatively framed characteristics JPETs, the results did not yield significant evidence of greater job prospect uncertainty leading applicants to evaluate PP-J fit, PP-O fit, or the job prospect as less attractive. Conversely, however, the results of the positively framed characteristics JPETs results provided evidence of the proposed negative uncertainty-attraction relationship. PP-J and PP-O fit served as the mechanism for the negative relationship between uncertainty and job-organization attraction through evidence of the mediation analyses. The positively framed characteristics JPETs results provided evidence of uncertainty aversion in the job choice process whereby applicants evaluate job prospects with greater uncertainty as less attractive. As theorized, greater job prospect uncertainty exposed applicants with greater variability in outcomes and therefore risk when choosing jobs. In the positively framed scenarios, job prospects with greater uncertainty were regarded as less attractive due to the absence of information. This was not observed for the negatively framed characteristic JPETs. It is, however, important to emphasize that while uncertainty aversion of disliking the unknown does limit the risk one incurs, it also does bias our way of thinking about alternatives. Job prospects with greater uncertainty do not inherently offer applicants less; they are, however, thought of as less attractive due to knowing less about the characteristics of the job prospect. From the applicant's perspective, it may not be best to discontinue learning about a job prospect because one lacks information. Likewise, it is also important for organizations to emphasize



reducing uncertainty in recruitment practices for applicants as much as possible to appeal to a wider range of qualified applicants.

One plausible explanation as to why the contrasting results of the positive and negative framed characteristics JPETs were observed is that job prospects with negatively framed characteristics may be inherently less prone to uncertainty aversion. Job prospects with little to offer in terms of externalized job-organizational characteristics (e.g., salary, location) may be easily evaluated as undesirable based on the information readily available to applicants. If applicants can quickly distinguish job prospects as offering them little, they will discontinue to seek information or continue to pursue the job prospect. Applicants will therefore not experience uncertainty aversion due to lack of information because they are not seeking further information. Applicants make their decision to not further pursue a job prospect based on the easily assessed undesirable externalized job-organizational characteristics.

Another plausible explanation for the differences in results based on JPET characteristics framing is that externalized and internalized job-organizational characteristics may be evaluated sequentially rather than simultaneously the job choice process. This study assumed that participants would weigh all the attributes of the job prospect by their subjective importance to evaluate a utility to attractiveness evaluation for each job prospect in an additive linear fashion (Hastie & Dawes, 2002; Simon, 1978). The results of this study may suggest otherwise. Externalized characteristics, those that are easier to distinguish than internalized characteristics, may be evaluated first to meet a subjective threshold. Then, after subjective utility is met, one may start to consider the internalized characteristics of the job prospect. Sequentially evaluating externalized characteristics then internalized characteristics would help explain why uncertainty aversion was not observed in the negatively framed JPETs. Applicants may discontinue seeking

information once they assess a job prospect unfavorably in terms of compensation and location and thus uncertainty would not further affect their decision process in terms of evaluating PP-J or PP-O fit. In contrast, uncertainty aversion may have been observed in the positively framed characteristics JPETs because participants had met their initial threshold for externalized characteristics utility. Seeking information to reduce uncertainty in assessing the internalized characteristics of the job prospect may be more prone to uncertainty aversion due to the difficulty of assessing PP-J and PP-O fit as observed in the positively framed characteristics JPETs.

Applicants may rely more on an elimination-by-aspects choice strategy by which certain thresholds for externalized job-organizational characteristics must be met to lead to further consideration of the job prospect (Hastie & Dawes, 2002; Payne, Bettman, & Johnson, 1993; Tversky, 1972). This choice strategy may be used to save applicants time and effort by eliminating those prospects that do not meet their threshold of a subjective pay or location. This possibly serves to make the job search process more efficient. In the negatively framed JPETs, the externalized characteristics may have been deemed unsatisfactory and therefore their evaluation of PP-J and PP-O fit were not affected by uncertainty in their evaluation of attraction. For the positively framed JPETs, participants viewed externalized characteristics as satisfactory and therefore consider internalized JPETs that were shown to be prone to uncertainty. By utilizing such a choice strategy to approach this complex decision, job prospects may only be prone to uncertainty aversion once they have met the baseline threshold of externalized characteristics. Further seeking information to consider internalized characteristics which are inherently more difficult to assess .

## **Limitations**

Ideally to isolate the effects of uncertainty and positive and negative framing on applicant job choice, each of the eight attributes should be manipulated in a manner that isolates each of their effects. In the present study, internalized and externalized job-organizational characteristics were manipulated to investigate the effects of uncertainty and framing on how applicants evaluate job prospects. All the characteristics present in the scenario mimicked the real-world job search processes, but this did not allow for isolating each characteristic's effect. Each of the attributes manipulated likely has unique considerations for applicant evaluations considering how much of each information one knows about the prospect and how each of these is framed. Manipulating the characteristics in this manner did not allow for testing of a subjective utility calculation, or comparison for each condition, for participants.

Another potential limitation of this study is that the JPETs only manipulate eight job-organizational characteristics for participants to consider and evaluate. When applicants are on the job market, they likely have many more considerations beyond the eight attributes captured and manipulated in the JPETs in this study as well as time and fiscal restraints. As such the JPETs as they were manipulated in this study may be oversimplifying the complex process that is the job choice. There are many more subjective considerations that applicants likely consider depending on the goals, values, and preferences of the applicant (Kahneman & Tversky, 1974; 1983; Holland, 1985; Schneider; 1987; Tversky & Kahneman, 1980; 1992).

## **Future Research Directions**

Future research should continue to investigate how the limited information in the job choice context affects how applicants evaluate and choose jobs. Studies should continue to investigate the uncertainty-attraction relationship by continuing to investigate which type of job-

organizational characteristics are most prone to uncertainty aversion. While this study examines eight of the more salient job-organizational characteristics present in the job choice literature, more research should be done to investigate other job-organizational characteristics given the diverse nature of work, the subjectivity of the choice itself, and the ever-changing nature of work (Barley, Bechky & Milliken, 2017; Kahneman & Tversky, 1974; Lyons, Ng, & Schweitzer, 2014; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006; Salas, Kozlowski, & Chen, 2017).

The global pandemic the world experienced in the spring of 2020 may also have changed the dynamic of how applicants approach job choice given the abrupt economic transition from a once-promising job market to a lean now a learn job market and the widespread adoption of remote work (Bryne, 2020; Mackrael & Cameron, 2020; Torry, 2020). Although applicants have subjective preferences about job characteristics, the current economic landscape caused by the pandemic may lead job seekers to settle rather than seeking the best alternative (Iyengar et al., 2006; Schwartz, Ward, Monterosso, Lyumbomirsky, White, & Lehman, 2002, Simon, 1955; 1956). Future research should address how fiscal and time restraints affect the uncertainty-attraction relationship and how these constraints may lead to a difference in the adoption of choice strategies utilized by job seekers.

Additional research should also address the widespread adoption of remote work due to the global pandemic and it affects the job choice process (Torry, 2020). Potential research questions could revolve around how internalized job-organizational characteristics are evaluated for job prospects that are remote given the limited amount of social interaction remote work limits employees to. Potential implications of remote work may lead applicants to prioritize internalized job-organizational characteristics of remote work job prospects to a less extent than traditional job prospects. Future on remote work should also consider the labor divide between

workers who can work remotely and those whose job demands in-person work. Remote work is typically only a viable working alternative for jobs without demands that require in-person work due to most of the elements of the job can be accomplished in non-traditional office settings. These jobs tend to be those that require a considerable amount of technical training and thus are often on the higher end of the labor market in terms of income (Torry, 2020). This will be an important research consideration moving forward as many lower-income jobs will not have the ability to be performed remotely. The divide in remote work will likely impact the job choice process depending on the type of jobs individuals can secure based on their skills and qualifications.

## **Conclusion**

This study fills a gap in job choice and person-environment fit literature by examining how uncertainty affects evaluations of PP-J, and PP-O fit as predictors of job-organization attraction before the applicant can directly observe their work environment (Chapman et al., 2005; Judge & Bertz, 1993; Vroom, 1966). Evaluations of prospective fit are distinct from perceived fit judgments because applicants have yet to enter into their work environment. This temporal discrepancy of not considering pre-entry fit also presents a potential selection bias inherent to the attraction-selection-attrition framework (Schneider, 1987). Applicants who evaluate prospective fit as undesirable would not reasonably accept an organization's job offer and thus are unable to report fit post job choice to the organization. Considering prospective fit has the potential to inform organizations at a greater level of veracity of how attractive they are to applicants by including those who choose not to join.

Furthermore, the role of uncertainty in an applicant's decision making process has yet to be empirically examined as related to job-organization attraction. The results of this study

provide some evidence that greater job prospect uncertainty can lead to applicants evaluating job prospects as less attractive. Considering uncertainty may better help applicants and organizations identify fit and misfit by considering the information present regarding one another.

Additionally, applicants and organizations may save time and money and avoid undesirable outcomes from an incompatible fit that often lead to attrition (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000).

Implications include potential higher rates of identifying fitting job prospects before the job choice is made, so employees do have to undergo the negative experience associated with a low congruence level of person-environment fit.

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Table 1. JPET Job-organizational characteristics manipulation.

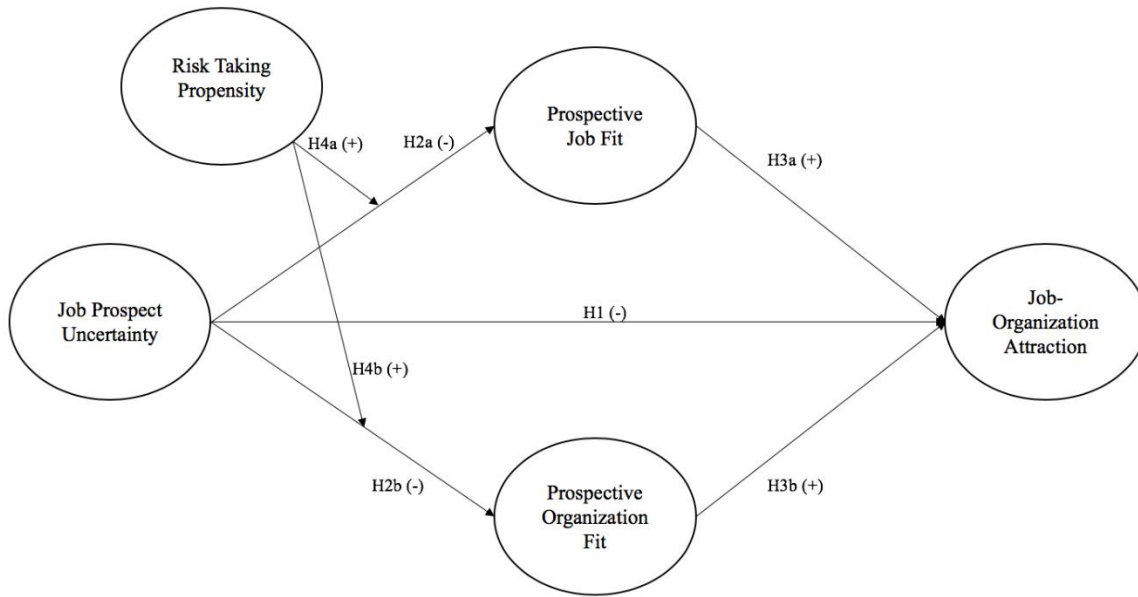
Uncertainty		
	Lower Uncertainty JPETs	Higher Uncertainty JPETs
Positive Frame		
Salary	Lower uncertainty	Lower uncertainty
Benefits	Lower uncertainty	Lower uncertainty
Location	Lower uncertainty	Lower uncertainty
Job fit	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty
Organization fit	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty
Work-life balance	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty
Career advancement	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty
Professional development	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty
Negative Frame		
Salary	Lower uncertainty	Lower uncertainty
Benefits	Lower uncertainty	Lower uncertainty
Location	Lower uncertainty	Lower uncertainty
Job fit	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty
Organization fit	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty
Work-life balance	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty
Career advancement	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty
Professional development	Lower uncertainty	Higher uncertainty

*Note. Only the uncertainty level was manipulated. All the characteristics embedded in the positively and negatively framed JPETs were all framed as positive or negative, respectively.*

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Internal Consistency, and Correlations of Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Age	19.99	1.62	-																		
Gender	1.17	.38	.04	-																	
LP Uncertainty	2.92	.81	-.01	.05	(.83)																
LP P-PJ Fit	4.54	.55	-.03	.01	-.39**	(.89)															
LP P-PO Fit	4.10	.62	-.07	-.03	-.40**	.63**	(.59)														
LP J-O Attraction	4.51	.50	.01	.01	-.37**	.77**	.62**	(.87)													
HP Uncertainty	3.97	.67	-.08	-.06	.13*	.03	.07	.05	(.76)												
HP P-PJ Fit	3.61	.65	-.03	.04	-.13*	.24**	.10	.13*	-.26**	(.81)											
HP P-PO Fit	3.30	.53	-.04	-.03	-.06	.19**	.15*	.11	-.25**	.58**	(.26)										
HP J-O Attraction	3.61	.56	.00	-.02	-.16*	.25**	.11	.17**	-.30**	.76**	.66**	(.82)									
LN Uncertainty	3.65	.86	-.03	-.13*	.22**	-.03	-.01	-.05	.14*	.06	.08	.10	(.76)								
LN P-PJ Fit	2.07	.92	.04	.02	.06	-.18**	-.18**	-.26**	-.21**	.10	.08	.03	-.04	(.88)							
LN P-PO Fit	2.09	.81	.06	.06	.19**	-.26**	-.33**	-.32**	-.16*	-.03	.05	-.05	-.04	.63**	(.74)						
LN J-O Attraction	1.97	.89	.05	-.01	.11	-.21**	-.22**	-.28**	-.20**	.05	.08	.02	-.01	.88**	.72**	(.91)					
HN Uncertainty	4.14	.81	.03	-.05	.07	.09	.02	.04	.16*	.12	.09	.13*	.29*	-.17**	-.28**	-.22**	(.80)				
HN P-PJ Fit	2.15	.87	-.03	.08	.00	-.17*	-.09	-.22**	-.09	.08	.09	.07	.02	.47**	.26**	.43**	-.17**	(.87)			
HN P-PO Fit	2.32	.75	.02	.04	.09	-.13*	-.19**	-.19**	-.15*	.00	.02	-.01	-.01	.39**	.38**	.39**	-.18**	.70**	(.70)		
HN J-O Attraction	2.07	.82	-.02	.02	.04	-.19**	-.16*	-.27**	-.10	.01	.03	.02	.01	.49**	.34**	.47**	-.16*	.86**	.74**	(.92)	
GRIPS	2.98	.87	.02	.12	.04	-.01	-.04	.03	.01	.04	.06	.08	-.12	.13	.19**	.12	-.08	.23**	.18**	.20**	

Note.  $n = 237$ . Gender (1 = Female), LP = Low uncertainty, positive frame, HP = High uncertainty, positive frame, LN = Low uncertainty, negative frame, HN = High uncertainty, negative frame. Diagonals contain reliability coefficient alpha. \*,  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*,  $p < 0.01$



*Figure 1:* Proposed theoretical model. This figure illustrates the relationship between job prospect uncertainty and job-organization attraction with two proposed mediators of PP-J and PP-O fit. Risk taking propensity is moderating the first-stage paths of both PP-J and PP-O fit.

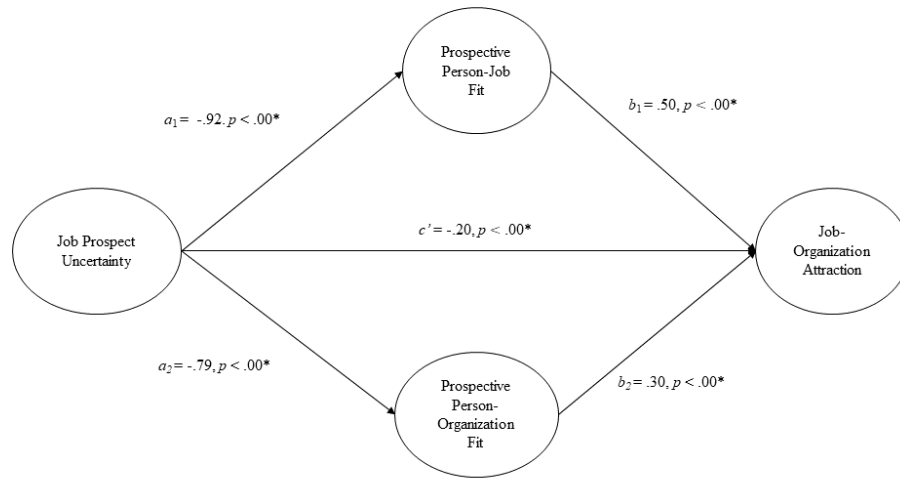


Figure 2. Results of the positively framed characteristics model.

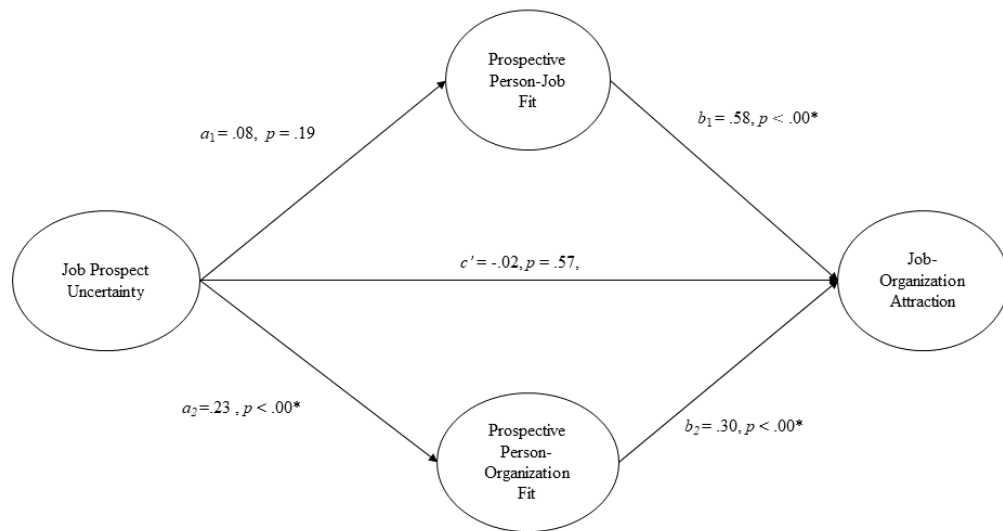


Figure 3. Results of the negatively framed characteristics model.

Appendix 1  
Job Prospect Evaluation Task (JPET)  
Low Uncertainty, Positive Framed Characteristics Scenario

We ask that you imagine searching for your first job after you graduate from college.

You may have a few options, and you are trying to determine which job will be best for you.

Please carefully read the information about a job possibility on the next screen. Afterward, we will ask you some questions about this job possibility.

A company you interviewed a week ago is going to offer you the following:

- An industry-standard salary with a benefits package that includes healthcare, dental care, and a 401k contribution matching program.
- The office where you would be working at is near your hometown and would be less than a 30-minute daily commute to work.

You also learned that:

- The job entails working on projects directly related to your college major.
- Most employees maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- This company supports the professional development of its employees.
- There are clear guidelines for promotions and advancement.

Additionally:

- You think that you would enjoy the work based on your interview and all the information you gathered so far.
- Your potential boss and colleagues you met during your interview were friendly and helpful.
- Your friends inform you that this company is a good place to work and has a supportive and friendly atmosphere.

Appendix 1 continued  
Job Prospect Evaluation Task (JPET)  
Low Uncertainty, Negative Framed Characteristics Scenario

We ask that you imagine searching for your first job after you graduate from college.

You may have a few options, and you are trying to determine which job will be best for you.

Please carefully read the information about a job possibility on the next screen. Afterward, we will ask you some questions about this job possibility.

A company you interviewed with a week ago is going to offer you the following:

- A below industry-standard salary with no benefits.
- The office where you would be working at is near your hometown and would be around a 1-hour daily commute to work.

You learned that:

- The job entails working on projects that seem challenging and will require you to learn as you go.
- Most employees do not maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- This company supports the professional development of its employees.
- There are clear guidelines for promotion and advancement.

You also think that:

- You do not think that you would enjoy the work based on your interview and all the information you gathered so far.
- Your potential boss and colleagues you met during your interview were standoffish.
- Your friends inform you that this company is a stressful place to work and has a competitive atmosphere.



Appendix 1 continued  
Job Prospect Evaluation Task (JPET)  
High Uncertainty, Positive Framed Characteristics Scenario

We ask that you imagine searching for your first job after you graduate from college.

You may have a few options, and you are trying to determine which job will be best for you.

Please carefully read the information about a job possibility on the next screen. Afterward, we will ask you some questions about this job possibility.

A company you interviewed with a week ago is going to offer you the following:

- An industry-standard salary with a benefits package that includes healthcare, dental care, and a 401k contribution matching program.
- The office you would be working at is near your hometown and would be less than a 30-minute daily commute to work

You also learned that:

- The job entails projects directly related to your college major, but you were not sure what you would be doing.
- You are unsure if people maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- You are unsure if the company supports professional development opportunities.
- There are no clear guidelines for promotions and advancement

Additionally:

- You are unsure if you would enjoy the work based on your interview and all the information you gathered so far.
- You did not get the chance to get to know your potential boss and colleagues.
- Your friends inform you that this company is a good place to work and has a supportive and friendly atmosphere.

Appendix 1 continued  
Job Prospect Evaluation Task (JPET)  
High Uncertainty, Negative Framed Characteristics Scenario

We ask that you imagine searching for your first job after you graduate from college.

You may have a few options, and you are trying to determine which job will be best for you.

Please carefully read the information about a job possibility on the next screen. Afterward, we will ask you some questions about this job possibility.

A company you interviewed with a week ago is going to offer you the following:

- A below industry-standard salary with no benefits.
- The office you would be working at is near your hometown and would be around a 1-hour daily commute to work.

You learned that:

- The job entails working on projects that seem challenging and will require you to learn as you go but you are not sure what you would be doing.
- You are unsure if people maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- You are unsure if the company supports the professional development of its employees.
- There are no clear guidelines for promotion and advancement.

Additionally:

- You are unsure if you would enjoy the work based on your interview and all the information you gathered so far.
- You did not get the chance to get to know your potential boss or colleagues.
- Your friends inform you that this company is a stressful place to work and has a competitive atmosphere.

Appendix 2

Uncertainty Measure

Uncertainty Measure

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly disagree

Strongly

agree

Items:

1. I know a lot about this job (Reverse scored)
2. I know a lot about this organization (Reverse scored).
3. I do not know much about this job possibility.
4. I would like to know more about this job before accepting an offer.
5. I would like to know more about this organization before accepting an offer.

Appendix 3

Job-Organizational Attraction Measure

Job Attraction – (Modified from Saks et al., 1994)

Item: I would like the work I do.

Item: I think this job would make good use of my abilities and skills.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Strongly disagree

Strongly Agree

Subjective Organizational Attraction – (Modified from Macan & Dipboye, 1990)

Item: I would like to work for this company.

Item: I would like the people in this company.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Strongly disagree

Strongly Agree

Objective Organizational Attraction – (Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Perlman, & Stoffey, 1993)

Item: This organization is one of the best employers to work for.

Item: This organization has a good reputation.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Strongly disagree

Strongly Agree

Appendix 4

Prospective Person-Job Fit Measure

Prospective Person-Job Fit – (Modified from Sacks & Ashford, 1997)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree

Items:

1. My knowledge, skills, and abilities will match the requirements of the job.
2. This job will fulfill my needs.
3. This job is a good match for me.
4. This job will enable me to do the kind of work I like.

## Appendix 5

### Prospective Person-Organization Fit Measure

Prospective Person-Organization Fit – (Modified from Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge and Cable, 1997)

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree				Strongly agree

Items:

1. My values, goals, and personality match this organization.
2. My values will match those of current employees in this organization
3. My values and personality will prevent me from ‘fitting in’ this organization. (Reverse scored).
4. The values and personality of this organization will reflect my own values and personality.

Appendix F  
Appendix 6 - Risk Taking Propensity Scale

General Risk Propensity Scale (GRiPS) (Zhang, Highhouse & Nye, 2018)

Directions: Please read and indicate your responses to the following statements by selecting the appropriate number.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Items:

1. Taking risks makes life more fun
2. My friends would say that I'm a risk taker
3. I enjoy taking risks in most aspects of life
4. I would take a risk even if it meant I might get hurt
5. Taking risks is an important part of my life
6. I commonly make risky decisions
7. I am a believer of taking chances
8. I am attracted, rather than scared, by risk

## Appendix 7 – Demographics

### Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your college major?
4. How many jobs have you held in the past?
5. How many hours do you work per week?
6. What type of job have you held in the past?
7. Are you currently looking for a job?