

## 4

## PERSONALITY AND CAREER SUCCESS

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*Success is relative. It is what we can make of the mess we have made of things.*

—T. S. Eliot

The relationship between personality and career success has provoked a great deal of speculation. It has often been asserted that achievement (especially in capitalist economies) can be explained largely by factors such as individual initiative, effort, and merit. This is the classic “Horatio Alger” story of how one gets ahead in life—through grit, determination, and effort. In this sense, personality is probably a significant determinant of how people will do in their careers. At the same time, luck and institutional factors—such as privilege or inheritance—may influence career success in a way that would attenuate the relationship with personality significantly. Tharenou’s (1997) review of the empirical research identified several

categories of explanations for career success and found that research has generally favored institutional explanations over individual explanations. Whereas the most commonly investigated influences were demographic (age, sex, marital status, number of children) and human capital (training, work experience, education), researchers have increasingly investigated the possible role of personality in explaining career success. Below, we discuss the dispositional factors that have been related to career success in past research. Before doing so, however, it is important to discuss what we mean by career success and to discuss an organizing framework for our discussion of trait influences on career success (in particular, the five-factor model, FFM).

## 60 • MAIN CURRENTS IN THE STUDY OF CAREER: CAREERS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

## DEFINITION OF CAREER SUCCESS

Career success can be defined as the real or perceived achievements individuals have accumulated as a result of their work experiences (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995). Most research has divided career success into extrinsic and intrinsic components (see also Khapova, Arthur, and Wilderom, Chapter 7; Guest and Sturges, Chapter 16). Extrinsic success is relatively objective and observable and typically consists of highly tangible outcomes such as pay and ascendancy (Jaskolka, Beyer, & Trice, 1985). Conversely, intrinsic success is defined as individuals' subjective appraisal of their success and is most commonly expressed in terms of job, career, or life satisfaction (Gattiker & Larwood, 1988; Judge et al., 1995). Research confirms the idea that extrinsic and intrinsic career success can be assessed as relatively independent outcomes, as they are only moderately correlated (Judge & Bretz, 1994).

The three criteria most commonly used to index extrinsic career success are (a) salary or income, (b) ascendancy or number of promotions, and (c) occupational status. The last factor is perhaps the most intriguing. Occupational status can be viewed as a reflection of societal perceptions of the power and authority afforded by the job (Blaikie, 1977; Schooler & Schoenbach, 1994). Occupational status has long been studied in sociology as a measure of occupational stratification (the sorting of individuals into occupations of differential power and prestige). Sociologists have gone so far as to conclude that occupational status measures "reflect the classical sociological hypothesis that occupational status constitutes the single most important dimension in social interaction" (Ganzeboom & Treiman, 1996, p. 203) and to term occupational status as sociology's "great empirical invariant" (Featherman, Jones, & Hauser, 1975, p. 331). The required educational skills, the potential extrinsic rewards offered by the occupation, and the ability to contribute to society through work performance are the most important contributors to occupational status (Blaikie, 1977). As a result, sociologists often view occupational status as the most important sign of success in contemporary society (Korman, Mahler, & Omran, 1983). Viewed from this perspective,

occupational status indicates extrinsic success because of its prestige and because it conveys increased job-related responsibilities and rewards (Poole, Langan-Fox, & Omodei, 1993).

Intrinsic career success is measured in several distinct ways. The most common marker for intrinsic career success is a subjective rating of one's satisfaction with one's career. Items that fit under the career satisfaction umbrella ask respondents to directly indicate how they feel about their careers in general, whether they believe that they have accomplished the things that they want to in their careers or if they believe that their future prospects in their careers are good (e.g., Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001). Job satisfaction is often closely related to career satisfaction, but there are some important differences. Particularly, job satisfaction usually is directed around one's immediate emotional reactions to one's current job, whereas career satisfaction is a broader reflection of one's satisfaction with both past and future work history taken as a whole.

## FIVE-FACTOR MODEL

Consensus is emerging that an FFM (or the "Big Five") of personality can be used to describe the most salient aspects of personality (Goldberg, 1990). The first researchers to replicate the five-factor structure were Norman (1963) and Tupes and Christal (1961), both of whom are generally credited with founding the FFM. The five-factor structure has been recaptured through analyses of trait adjectives in various languages, factor analytic studies of existing personality inventories, and decisions regarding the dimensionality of existing measures made by expert judges (McCrae & John, 1992). The cross-cultural generalizability of the five-factor structure has been established through research in many countries (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Evidence indicates that the Big Five are substantially heritable (roughly 50% of the variability in the Big Five traits appears to be inherited) and stable over time (Costa & McCrae, 1988; Digman, 1989).

The dimensions comprising the FFM are emotional stability, extroversion, openness to

experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Emotional stability represents the tendency to exhibit positive emotional adjustment and seldom experience negative affects (NAs) such as anxiety, insecurity, and hostility. Extroversion represents the tendency to be sociable, assertive, and active and to experience positive affects such as energy and zeal. Openness to experience is the disposition to be imaginative, nonconforming, unconventional, and autonomous. Agreeableness is the tendency to be trusting, compliant, caring, and gentle. Conscientiousness comprises two related facets, achievement and dependability. The Big Five traits have been found to be relevant to many aspects of life, such as interpersonal relations (e.g., Pincus, Gurtman, & Ruiz, 1998) and even longevity (Friedman et al., 1995). As we will see, these traits are also relevant to several aspects of career success. We will also discuss other personality traits that might be relevant for career success where relevant research exists.

#### WHY DOES PERSONALITY AFFECT CAREER SUCCESS? A PROPOSED MODEL

Starting from the premise that personality can be related to numerous work-relevant outcomes, it is worth considering how personality traits might have an effect on careers. To this end, we propose that Figure 4.1 depicts the most important and empirically supported linkages between personality and career-relevant outcomes that will be reviewed in this chapter. We first propose that personality leads individuals to possess certain jobs both through the process of attraction to the jobs of interest as well as by leading organizations to select certain individuals. Personality also influences individual performance on the job in a way that will lead to higher compensation, new job responsibilities, and promotions into higher organizational ranks. Finally, personality influences the ways in which individuals engage in social interactions at work. Social interactions can lead to any number of outcomes, ranging from improved knowledge of the job and role to more visibility in the organization. These factors combine, in turn, to predict the job features individuals encounter on the job, including both extrinsic

and intrinsic features known to predict job satisfaction. The static nature of this model is a simplification, because it is likely that there would be multiple nonrecursive links (e.g., over time, job features affect social behavior, career success affects job features), but we present this simplified model because there is not sufficient research to discuss these reciprocal relationships at the present time and our model is based on extant empirical results. To demonstrate the relevance of this model, it is first necessary to determine if there is in fact a relationship between personality and career success to explain in the first place. This topic is the subject of the next section.

#### FIVE-FACTOR MODEL AND CAREER SUCCESS

Below, we review the literature on the relationship of the Big Five to aggregate career success, with our review organized according to each of the Big Five traits. Within each trait, we first discuss the link between the trait and intrinsic success, followed by a discussion of the link between the trait and extrinsic success.

#### Conscientiousness

In general, conscientiousness is positively correlated with measures of intrinsic career success, though the multivariate evidence is far less consistent. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that conscientiousness is positively associated with job ( $\hat{\rho} = .26$ ; Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002) and life ( $\hat{\rho}_u = .21$ ; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998) satisfaction.<sup>1</sup> Judge et al. (1999) found that conscientiousness strongly predicted intrinsic success ( $\hat{\beta} = .34, p < .01$ ), even when personality was measured during childhood and the latter variables were measured in midadulthood. On the other hand, several studies have found limited incremental validity of conscientiousness in predicting career success with a multivariate design. Representative findings include nonsignificant relationships of  $\hat{\beta} = .06$  (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001) and  $\hat{\beta} = .09$  (Bozionelos, 2004) or small but significant effects of  $\hat{\beta} = -.05$  among American executives and  $\hat{\beta} = .10$  among European executives (Boudreau et al., 2001).

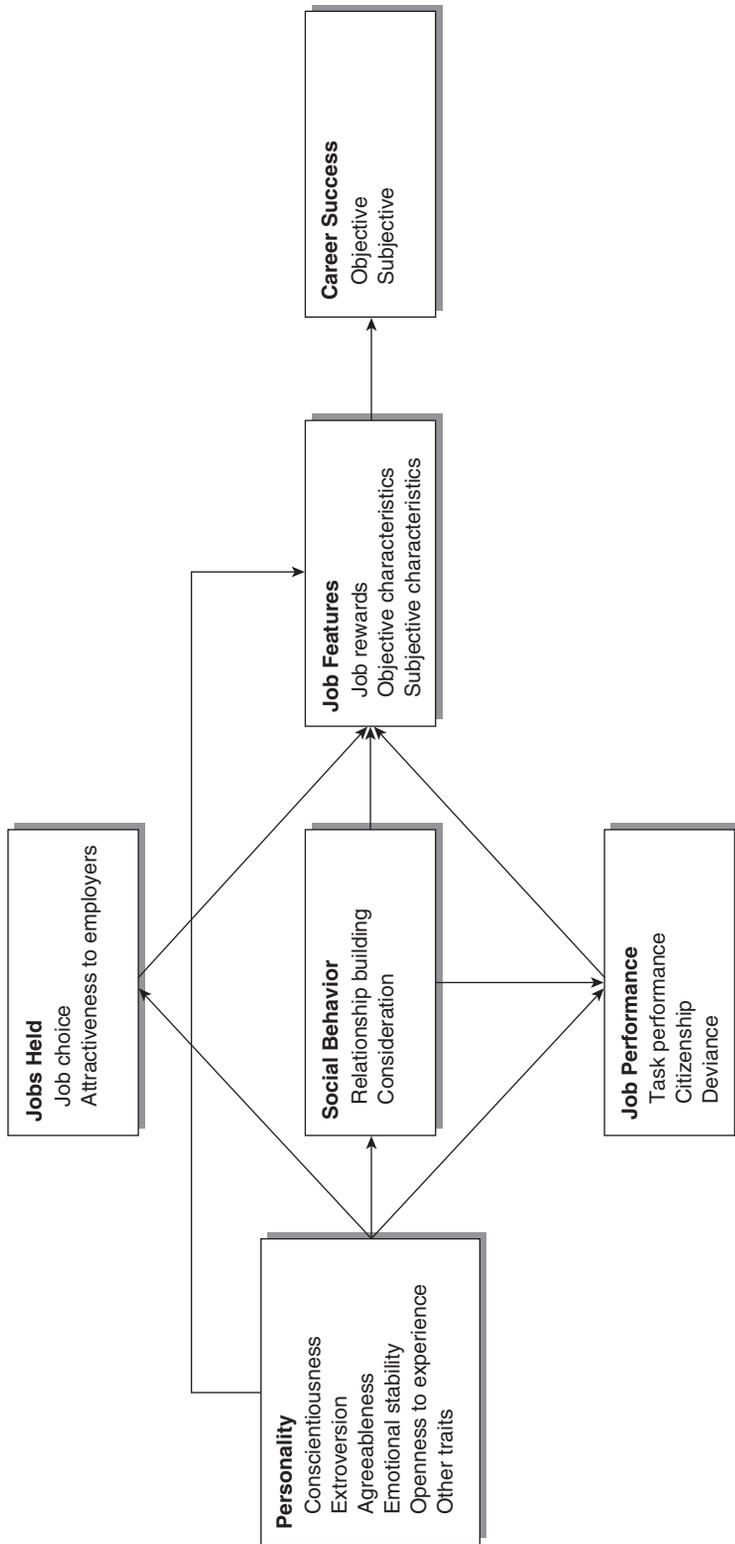


Figure 4.1 Conceptual Model of Personality and Career Success

Thus, though evidence suggests that the bivariate relationship between conscientiousness and indices of intrinsic career success is positive, this relationship tends to deteriorate and becomes less consistent when the influence of the other Big Five traits is taken into account.

Conscientiousness is theoretically linked to extrinsic career success most strongly through the achievement orientation of conscientious persons (McCrae & Costa, 1991). Barrick and Mount (1991) found a small, positive correlation ( $\hat{\rho} = .17$ ) between conscientiousness and salary in five studies. Judge et al. (1999) found that conscientiousness strongly predicted extrinsic success ( $\hat{\beta} = .44, p < .01$ ). Conscientiousness also seems to enable persons to obtain promotions into more complex and prestigious jobs. A consistent finding from the assessment center literature is that ratings of achievement orientation effectively predict promotions (e.g.,  $\hat{r} = .28, p < .01$ ; Howard & Bray, 1994). Orpen (1983) also found that need for achievement predicted 5-year salary growth in a sample of South African managers. Here again, though, there is disconfirmatory evidence. Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that conscientiousness failed to predict salary ( $\hat{\beta} = -.03, ns$ ) and number of promotions ( $\hat{\beta} = -.04, ns$ ). Similarly, Bozionelos (2004) found that conscientiousness failed to predict self-reported promotion rate ( $\hat{\beta} = -.06, ns$ ). Boudreau et al. (2001) found that conscientiousness was weakly associated with extrinsic career success; across three criteria in two samples, only one coefficient was significant (salary of European executives,  $\hat{\beta} = .06, p < .05$ ).

In sum, it appears that the multivariate results on the relationship between conscientiousness and intrinsic and extrinsic success are far from consistent. There is a trend for the relationship to be positive in both cases, but in general, the results vary from moderately strong and positive to quite weak.

### Emotional Stability

Evidence generally indicates that emotional stability is positively associated with intrinsic career success or, equivalently, that neuroticism is negatively associated with intrinsic career success. Meta-analytic evidence reliably indicates that those who score high on emotional

stability are more satisfied with their jobs ( $\hat{\rho} = .29$ ; Judge et al., 2002) and lives ( $\hat{r}_v = .22$ ; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Boudreau et al. (2001) found that emotionally stable individuals were more satisfied with their careers (American,  $\hat{\beta}_A = .22$ ; European,  $\hat{\beta}_E = .12$ ). Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that emotional stability positively predicted career satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = .20, p < .01$ ). Judge et al. (1999), however, found that whereas the zero-order correlation between emotional stability and intrinsic career success was significant ( $\hat{r} = .22, p < .01$ ), the effect disappeared once the influence of the other Big Five traits was controlled ( $\hat{\beta} = .02, ns$ ), and Bozionelos (2004) found that emotional stability failed to predict subjective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = .10, ns$ ). Here again, the results are somewhat inconsistent, but in general, emotional stability appears to be negatively related to intrinsic career success.

Although not quite as consistent, evidence also indicates a positive relationship between emotional stability and extrinsic career success. Judge et al. (1999) found that emotional stability was positively associated with extrinsic success ( $\hat{\beta} = .21$ ). Boudreau et al. (2001) found that emotional stability was positively associated with extrinsic success (salary,  $\hat{\beta} = .15$ ; promotion,  $\hat{\beta} = .15$ ; and job level,  $\hat{\beta} = .06$ ) among American executives but not among European executives ( $\hat{\beta} = .04, \hat{\beta} = -.02$ , and  $\hat{\beta} = -.01$ , respectively). Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that emotional stability did not predict salary ( $\hat{\beta} = -.03, ns$ ) or promotions ( $\hat{\beta} = .00, ns$ ). Bozionelos (2004) found that emotional stability failed to predict objective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = -.04, ns$ ).

In sum, evidence indicates that emotional stability is positively related to intrinsic and extrinsic career success. The former results are more consistent than the latter, though both sets of results show inconsistency when the influence of the other Big Five traits is taken into account.

### Extroversion

In general, extroversion is positively associated with intrinsic career success. As Watson and Clark (1997) note, extroversion is closely linked to positive emotionality (also known as positive affectivity), which in turn expresses

## 64 • MAIN CURRENTS IN THE STUDY OF CAREER: CAREERS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

itself in positive moods, greater social activity, and more rewarding interpersonal experiences. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that extroverts report higher levels of job (Judge et al., 2002:  $\hat{\rho} = .25$ ) and life (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998:  $\hat{r}_u = .17$ ) satisfaction. Boudreau et al. (2001) found that both American and European extroverts reported higher levels of career satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta}_A = .10$  and  $\hat{\beta}_E = .15$ , respectively). Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that extroversion positively predicted career satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = .15$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In Judge et al. (1999), extroversion failed to predict intrinsic career success ( $\hat{\beta} = .00$ , *ns*). Bozionelos (2004) found that extroversion failed to predict subjective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = .03$ , *ns*). Thus, in general, it appears that extroversion is positively related to intrinsic career success, though the results are not fully consistent.

Extroversion and its facets appear to be positively related to extrinsic career success. Rawls and Rawls (1968) found that measures of dominance and sociability differentiated successful and unsuccessful executives when pay and job title were considered as indices of success. Extroversion was also predictive of salary and job level in two recent studies conducted in the United Kingdom (Melamed, 1996a, 1996b). Well-controlled longitudinal studies also have supported a link between extroversion and extrinsic success. For example, Caspi, Elder, and Bem (1988) found that childhood ratings of shyness were negatively associated with adult occupational status ( $\hat{\beta} = -.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Likewise, Howard and Bray (1994) noted that dominance (a characteristic of extroverts, Watson & Clark, 1997) was correlated ( $\hat{r} = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with managerial advancement. Harrell and Alpert (1989) found that sociability was positively, though not strongly, correlated with earnings 20 years after the trait was measured ( $\hat{r} = .14$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that extroversion positively predicted earnings and promotions ( $\hat{\beta} = .13$  in both cases,  $p < .01$ ). Melamed (1996a) found that extroversion was positively correlated with relative wages ( $\hat{r} = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and managerial level ( $\hat{r} = .15$ ,  $p < .05$ ) for men but not for women ( $\hat{r} = .07$ , *ns* and  $\hat{r} = .09$ , *ns*, respectively). In Bozionelos (2004), extroversion failed to predict objective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = .07$ , *ns*).

Thus, extroversion tends to be positively related to intrinsic as well as extrinsic career success. The results are not totally consistent, as one would expect based on data from multiple samples. However, the majority of the evidence suggests that extroverts are more extrinsically successful in their careers and more satisfied with them as well.

### Openness to Experience

Openness displays an inconsistent relationship with career success. Judging from the meta-analytic evidence, the association of openness with job satisfaction ( $\hat{\rho} = .02$ , Judge et al., 2002) is weak and variable. These results are matched by explicit studies of career success. For example, Boudreau et al. (2001) found that openness failed to predict any aspect of intrinsic success, with the exception of a significant but small effect on job satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = -.07$ ,  $p < .01$ ) for European executives. Judge et al. (1999) found that childhood openness was positively correlated with adult intrinsic success ( $\hat{r} = .21$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but that effect became nonsignificant ( $\hat{\beta} = .12$ , *ns*) once the influence of the other Big Five traits and intelligence (which correlated  $\hat{r} = .51$  with openness) was taken into account. Bozionelos (2004) found that openness failed to predict subjective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = .03$ , *ns*). Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that openness was unrelated to career satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = .02$ , *ns*).

In terms of extrinsic success, the results are equally inconsistent. Boudreau et al. (2001) found that openness failed to significantly predict any aspect of career success for American or European executives. As with the results for intrinsic career success, Judge et al. (1999) found that childhood openness was positively correlated with adult extrinsic success ( $\hat{r} = .26$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but this effect disappeared ( $\hat{\beta} = -.02$ , *ns*) once the influence of the other Big Five traits and intelligence was taken into account. Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that openness negatively predicted earnings ( $\hat{\beta} = -.10$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and was unrelated to number of promotions ( $\hat{\beta} = -.01$ , *ns*). Bozionelos (2004) found that openness negatively predicted objective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = -.15$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, it appears that openness bears little consistent relationship with intrinsic or extrinsic career success.

## Agreeableness

Evidence tends to indicate a relatively modest but positive relationship between agreeableness and job satisfaction ( $\hat{\rho} = .17$ , Judge et al., 2002). However, the relationship appears to disappear once adjusted for the influence of the other Big Five traits. Both Judge et al. (1999) and Boudreau et al. (2001) found that agreeableness was unrelated to any measure of intrinsic career success. Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that agreeableness negatively predicted career satisfaction, though the effect size was rather small ( $\hat{\beta} = -.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Conversely, Bozionelos (2004) found that agreeableness positively predicted subjective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = .18$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

What is more intriguing is that agreeableness appears to be negatively related to extrinsic career success. Judge et al. (1999) found that agreeableness was relatively strongly negatively predictive of extrinsic career success ( $\hat{\beta} = -.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and Boudreau et al. (2001) found that agreeableness negatively predicted all aspects (salary, promotions, job level) for both American and European executives, though the effect sizes were appreciably smaller (e.g.,  $\hat{\beta} = -.14$ ,  $p < .01$  for American executives' salary). On the other hand, Seibert and Kraimer (2001) found that agreeableness did not predict salary ( $\hat{\beta} = -.03$ , *ns*) or promotions ( $\hat{\beta} = .00$ , *ns*). Bozionelos (2004) found that agreeableness negatively predicted objective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = -.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ), which is odd, given that he found agreeable people more intrinsically successful. Thus, it appears that agreeableness is unrelated to intrinsic career success but negatively related to extrinsic career success.

## OTHER DISPOSITIONAL TRAITS

The FFM does not exhaust the traits that may be relevant to career success. Below, we review evidence on the relationship of other traits to career success.

### Proactive Personality

Two studies have suggested that proactive personality—the tendency to identify and act on opportunities, take the initiative, and persevere—is positively associated with career success.

Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer (1999) found that proactive personality positively predicted earnings ( $\hat{\beta} = .11$ ,  $p < .05$ ), number of promotions ( $\hat{\beta} = .12$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and career satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = .30$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Seibert, Kraimer, and Crant (2001) found that proactive personality was related to career satisfaction ( $\hat{r} = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) but was uncorrelated with salary progression ( $\hat{r} = .11$ , *ns*) or promotions ( $\hat{r} = .05$ , *ns*). A limitation of these results is that the FFM personality traits were not controlled, which is especially problematic given the existence of studies showing significant relationships between proactivity and both extroversion and conscientiousness (Crant, 1995).

### Agentic and Communal Orientation

Abele (2003), studying approximately 800 graduates from a large German university, found that agentic tendencies (“very self-confident,” “can make decisions easily,” “very active,” “very independent”) positively predicted objective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = .15$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and subjective career success ( $\hat{\beta} = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ), which was assessed with a single-item question (“Comparing your occupational development until now with your former student colleagues, how successful do you think you are?”). Abele (2003) further found that communal tendencies (“very kind,” “very helpful to others,” “very emotional,” “able to devote self completely to others,” “very warm in relation to others,” “very understanding, aware of feelings of others,” “very gentle”) failed to predict either objective ( $\hat{\beta} = -.01$ , *ns*) or subjective ( $\hat{\beta} = -.01$ , *ns*) success. Surprisingly, given the strong conceptual linkages between agentic and communal tendencies and the FFM, Abele did not investigate the incremental validities of these orientations beyond the FFM.

### Core Self-Evaluations

Core self-evaluations (CSEs) are a relatively recent addition to the personality literature. CSEs are a set of closely linked traits that include emotional stability, an internal locus of control, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Those higher in CSEs tend to appraise situations more positively, have higher levels of motivation, and have greater confidence in their ability to positively influence the world around them (Judge, Locke,

## 66 • MAIN CURRENTS IN THE STUDY OF CAREER: CAREERS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

& Durham, 1997). We are aware of no research that has explicitly linked CSEs to career success. However, beyond the emotional stability evidence reviewed above, evidence has linked the other core traits to career success. Wallace (2001) found that internal locus of control positively predicted the career satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = .15$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and self-reported promotional opportunities ( $\hat{\beta} = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ ) of female lawyers but did not significantly (negatively) predict their earnings ( $\hat{\beta} = -.09$ , *ns*). Turban and Dougherty (1994) found that external locus of control was negatively associated with perceived career success ( $\hat{r} = .38$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and self-reported promotions ( $\hat{r} = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but uncorrelated with salary ( $\hat{r} = .00$ , *ns*). They also found that self-esteem was uncorrelated with promotions ( $\hat{r} = .09$ , *ns*) or salary ( $\hat{r} = .10$ , *ns*) but was positively correlated with perceived success ( $\hat{r} = .43$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Melamed (1996a) found that self-confidence negatively predicted job level for women ( $\hat{\beta} = -.21$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but not for men ( $\hat{\beta} = .13$ , *ns*); in another sample, self-confidence was positively related to salary and job level for the sample overall ( $\hat{r} = .16$ ,  $p < .05$  for both), but the correlations were only significant for men. In interpreting these results, there are causality issues. Because CSEs may be somewhat more malleable than most traits (Bono & Judge, 2003), it is possible that career success causes one to have a positive self-concept.

#### SUMMARY OF PAST RESEARCH

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While reflecting on the results from past research relating personality to career success, several themes emerge. First, the effect sizes are not strong. The modal validities of personality in predicting intrinsic and extrinsic success tend to be in the 20s. In a sense, we have known this for some time (Guion & Gottier, 1965). As Schmitt (2004) recently commented, "The observed validity of personality measures, then and now, is quite low even though they can account for incrementally useful levels of variance in work-related criteria" (p. 348). Mischief is created when we try to make the validities something that they are not. At the same time, thinking in terms of the other dichotomy—that validities are meaningless—is equally misleading.

Second, the results for each trait are not particularly consistent. For every trait, there is more than one weak and/or nonsignificant finding. Clearly, there are studies that would seem to disconfirm the hypothesis that a particular trait is predictive of career success. At the same time, with such qualitative reviews, it is very easy to overinterpret the variability in the estimates (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990). We selected studies that were as representative of the current state of the field as possible, with an emphasis on methodologically rigorous studies conducted with large samples, being careful to represent the diversity of findings currently available. Thus, one should realize that a comprehensive meta-analysis would have illustrated the trend toward results demonstrating fairly weak to moderate, but consistent, relationships between personality and career success. Although this was not the purpose of this chapter, such a review would be worthwhile, indeed necessary, to most properly interpret the findings.

Third, despite the first two points, some trends still emerge. Conscientiousness and extroversion tend to have very weak to positive effects on intrinsic and extrinsic career success. Emotional stability tends to have very weak positive effects on intrinsic and extrinsic success. Agreeableness tends to have very weak to negative effects on extrinsic success and very little effect on intrinsic success. Openness tends to be unrelated to either component of career success. Thus, if one wished to have a career that was deemed successful by conventional standards, one might wish to be conscientious, extroverted, emotionally stable, and perhaps not too agreeable. It would be hard to argue that one would wish to be low in conscientiousness, for example, in order to be successful.

#### MEDIATORS OF THE PERSONALITY/ CAREER-SUCCESS RELATIONSHIP

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Given the evidence that personality is at least sometimes related to career success, it is worth considering why personality traits might lead to superior career outcomes. We proposed earlier that Figure 4.1 depicts the most important and empirically supported linkages between personality and career-relevant outcomes. It will

become clear in this section that these relationships are necessarily tenuous because of the conceptual distance from personality as an internal trait to final measures of career success. The stages of the mediating model considered next are as follows: (a) personality leads individuals to possess certain jobs, (b) personality also influences individual performance on the job, and (c) personality influences the ways in which individuals engage in social interactions at work. These factors are proposed to combine to predict the extrinsic and intrinsic features known to predict job and career satisfaction.

### Personality and Jobs Held

One mechanism that might lead to a relationship between personality and career success is the effect of personality on the types of jobs that individuals might acquire. These relationships can be broadly divided into the effects of personality on job preferences and the ways in which personality can lead an individual to be considered desirable by employers. In other words, personality can influence what you want as well as what you can get.

The dominant paradigm in the literature on personality and job preferences comes from the long-established program of research on the realistic-investigative-artistic-social-enterprising-conventional (RIASEC) circumplex (see Savickas, Chapter 5; Kidd, Chapter 6; for a review of the research conducted over the past 40 years, see Holland, 1997). The basic proposition of the RIASEC model is that there are stable individual differences in preferences for job characteristics and that individuals who are in jobs that match their preferences will be more satisfied. Although RIASEC types are fairly stable over time (e.g., Lubinski, Benbow, & Ryan, 1995), they are partially distinct from other measures of personality. Openness to experience correlates fairly strongly with the artistic type ( $\hat{\rho} = .39$ ) and the investigative type ( $\hat{\rho} = .21$ ), and extroversion correlates fairly strongly with the enterprising type ( $\hat{\rho} = .41$ ) and the social type ( $\hat{\rho} = .25$ ) (Barrick, Mount, & Gupta, 2003). The relationships between conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability with any of the RIASEC dimensions are more tenuous. There is also evidence that the RIASEC dimensions add incremental

variance in predicting jobs after FFM traits are considered. For example, while RIASEC dimensions rated at graduation were consistently predictive of employment in commensurate jobs (e.g., realistic individuals tend to hold jobs higher in realism) 1 year later, the five-factor personality model provided almost no incremental explanatory power for most job characteristics after RIASEC was considered (De Fruyt & Mervielde, 1999).

The relationship between personality traits and success in the selection process has been explored in several studies. As will be shown later, personality has been related to job performance, so it makes sense that employers might well prefer certain “types” of individuals based on their impressions of who will do best on the job. In a study examining interviewers’ perceptions of applicants’ “fit” with their organization, the two most predictive variables after general employability was factored out were interpersonal behaviors such as listening and warmth ( $\hat{\beta} = .44$ ) and goal orientation characteristics, such as having goals and plans ( $\hat{\beta} = .26$ ) (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Interviewers also perceive that conscientiousness is a significant predictor of hirability across multiple job types ( $\hat{\beta} = .40$ ) and that counterproductive behavior can be predicted by emotional stability ( $\hat{\beta} = -.36$ ), conscientiousness ( $\hat{\beta} = -.25$ ), and agreeableness ( $\hat{\beta} = -.24$ ) (Dunn, Mount, Barrick, & Ones, 1995). Not all interview types are equally affected by personality traits. Some research has suggested that success in situational interviews is less related to extroversion ( $\hat{r} = .01$ ) than success in behavioral interviews ( $\hat{r} = .30$ ) (Huffcutt, Weekley, Wiesner, Degroot, & Jones, 2001).

Another reason why personality might influence interview success is because of the behaviors associated with different personality traits. An increasing number of studies have suggested that impression management is an important component of interview success. Kristof-Brown, Barrick, and Franke (2002) found that extroverts engage in more self-promotion behavior ( $\hat{\beta} = .47$ ) and that self-promotion behavior, in turn, was associated with perceptions of fit between the applicant and the job ( $\hat{\beta} = .60$ ). Agreeableness was associated with nonverbal cues ( $\hat{\beta} = .31$ ), which were related to perceptions of similarity between the interviewer and interviewee ( $\hat{\beta} = .37$ ).

## 68 • MAIN CURRENTS IN THE STUDY OF CAREER: CAREERS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Given the meta-analytic evidence suggesting that impression management is, at best, weakly related to job performance ( $\hat{\rho} = .04$ ), it appears that the tendency for interviewers to favor the extroverted and, in particular, the immodest extroverted is an error in judgment (Viswesvaran, Ones, & Hough, 2001).

The results to date suggest that conscientiousness and extroversion are the dimensions of personality that are most related to success in the screening process. This is interesting in light of the generally positive relationships between these personality traits and career success. Research also suggests that interviewers deliberately try to select conscientious individuals in the hope of obtaining better performance on the job, whereas extroverts are able to improve their success through social influence. As we will see, the linkage of extroversion with social behavior and conscientiousness with performance appears in other areas as well.

### Personality and Job Performance

The relationship between personality and job performance has received a huge amount of attention. Seminal meta-analyses demonstrated that there were consistent relationships between the trait of conscientiousness and job performance across a number of jobs, while other personality traits were not associated with performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Subsequent studies have generally confirmed this result when more specific measures of the FFM are used (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000); when specific occupations such as sales are examined (Vinchur, Schippmann, Switzer, & Roth, 1998); when data are collected exclusively among the European community (Salgado, 1997); or when specific dimensions of performance, such as citizenship performance (Borman, Penner, Allen, & Motowidlo, 2001), or counterproductivity (Salgado, 2002) are the focus. More recent research has shown that the trait of CSEs is also related to job performance (correlations range from  $r = .23$  to  $r = .27$ ) and, moreover, that this trait shows incremental validity in predicting job performance beyond the FFM of personality (Judge, Erez, & Bono, 2003).

A study of 91 sales representatives demonstrated that conscientiousness leads employees

to set goals ( $\hat{\beta} = .44$ ) and to be more committed to these goals ( $\hat{\beta} = .35$ ) (Barrick, Mount, & Strauss, 1993). Goal setting was related to sales volume ( $\hat{\beta} = .21$ ) and performance ratings ( $\hat{\beta} = .33$ ), and goal commitment was related to sales volume ( $\hat{\beta} = .17$ ) and performance ratings ( $\hat{\beta} = .16$ ). An alternative, but conceptually related, model of personality and performance was examined in a study of 164 sales agents (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002). In this study, conscientiousness was related to accomplishment striving ( $\hat{\beta} = .48$ ) and extroversion was related to status striving ( $\hat{\beta} = .39$ ); accomplishment striving was related to status striving ( $\hat{\beta} = .45$ ), which was related to job performance ( $\hat{\beta} = .41$ ). Fewer data directly address the mediating relationship between conscientiousness and other aspects of performance. In a sample of 4,362 soldiers, dependability was related to fewer disciplinary actions ( $\hat{\beta} = -.23$ ), which was in turn related to job performance ( $\hat{\beta} = -.27$ ) (Borman, White, Pulakos, & Oppler, 1991). More research examining other dimensions of personality as predictors of other dimensions of performance is clearly needed.

Research on CSEs has examined mediated models. Evidence, from both lab and field settings further suggests that the effect of CSEs on job performance can be explained by task motivation and goal-setting behavior (Erez & Judge, 2001). In the lab study, the substantial effect of CSEs on task performance ( $\hat{\beta} = .35$ ) dropped considerably ( $\hat{\beta} = .18$ ) after the relationship between CSEs and motivation ( $\hat{\beta} = .41$ ) was taken into account by regressing performance on motivation ( $\hat{\beta} = .44$ ). In the field study, the total effect of CSEs on job performance ( $\hat{\beta} = .27$ ) was 44% mediated by a path from CSEs to goal setting ( $\hat{\beta} = .70$ ) to activity level ( $\hat{\beta} = .30$ ) and from activity level to sales performance ( $\hat{\beta} = .57$ ).

The literature on employee proactivity has also explored mediating models. A longitudinal study of 180 employees involving both self-reports and supervisor reports showed that proactive personality is positively related to innovation ( $\hat{\beta} = .18$ ) and career initiative ( $\hat{\beta} = .32$ ), which in turn were related to salary growth, promotions, and subjective career satisfaction (regression coefficients for the mediators predicting these outcomes were in the range

from  $\hat{\beta} = .17$  to  $\hat{\beta} = .36$ ) (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001).

In light of these results, the effects showing that conscientiousness, CSEs, and proactivity are related to extrinsic and intrinsic career success appear to occur at least partially through the mediating influence of improved motivation and task performance. Conscientiousness also appears to affect career success by producing lower deviance.

### Personality and Social Ties

The established paradigms proposing that career success is largely a matter of individual initiative, choice, and effort on the job have been supplemented more recently by research demonstrating that careers are made by social ties as well. Research has shown that individuals with superior positions in social networks are able to achieve superior work outcomes, including access to information, access to resources, and career sponsorship (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). This study showed that career success was greater among individuals who fill a "structural hole," meaning that they were a crucial intermediary between groups of individuals who otherwise have little contact. The core variables that are studied in the social domain of personality at work include measures of relationship building, knowledge of the political domain of the organization, and efforts to actively understand which behaviors are rewarded.

A longitudinal study of the FFM of personality and proactive adjustment among organizational newcomers found that extroversion was significantly related to seeking feedback ( $\hat{\beta} = .18$ ) and building relationships with colleagues ( $\hat{\beta} = .23$ ), while openness to experience was related to feedback seeking ( $\hat{\beta} = .16$ ) (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Relationship building was related, in turn, to social integration ( $\hat{\beta} = .20$ ), role clarity ( $\hat{\beta} = .20$ ), and job satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = .18$ ) and negatively related to intention to turnover ( $\hat{\beta} = -.24$ ), while feedback seeking was positively related to job satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = .20$ ) and negatively related to turnover (logistic regression coefficient =  $-.19$ ).

Proactive personality has also been investigated in this domain. One study involving 180 employees found that proactive personality was

significantly related to political knowledge ( $\hat{\beta} = .28$ ) and career initiative on the job ( $\hat{\beta} = .32$ ), both of which were positively related to subsequent salary progression ( $\hat{\beta} = .17$  and  $\hat{\beta} = .25$ , respectively) and subjective perceptions of career satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = .25$  and  $\hat{\beta} = .36$ , respectively) (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). A longitudinal examination involving organizational newcomers found that proactivity was associated with greater role clarity ( $\hat{\beta} = .33$ ), work group integration ( $\hat{\beta} = .13$ ), and political knowledge ( $\hat{\beta} = .13$ ) (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Commitment was found to be higher among those with greater role clarity ( $\hat{\beta} = .17$ ) and work group integration ( $\hat{\beta} = .23$ ), but political knowledge was not significantly related to any markers of newcomer adjustment. A longitudinal study of newcomer adjustment among doctoral students also found that proactivity was positively related to building social relationships with coworkers ( $\hat{\beta} = .18$ ) and positively associated with average levels of role clarity ( $\hat{\beta} = .40$ ) and social integration ( $\hat{\beta} = .19$ ) over the four time periods of the study (Chan & Schmitt, 2000).

The relationship between lower-level employees and more experienced, powerful members of an organization (i.e., mentoring) has been of significant interest in the careers literature. Some research suggests that protégés have an important role in initiating relationships. Initiation of relationships was positively related to internal locus of control ( $\hat{\beta} = .37$ ), self-monitoring ( $\hat{\beta} = .43$ ), and emotional stability ( $\hat{\beta} = .26$ ); initiation was positively related to having mentoring relationships ( $\hat{\beta} = .86$ ), and these mentoring relationships were positively related to career attainment and perceived career success ( $\hat{\beta} = .30$ ) (Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Research in a similar strain involving 184 early-career-stage Hong Kong Chinese has shown that extroversion leads to protégé-initiated mentoring relationships ( $\hat{\beta} = .22$ ) (Aryee, Lo, & Kang, 1999). Unfortunately, because of the correlational nature of these studies, it is difficult to assess causality in any meaningful way. Some studies have suggested, using essentially the same methodology, that having a mentor can increase self-esteem, need for achievement, and need for dominance (Fagenson-Eland & Baugh, 2001).

In sum, the research suggests that individuals who are extroverted are likely to have positive

## 70 • MAIN CURRENTS IN THE STUDY OF CAREER: CAREERS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

social relationships, which may again serve as a potential mediator of extroversion and career success. Proactivity's effect on career success may also be explained by social relationships. Given the close relationship between extroversion and proactivity, future research should attempt to examine whether one of these variables is the more immediate explanation for career success through social connections.

### PERSONALITY AND JOB FEATURES

Researchers have long proposed that there is an important relationship between personality and job features. An obvious area for consideration here is the research on person-environment fit by Holland, described earlier. However, while the RIASEC theory primarily offers propositions regarding how personality might relate to occupational preferences, there are additional reasons why personality might relate to both objective jobs held as well as perceptions of jobs.

One of the most controversial areas for research in the study of personality at work is the role of negative affectivity or neuroticism in perceptions of job characteristics. The arguments boil down to a dispute as to the role of dispositional NA in measures of job characteristics and work reactions. One of the first salvos fired in this battle came when Watson, Pennebaker, and Folger (1986) noted that individuals with high levels of dispositional NA will tend to view their environments in negative terms and also report distress, dissatisfaction, and negative emotions. From the perspective of our model, this implies that personality shapes the subjective perception of job characteristics, which in turn leads to lower career satisfaction. The possibility that dispositional NA can account for both perceptions of a job as well as negative reactions to the job was shown by Brief, Burke, George, Robinson, and Webster (1988), who found that there were significant relationships between NA and job stress ( $\hat{r} = .34$ ) and NA and job strain ( $\hat{r} = .57$ ) and that the substantial zero-order relationship between stress and strain ( $\hat{r} = .37$ ) was reduced ( $\hat{r}_p = .22$ ) after partialling out NA; relationships between job stress and some other correlates fell even more after accounting for NA. From another angle, research has shown that even after subjectively

rated job characteristics have been partialled out, NA is still negatively related to job satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = -.18$ ) (Levin & Stokes, 1989). Another method for factoring out personality as a selection mechanism into certain types of work is by using experiments to randomly assign individuals to working condition. Evidence from laboratory studies generally suggests that individuals high in NA are more likely to see the same tasks more negatively than individuals who are lower in NA (Levin & Stokes, 1989).

An alternative point of view has been proposed by Spector and colleagues, who propose that the relationship between NA and objective job characteristics is a substantial and important one. Burke, Brief, and George (1993) also note that there is a possibility of causal and substantive effects involving dispositional NA, job characteristics, and work attitudes. Evidence from Spector, Jex, and Chen (1995) found that incumbents' self-reported negative affectivity was significantly correlated with expert raters' opinions of these individuals' job autonomy ( $\hat{r} = -.14$ ), variety ( $\hat{r} = -.19$ ), identity ( $\hat{r} = -.10$ ), and complexity ( $\hat{r} = .17$ ). Because the reports of job conditions are taken from significant others, this is fairly good evidence that individuals who are higher in negative affectivity do tend to be in jobs that have worse characteristics. This perspective also serves as a reminder that care must be taken before researchers assume that a relationship between personality and work-related affect necessarily is the result of perceptions being shaped by situations; it is also possible that one of the reasons people higher in negative affectivity are less satisfied at work is because they are in more negative work situations.

Research has also shown that employee perceptions of appropriate emotional displays at work are predicted based on employee extroversion and neuroticism, with extroversion being related to perceptions that jobs demand more positive emotional displays ( $\hat{\beta} = .20$ ) and neuroticism being related to perceptions that jobs demand more suppression of negative emotional displays ( $\hat{\beta} = .15$ ) (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003). The study also showed that perceptions of demands for positive emotional displays were associated with higher job satisfaction ( $\hat{\beta} = .39$ ), while perceptions of demands for suppression

of negative emotional displays were associated with lower job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.22$ ).

There is evidence beyond simple negative affectivity related to job characteristics. The relationship between CSEs measured in childhood and job satisfaction in adulthood can be explained, in part, by the relationship between CSEs and externally rated job complexity (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000). This relationship is at least partially due to the influence of emotional stability described earlier, but it also incorporates the more motivationally loaded traits of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and locus of control. This study also further supports the idea that personality can have a direct effect on objective job characteristics.

To determine if personality characteristics act as a cause or effect of employee reactions, researchers must find ways to move beyond simple correlational designs. One way to approach this problem comes from a two-wave panel study of bank employees and teachers, in which growth needs, strength, NA, and upward striving were measured at multiple points in time (Houkes, Janssen, de Jonge, & Bakker, 2003). Results showed that Time 1 NA was associated with Time 1 emotional exhaustion ( $\hat{\beta} = .44$ ), which in turn led to Time 2 emotional exhaustion ( $\hat{\beta} = .64$ ); Time 1 NA also led to Time 2 NA ( $\hat{\beta} = .68$ ), which in turn was associated with Time 2 emotional exhaustion ( $\hat{\beta} = .32$ ). These results suggest that personality dispositions may build on themselves over time, with initially minor effects becoming greater over time as initial tendencies are exacerbated.

Among the most thorough longitudinal examinations of the relationship between personality and work experiences is the study of a sample of 861 individuals tracked from the beginning of their adult work course at age 18 until the age of 26 (Roberts, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2003). In this study, a combination of objective measures of occupational attainment, resource power, work autonomy, and financial security was taken, along with the subjective measures of satisfaction and involvement. Concentrating only on those results of moderate effect size ( $r > .15$ ), negative emotionality was shown to be especially negatively correlated with occupational attainment ( $r = -.27$ ) and financial security ( $r = -.22$ ). Communal positive emotionality

(similar to agreeableness) was correlated with occupational attainment ( $r = .19$ ), work satisfaction ( $r = .15$ ), and work stimulation ( $r = .15$ ). Agentic positive emotionality (similar to certain aspects of extroversion related to achievement striving) was positively correlated with occupational attainment ( $r = .16$ ) and work stimulation ( $r = .17$ ). Constraint (similar to the dutifulness component of conscientiousness) was positively related to work involvement ( $r = .18$ ) and financial security ( $r = .15$ ). These relationships generally suggest that individual differences measured prior to early work experience do predict objective job characteristics, although the relationships are relatively modest in size. This is especially true in light of the many relationships that were smaller than those reported here. This study should be replicated in future research to see how these results generalize to older populations, given the fact that the adolescent years are a time of considerable variation in personality.

A unique aspect of this study was the explicit examination of how work experiences might affect subsequent personality states. To estimate these effects, personality scores at age 26 were regressed on personality at age 18 and job features. The residual effects found for job features represent changes in the respondents' personality. Again, concentrating on effect sizes over  $b = .15$ , the results showed that financial security was related to reduced negative emotionality ( $\hat{\beta} = -.19$ ), occupational attainment was associated with increased communion (i.e., positive social relationships) ( $\hat{\beta} = .16$ ), resource power was associated with increased agency (i.e., personal initiative) ( $\hat{\beta} = .23$ ), work involvement was associated with increased agency ( $\hat{\beta} = .20$ ), and work stimulation was associated with increased agency ( $\hat{\beta} = .18$ ). No significant relationships were found for increasing constraint; work satisfaction and work autonomy were not predictive of any changes in personality.

In sum, the research on personality and job characteristics suggests that there is a complex relationship that involves personality shaping selection into certain jobs and certain jobs leading to changes in personality. The evidence generally suggests that neuroticism is likely to result in lower levels of actual and perceived job characteristics, which can explain at least

## 72 • MAIN CURRENTS IN THE STUDY OF CAREER: CAREERS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

part of the relationship between neuroticism and (lower) career success.

### MODERATORS OF THE PERSONALITY/CAREER-SUCCESS RELATIONSHIP

The previous section proposed a theoretical model showing main effects for personality on a variety of mediating mechanisms that might be related to career success. However, there are many contingencies that might alter the relationship between personality and career outcomes. In this section, we consider several potential moderators of the career-success/personality relationship.

One of the most comprehensive efforts to create a theory for incorporating moderators of the relationship between personality and work behavior is associated with the concept of *trait activation* (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000). According to the trait activation concept, different situations provide different opportunities for traits to express themselves. For example, a work environment rich in social interactions will be likely to result in bigger differences in behavior between introverts and extroverts. Similarly, a work environment with minimal supervision is likely to result in greater differences in behavior between those high in conscientiousness (who will behave in an organized, goal-directed fashion even without supervision) and those low in conscientiousness (who will take the lack of supervision as an opportunity to relax and reduce work effort). Researchers interested in studying interactions between persons and situations should look most closely at areas where situations open unique opportunities for personality traits to express themselves. The statistical model for trait activation is an interaction between individual dispositions and the relationship between personality and an outcome.

### Situations as Moderators of Personality/Career-Success Relationships

One of the historically strongest theoretical explanations for the relationship between

personality and situations is that in weak situations, personality will exert stronger influences on behavior and attitudes. In other words, when there are clear demands on behavior presented by the situation, it is unlikely that personality will matter much. However, when situations don't clearly suggest the correct way to behave, personality tends to have a much stronger effect on how people act.

The personality trait of conscientiousness has been described as involving both an increased personal drive for success as well as greater regulation of one's behavior to meet standards. Both these factors are likely to be especially important in situations where the environment provides minimal direct contingencies for behavior and minimal regulation of behavior. Consistent with this theoretical model, Barrick and Mount (1993) found that the correlation between job performance and conscientiousness was considerably greater in jobs high in autonomy relative to jobs low in autonomy. One study found that extroversion and agreeableness were positively related to contextual performance only when job autonomy was high (Gellatly & Irving, 2001). Similarly, Type A behavior exerted strong effects on performance, job satisfaction, and somatic complaints when perceived control was higher.

As noted earlier, Tett and Burnett (2003) proposed that personality is likely to be most predictive of behavior when there is a correspondence between the trait of interest and situations that might elicit the behavior. A clear example is the relationship between personality traits and socially loaded situations. A meta-analysis of 11 studies found that emotional stability and agreeableness were more strongly related to job performance when individuals had to engage in teamwork as opposed to jobs that required only brief one-on-one interactions with customers (Mount, Barrick, & Stewart, 1998). Evidence suggests that despite the low general correlation found between extroversion and job performance, in a meta-analysis limited to sales jobs, higher levels of achievement striving or "potency" emerged as a significant predictor of supervisor ratings of performance ( $r = .28$ ) and objective measures of sales ( $r = .26$ ) (Vinchur et al., 1998).

A study of a diverse set of 496 individuals found a significant negative relationship between

agreeableness and salary among people working in jobs that had a strong people-oriented component, while for those in jobs with a weaker people-oriented component there was no relationship between agreeableness and salary (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001).

### **Personality as a Moderator of Situation/Career-Success Relationships**

An alternative way to think about the interaction between personality and situations is to consider how personality traits may change the relationship between situations and outcomes. In this case, it is possible that some personality traits make it easier for people to take advantage of situations. For example, it is easy to imagine cases in which an opportunity for training or development would lead to career success in general but would be especially useful for individuals who were higher in proactivity, CSEs, or openness to experience.

This area remains relatively speculative because there is not a great deal of research available that examines these possibilities. One study found that requirements for emotional displays at work were more strongly related to poor physical health among those who were low in emotional adaptability (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). There is also evidence that openness to experience moderates the relationship between job characteristics and job satisfaction in a manner very similar to the moderating of the relationship between growth needs, strength, and job characteristics (de Jong, van der Velde, & Jansen, 2001). A large-scale longitudinal study, described earlier, showed that negative affectivity moderated the relationship between workload, measured at the same time as NA, and emotional exhaustion, measured 1 year later (Houkes et al., 2003). Further research is clearly needed in this area.

### **Personality as a Moderator of Personality/Career-Success Relationships**

Besides situational moderators of the relationship between personality and work behavior, it is also possible that the constellation of personality traits held by individuals might

moderate one another. In other words, it is possible that personality traits operate differently in combination than they do singly.

This is another area where there is not a great deal of research. One study found that for jobs high in interpersonal interactions, the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance ratings was higher for individuals who were highly agreeable (Witt, Burke, & Barrick, 2002). These results suggest that simply being organized, motivated, and dutiful may not be enough to create positive social outcomes; individuals must be sufficiently socially sensitive to make these positive conscientious traits really become evident. Other areas for future research might be to investigate how conscientiousness interacts with openness (open individuals are able to learn more and innovate but only successfully apply this knowledge to the workplace if they have the discipline to see their ideas through) or with emotional stability (emotionally unstable individuals who are not conscientious may be prone to perseverating over their worries and never completing tasks, whereas emotionally unstable individuals who are conscientious will work hard to minimize the reason for their worries).

Another area in which personality might be differentially relevant is the area of creativity. A study conducted by Oldham and Cummings (1996) identified several characteristics, such as insight, curiosity, and originality, that are associated with creativity; it is clear that this study is conceptually close to a measure of openness to experience. These individual differences in dispositional personality were significantly related to obtaining new patents ( $R^2 = .07$ ) but were not significantly related to supervisor ratings of creativity ( $R^2 = .01$ ). However, the interaction between motivating potential score and creative personality was not significant for obtaining new patents ( $R^2 = .00$ ) but was significant for supervisor ratings of creativity ( $R^2 = .07$ ). This suggests that the interactions between personality variables and working conditions may be extremely complex.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The literature on personality and career success has received increased attention over the years.

## 74 • MAIN CURRENTS IN THE STUDY OF CAREER: CAREERS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

It may be a surprise to many readers that the effect sizes are relatively modest and the results relatively inconsistent. This does not mean, of course, that the effect sizes are zero. Indeed, four of the Big Five traits appear to bear some relation to either extrinsic or intrinsic career success, with conscientiousness and extraversion being associated with slightly higher levels of extrinsic and intrinsic career success and neuroticism and agreeableness being associated with slightly lower levels of career success.

Beyond providing an appraisal of the effects of personality and career success, we sought to review evidence on why personality is related to career success. We reviewed evidence on various mediators of the relationship between personality and career success (personality leads individuals to possess certain jobs, personality also influences individual performance on the job, personality influences the ways in which individuals engage in social interactions at work). We also discussed the linkage between personality and job features, as well as dispositional and situational factors that moderate the personality/career-success relationship.

Although research on personality and career success has come a long way in the past 20 years, there is considerable room for further development. Below, we outline a few areas that especially require further study.

### Need for Careful Research Design

Researchers have tended to rely frequently on the use of data gathered at a single point in time to measure the influence of personality on career success. While such designs have shown a considerable correlation between personality traits and career outcomes, several of the studies we reviewed here suggest that conclusions from such studies could be potentially spurious. Moreover, the debate regarding negative affectivity and career outcomes clearly suggests that researchers can be most informative when they make an effort to eliminate alternative explanations for observed correlations.

### Inclusion of Work-Family Balance as an Outcome

Because men and women are increasingly occupying the dual roles of breadwinner and

homemaker, the issue of work-family conflict has become more prominent (see Greenhaus and Foley, Chapter 8). The issue of work-family balance is conspicuously absent from the literature on personality and career success, however. Do certain personalities emphasize work over family, or the converse? Are some personalities able to better balance work and family demands than others? Is the fit between work and family contingent on personality? Does the balance between work and family demands evolve over time based on personality?

### Moderators

Although we reviewed various moderators of the personality/career-success relationship, other moderators need to be investigated. Some areas for future analysis include family status (e.g., spousal concerns, children, or the need to care for other family members), labor market variables (e.g., unemployment rates), and industry characteristics. In the personality/job-performance literature, more systematic progress has been made on the moderator front, including investigations of the situational (Barrick et al., 1993) and dispositional moderators. Some of these moderators should be investigated in the context of career success, and others are undoubtedly worthy of consideration as well.

### Other Traits

Although traits beyond the FFM have been investigated (e.g., proactive personality, agentic/communal orientation), we have only scratched the surface of traits that might prove useful. Examination of the lower-order facets of the FFM might prove especially fruitful.

In sum, although considerable advances have been made in our understanding of the dispositional basis of career success, further development is needed. In particular, there is a need to investigate factors that explain the relatively modest and apparently inconsistent results. Process models that investigate mediation will contribute to our understanding of the specific mechanisms by which personality leads to career success; examples of mediators in the current literature include task motivation, social interactions, and goal setting. Studies should also make a greater effort to investigate some of

the ways in which personality interacts with the environment to produce career success by studying the ways in which traits moderate the effect of situations and situations moderate the effects of traits.

## NOTE

1. Here and throughout the chapter, the following statistical notation will be used:  $\hat{\rho}$  = estimated correlation corrected for measurement error,  $\hat{\rho}_u$  = estimated uncorrected correlation,  $\hat{\beta}$  = estimated standardized regression coefficient, and  $\hat{r}$  = estimated zero-order correlation (uncorrected).

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## 76 • MAIN CURRENTS IN THE STUDY OF CAREER: CAREERS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

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## 78 • MAIN CURRENTS IN THE STUDY OF CAREER: CAREERS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

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