Who follows their dreams? Self-efficacy, sociotropy and autonomy as predictors of career aspiration attainment

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between dream job attainment and self-efficacy, sociotropy and autonomy. A review of the literature identified a lack of research on specific aspirations, as opposed to aspiration levels, and an absence of personality or self-image variables as correlates of dream job attainment. The study used a cross-sectional, quantitative design, based on self-report questionnaires. The sample consisted of 118 adults working in Ireland (27 male, 85 female). A significant difference was found in the self-efficacy of those who were and were not in their dream job. The corresponding difference in sociotropy very closely approached the significance threshold. Relationships with age, gender, parental and peer influence, and intrinsic motivation were also explored. The study suggests a promising future direction for research on personality predictors of career attainment in general and one’s dream job in particular.
Introduction

Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.

Confucius

There is no lack of websites, magazine covers and dubious career gurus willing to exhort us to “follow our dreams”, and we all have an intuitive sense that one must follow one’s own direction. But there are many unanswered questions about that direction: where do our dreams come from? Are some healthier than others? Will attaining them make us happy? And what are the personal qualities that make it more likely that we will attain them? This study is aimed at the last of these questions: a tiny part of it.

Why Study Aspirations?

Numerous authors in the popular literature advocate following one’s dreams in terms of career choice, rather than choosing an option that provides greater remuneration, job security, or pleases some intimate. For example, Greene (2012) argued that those who follow their dreams are more likely to achieve competence by working harder and using more adaptive learning and self-monitoring behaviours, while Robinson and Aronica (2009) suggested that following one’s dreams is associated with more pleasure and work satisfaction.

Qualitative research suggested the salience of career aspirations in the self-image and wellbeing of the individual: career aspirations are important to how one sees oneself throughout the lifespan (Ashby & Schoon, 2012). In structured interviews at age 50, all participants mentioned and correctly remembered their aspirations from age 16. Those who attained their aspirations were more likely to think of themselves as having a career, while those that didn’t referred to their occupation as only a “job”. Also, the strength and meaningfulness of aspirations predicted attainment. Career aspiration attainment (CAA) predicted job satisfaction and those who were
forced to leave their dream job earlier than they wished due to, for example, family reasons, had lower subjective wellbeing. One’s dreams can be considered intrinsic motivators and the literature on self-determination suggests that an intrinsic work value orientation improves mental health and employment outcomes (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007).

Career aspirations come in many forms: the idle dreams and fantasies of an infant; pragmatic or compromised aspirations, based on prioritizing other aspects of life higher than work self-expression; and aspirations based on a personal sense of inspiration or personality fit. This study distinguishes between a “dream job” and a career aspiration. This study defines dream job as a mature aspiration (i.e., not a childish fantasy) before it has been moderated by subsequent influences, such as pragmatics, setbacks and lack of self-belief. A career aspiration is the aspiration that exists after moderation. For example, an aspiring writer who thinks they are not imaginative enough and enrols in a teaching course has a career aspiration of teacher, but a dream job of writer. This distinction is not made in most of the literature here reviewed. However, in this study, the participant will receive a description of the distinction as part of the questionnaire, and will be asked to report their dream job. When discussing the literature, the term career aspiration will be used. While discussing the present study, the term dream job will be used.

**Career Aspirations**

The first challenge in establishing the relationship between career aspirations (CA) and career aspiration attainment (CAA) is discovering genuine and mature career aspirations. Aspirations change frequently in adolescence (Trice & McClellan, 1993), are the subject of revisionism later in life, perhaps to protect self-esteem (Tesser, 2000), and are adapted based on pragmatism or compromise after educational and professional setbacks. As an aside, as aspirations are dependent on knowledge, it is possible that individuals do not even “know” their dream job, as they may not have been exposed to it yet. Unfortunately, mindreading is outside the scope of this thesis.
Schoon and Parsons (2002) used a mediating and a contextual model to explore the relationship between socio-economic status (SES), childhood aspirations, and academic and occupation outcomes. They utilized two very large data sets from Great Britain in a longitudinal, cohort study. Parental SES predicted teenage aspiration levels and aspiration levels predicted academic and occupational outcomes. Parental aspirations and expectations mediated the relationship between SES and the teenager’s aspirations. Material conditions also mediated the same relationship: “teenagers growing up in households where they have no room of their own, or possibly even desk or table to do homework, are less likely to do well in school” (Schoon & Parsons, 2002, pp.279). The importance of educational attainment to occupational attainment was stronger in the latter cohort, matching a trend from other studies they cited.

Historically, females have had a narrow range of aspirations, perhaps driven by society’s view of the role of women. This effect has disappeared in more recent years (Trice, 1991). In the past, the father’s occupation was a better predictor of childhood aspirations than the mother’s. This effect has completely reversed, and now the mother’s occupation is a better predictor, at least for younger children (Trice & Knapp, 1992). This is likely due to knowledge and exposure: the children studied had better knowledge of their mother’s occupation, and were “three times more to have visited their mothers’ workplace” (Trice & Knapp, 1992).

For the sake of brevity, the current study will not include SES or parental occupation. These are potential variables for a future study.

**Expectations**

Expectations are also good predictors of outcomes. Mello (2008) found that educational expectations at age 14 predicted educational attainment and occupational expectation at the same age predicted occupational attainment. The predictive power of expectations was similar to that of academic achievement tests. Mello found expectations were a better predictor of outcomes for males than for females.
Parental educational aspirations and expectations predict exam results and the child’s aspiration level, showing that aspirations can compensate somewhat for lower socio economic status (Ashby and Schoon, 2010). Parental academic involvement can increase aspirations and achievement, while reducing behavioural problems, though involvement was found to increase achievement for African Americans but not European Americans (Hill et al., 2004).

This study will collect both aspirations and expectations from participants, by asking what their dream job is, and also whether they expect to attain it in the future. Note that expectations are a form of belief affected by other forces, such as optimism, and a need to maintain self-evaluation (Tesser, 2000).

**Career Aspiration Attainment**

In the literature on predictors of career aspiration attainment, the most robust and widely reproduced findings centre on identification and social reproduction effects. The level of both aspirations and attainment of the child depend strongly on the family environment and SES of the parents or guardians (Ashby & Schoon, 2010). Parental educational aspirations and family income predicted educational outcomes, such as likelihood of staying in education and exam performance. Career aspirations and ambition value predicted earnings and adult SES measures, such as attainment of a professional career (Ashby & Schoon, 2010). These results show the mediating effect of aspirations between the family environment and adult attainment. Also, individuals from higher socioeconomic status (SES) are thought to be exposed to more “role models, occupational knowledge and informal/kinship networks” (Schoon, 2000), creating a broader and deeper knowledge of career opportunities.

Similarly, Noeth and Jepsen (1981) found that aspirations at 11th grade predicted occupation two years after leaving high school in 38% of cases with a small variation by gender (male: 40%, female: 35%). Trice and McClellan (1993) found that for a group of gifted children CAs predicted CAA in 26 to 46% of cases.
In 2012, LinkedIn surveyed over 8,000 professionals, and found that around 30% attained their childhood dream job or work in a related field (LinkedIn Corporate Communications Team, 2012). The most common reason for not being in their childhood dream job was that their interests changed over time (44%). The most important characteristic of a dream job for the majority of the respondents (70%) was being able to take pleasure in their work. Some of the most popular dream jobs included athlete, teacher and pilot, though this differed by country: the most popular dream job choice in New Zealand was doctor, while the most popular in Brazil and India was engineer (Williams, 2012).

Most of the research presented thus far has categorized occupational outcomes into broad categories (professional/managerial, skilled manual, unskilled) and coded it as an ordinal variable. By contrast, Schoon (2001) used existing longitudinal data to study the relationship between aspirations and outcomes for 3 specific career paths: science, health and engineering. Aspirations to a role in health were the most likely to be realized (24.3%), well ahead of science (5.6%) and engineering (3.2%). The individuals more likely to attain a career in health were found to have aspired to a career in health in the first place, have a high self-rating of scientific ability, strong mathematics ability and had a professional family background. Science career aspiration, high teacher- and self-rating of scientific ability, strong mathematics ability and a ‘timid’ personality were found to be predictors of attaining an aspiration to a career in science.

**Gender**

With regard to gender, males and females have a similar aspiration trajectory throughout adolescence, with females having slightly higher aspirations at all stages, despite perceiving more barriers to achievement (Mello, 2008). This is possibly because females have a more positive attitude to school and less negative thoughts about the future. Parents have higher educational expectations for girls than for boys, though boys are more affected by aspirations. This finding suggests that male educational attainment could be improved by increased parental expectations
and encouragement (Ashby and Schoon, 2010). Gender information will be collected in this study to enable comparison with previous studies.

Relation to present study

Another challenge of measuring dream job attainment (DJA) is that everyone is at different stages of their lifespan, and their dream job may be only attainable after a long apprenticeship or multiple promotions (e.g., judge or CEO). For this reason, as well as asking whether participants have attained their dream job, and their age, we will also ask whether they are on a career path leading to their dream job. Similarly, practicalities such as parenthood or illness may force a change of career, so this study will also ask if participants have ever been in their dream job in the past.

As stated above, self-determination theory (Vansteenkiste, 2007) suggests that intrinsic motivation predicts positive occupational outcomes. However, it would be wrong to just assume that dream jobs are determined by interests only, as some people are highly motivated by money and status. For this reason, the present study will explore whether intrinsic or extrinsic motivators are more closely associated with DJA.

Personality Predictors of Dream Job Attainment

As described in the previous section, the most common predictors used in previous research of career aspiration and attainment have been gender and environmental factors, such as SES and parental aspirations. There is therefore an opportunity to perform novel research by including personality and self-image variables as predictors. Numerous personality variables were considered, such as risk-taking behaviour (Stanford et al., 1996), self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) and personality traits (Goldberg, 1990). However, the variables chosen for the current study are sociotropy, autonomy and self-efficacy. This choice will be justified with reference to the literature on each of these constructs.
**Sociotropy and Autonomy**

The concepts of sociotropy and autonomy (subsequently SA) were initially theorized as personality predispositions to depression, with similar definitions proposed in the cognitive (Beck, 1983) and psychoanalytic (Blatt *et al.*, 1982) communities. The sociotropic (dependent) individual is hypothesized to have a high need for acceptance and positive feedback and seek secure interpersonal relationships, perhaps to protect against low self-esteem. The autonomous individual has a high need for independence and control over one’s domain. They are driven to achieve goals and meet internal standards.

While cross-sectional research consistently finds a correlation between SA and depressive symptoms, longitudinal research has had mixed results, suggesting that SA may not be fully independent from depressive symptomology. In a 3 year cohort study of Belgian adolescents, Brenning *et al.* (2013) found a significant moderate-to-high correlation between Child Depression Inventory scores and autonomy. For the sake of brevity, the research linking SA to depression will not be discussed in detail here.

While sociotropy/autonomy (SA) has not been studied directly in relation to occupational outcomes, there have been various studies that addressed aspects of SA that may contribute to difficulties in occupational (and academic) achievement. In particular, high SA individuals generate and respond to achievement-related stress differently, and display “divergent interpersonal patterns” (Nelson *et al.*, 2001) that may lead to dysfunctional work (and intimate) relationships.

Beck *et al.* (2003) found both sociotropy and autonomy was correlated to homesickness in college freshmen. 167 college freshmen who were experiencing depressive symptoms due to adjustment related difficulties were tested for SA and two subscales of homesickness: attachment to home and disliking the university. As hypothesized, Sociotropic individuals were more likely to suffer homesickness due to “attachment to home”. Surprisingly, autonomous individuals were also more likely to be homesick, but due to “disliking of university”. Homesickness mediated the relationship
between SA and depressive symptoms. This research suggests both sociotropy and autonomy present difficulty in adapting to college life, an important precursor to occupational attainment.

While the work of Beck et al. (2003) addresses the response of high SA individuals to particular stressors, Nelson et al. (2001) has recently explored how personality types can actually generate stress. They demonstrated that Sociotropic and autonomous individuals generate particular types of stressors, but not those that might have been predicted by previous research. 115 females in senior high school participated for an 18 month period in a longitudinal study of SA on stressful event generation. They found that autonomy was a risk factor for chronic interpersonal stress, while sociotropy was a risk factor for chronic achievement stress. Nelson et al. (2001) speculated that the unexpected crossover effect may be due to the fact that individuals generate stress in the areas where they place less emphasis, due to setbacks caused by neglect. Sociotropic individuals, for example, may focus on relationships to the extent that academic work is neglected. However, it is not possible to ignore academic pressure indefinitely.

Similarly, in the context of attachment styles, Permuy et al. (2010) found that sociotropy was associated with a preoccupied attachment style and autonomy was associated with a dismissing style. As both SA and attachment styles both have behavioural definitions, it is possible that they are to some extent the same constructs, or, at least, highly overlap.

Finally, Sato and McCann (2007) identified dysfunctional interpersonal styles characteristic of both Sociotropic and autonomous individuals. Sociotropic individuals were found to be overly nurturant to non-close others and vindictive towards intimates. Autonomous individuals differed, in that they were domineering towards non-close others and socially avoidant to intimates. They speculated that collaboration is central to intimate relationships and autonomous individuals withdraw from collaboration due to their high need for control.
As presented here, there is numerous evidence that SA influences behaviour in ways that might be expected to affect academic and occupational outcomes, such as DJA. High SA individuals have a higher propensity to negative affect, react more strongly to stressors such as leaving home, generate particular types of stress, have non-adaptive attachment styles, and have dysfunctional patterns of inter-personal behaviour. Despite this, the constructs have not previously been utilized to predict occupational outcomes. Therefore, this study will be novel in the literature, in using SA to predict the occupational outcome, dream job attainment (DJA). SA has been widely studied and measures have been developed over time with demonstrated validity and reliability (Robins et al., 1994).

**Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a psychological construct that describes one’s belief in one’s own ability to achieve goals and perform tasks. It was initially theorized in the context of social learning theory by Bandura (1994), and was intended as a highly domain-specific construct: one’s self efficacy for cooking steak may differ greatly from one’s self-efficacy for programming computers. Later research explored the concept of generalized self-efficacy, which focuses on a common sense of one’s own ability to address any task.

Research on self-efficacy in the area of occupational behaviour has explored both career aspiration and career attainment, but not aspiration attainment per se. Comparability of research is hampered by the use of different measures. Much early research, for example, utilizes the Career Decision Making Self Efficacy Scale (Betz et al., 1996), a domain specific measure.

**Self-efficacy and career aspirations**

Bandura et al. (2001) used cross-correlations and path analyses to explore the relation between SES, self-efficacy, parent and child aspiration and expectation level and children’s interests. 272 sixth and seventh grade students from a school outside Rome, Italy completed a domain-specific self-efficacy measure that has three factors: academic, social and self-regulation. Parents completed a perceived
parental efficacy measure that focused on academic efficacy, such as “ability to promote children’s intellectual development”.

Path analysis revealed that aspiration levels, and to a lesser extent self-efficacy, mediated the relationship between SES and the child’s areas of interest and aspiration level. SES predicted parent’s academic aspiration level (as well as parent’s academic efficacy). Parent’s academic aspiration level predicted children’s aspiration level, academic achievement and academic efficacy, as well as social and self-regulatory efficacy. High aspiration level predicted domain-specific self-efficacy in science, engineering and technology, education, medicine and literary arts. These relationships are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Path analysis of correlations between efficacy and aspiration predictors and domain-specific efficacies and interests (Bandura et al., 2001).

Bandura et al.’s study is only one of many that demonstrate a relationship between self-efficacy and aspirations, interests and expectations. A review by Hackett & Betz (1995) showed that self-efficacy predicts interests, which in turn predicts persistence and achievement. Occupational self-efficacy also predicts field of choice. For students with low SES, peer and sibling support predicted vocational and educational self-efficacy, which in turn predicted expectation level (Ali et
Finally, self-efficacy predicts aspiration level, even after controlling for interests and personality types (Rottinghaus et al., 2002).

**Self-efficacy and career attainment**

In a longitudinal study of 734 highly educated professionals, Abele & Spurk (2009) explored whether occupational self-efficacy and career advancement goals predicted objective and subjective occupational outcomes. Occupational self-efficacy was found to predict salary and hierarchical status 3 years after graduation, and career satisfaction 7 years after graduation. Career advancement goals also predicted salary and status after 3 years.

Interestingly, career advancement goals negatively impacted career satisfaction after 7 years. The authors suggest that “if the aspiration level is very high, it takes longer... to achieve”. Also, “with lower aspirations individuals will be satisfied with lower objective attainments”. Abele and Spurk (2009) give the example of teachers, who had low expectations for earnings and promotion and were hence more likely to be satisfied. This is relevant to the current study, as the concept of “dream job” is highly subjective, and may involve roles with high or low income and promotion expectations. Dream jobs that are highly competitive are harder to attain, and may lead to lower average career satisfaction (as many fail to attain them) in general than more attainable roles.

Meta-analyses of the effect of self-efficacy on job performance disagree on the magnitude of the effect, but agree that self-efficacy does predict some increase in job performance (Judge et al., 2007; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Finally, self-efficacy has also been shown to highly correlate with academic performance (Pajares, 1996), study motivation and course satisfaction (Komarraju, 2014).

In summary, self-efficacy has been shown to influence all stages of career development, from initial interests and academic choice, to occupational choice, performance, salary, status and subjective satisfaction. For this reason, it is an excellent candidate as a predictor variable for dream
job attainment. It should be noted, however, that self-efficacy predicts higher and more challenging goals. Therefore, while self-efficacy is generally considered a positive predictor in the literature, it may also lead to aspirations that are difficult to attain.

This study will use the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995), as it is widely used, has demonstrated validity and reliability and is much shorter than the domain-specific measure used by Bandura (2001).

**Purpose of the Study**
The purpose of the current study is to explore the relationship between personality and self-image constructs and DJA. Numerous gaps in the literature were identified relating to this area. Previous research tended to code occupational outcomes as ordinal variables, ordered by income, rank or skill level. Such an approach overlooks precise aspiration and attainment. Few studies used personality predictors of DJA. Numerous studies address the relationship between self-efficacy and aspirations, expectations and occupational outcomes, but not DJA per se. Knowing the factors that predict attainment of one’s dreams can facilitate the development of educational interventions and career guidance.

Theoretical and empirical research suggests a number of mechanisms whereby sociotropy and autonomy, and self-efficacy may relate to DJA. The broad literature on self-efficacy suggests that it highly correlates to various employment outcomes, and would be expected to relate to DJA. This study will focus on individuals of working age, living in Ireland. One country is ideal for cultural validity. Future cross cultural research could compare the Irish context to others.
Hypotheses

Dream job relationships to scalar variables (questionnaires from literature)

This study explores four relationships to one’s dream job: current attainment, past attainment, expectation of future attainment and on path to future attainment. For conciseness below, these four will be combined into the umbrella term “dream job attainment”. The direction of all hypothesized relationships is the same for each of the four dream job questions.

1. There will be a significant difference in the self-efficacy of those who have and have not attained their career aspiration.

2. There will be a significant difference in the sociotropy and autonomy of those who have and have not attained their career aspiration.

3. Those high on sociotropy who are not in their dream job will be more likely to state that it is because of work relationships or parent/peer/friend influence.

Dream job relationships to other categorical and ordinal variables

4. There will be a significant difference in the probability of different genders and age groups attaining their career aspiration or expecting to attain it.

5. Those currently undertaking postgraduate study are less likely to be in their dream job.

Relationships with aspects of current role and current role choice

6. Those who chose their current career path based on intrinsic motivators (e.g., personal interest) are more likely to attain their dream job than those who chose based on extrinsic motivators (e.g., remuneration).

7. There will be a relationship between self-efficacy and being influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Those higher in self-efficacy are more likely to choose intrinsic motivators while those lower in self-efficacy will be more likely to choose extrinsic motivators.
Method

_Pleasure in the job puts perfection in the work_

_Aristotle_

Participants

The sample for the present study consisted of 118 adults of typical working age (20 to 65) currently resident in the Republic of Ireland. A single country was chosen to avoid cross cultural effects. This limited the use of online questionnaires. 27 respondents were male and 85 were female. The study utilized convenience sampling. Respondents filled out either a pen-and-paper or an identical online questionnaire. Three separate groups filled out the pen-and-paper version: the first and second year Dublin Business School (DBS) part time evening students pursuing a Higher Diploma in Arts in Psychology, and another DBS group studying web design. Two separate groups also filled out the online version: a facebook group comprising members that had recently graduated from the same Psychology course, and another facebook group comprising members that had given birth within the same month. The online questionnaire was also posted to the wall of three individuals of facebook. Note that the 3 groups of psychology students form 3 consecutive cohorts drawn from the same degree.

No incentive was provided to encourage participation. Precise mean and standard deviation of ages is not available, as age ranges were used to protect anonymity. The median and modal age range selected was 30 to 39 (70 respondents, 59.3%).

Design

A quantitative correlational design was used in the present study. The study was also cross sectional, due to time constraints. The independent variables were self-efficacy, as well as sociotropy and autonomy and their subscales. The dependent variables were whether the respondent was in their
dream job, on a career path that led to their dream job, etc. Various lesser research questions were also addressed.

**Materials**

The pen-and-paper and online versions of the questionnaire contained identical content, in the same order. The questionnaire began with an author-developed set of questions on demographic information and questions regarding dream job, current job and reasons for choosing one’s career path. This was followed by two standardized instruments: the Personal Styles Inventory Revised (PSI-R) (Robins et al., 1994) and the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995). All sub-scales of the PSI-R were included.

**Personal Styles Inventory-Revised**

The PSI-R consists of 48 questions using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”. The PSI-R measures two personality variables, each of which contains 3 sub-scales. Sociotropy is subdivided into the “concern about what others think”, “dependency” and “pleasing others” subscales. Autonomy is subdivided into the “perfectionism/self-criticism”, “need for control” and “defensive” subscales. An example of a question that measures sociotropy is “I am sensitive to criticism by others”. An example of a question that measures autonomy is “I feel controlled when others have a say in my plans”. There are no reverse coded items and all scores are obtained from a simple sum of responses, so high scores indicate high levels of each personality trait. The scale is included in the questionnaire and the scoring sheet is included in Appendix B. Validation studies have estimated the internal validity of the autonomy subscale to be .85, and the sociotropy subscale to be .88 (Bagby et al., 2001).

**General Self-Efficacy Scale**

The general self-efficacy scale contains 10 questions utilizing a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from “Not at all true” to “Exactly true”. It has no subscales or reverse coded items, so participants generalized self-efficacy score is a simple sum of their ten responses. An example of a question from
the scale is “I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort”. The scale is included in the questionnaire and the scoring sheet is included in Appendix C. It is a very widely used scale, and internal reliability scores have been shown to vary in different studies between alpha .75 and .91. Test-retest reliability varies between .47 and .75.

**Procedure**

Ethical approval was requested and granted before any data collection was performed. Ethical approval was given by the Dublin Business School Psychology Department Board of Ethics. The only noteworthy issue was in clarifying that the study was not about depression, though sociotropy and autonomy are often studied in the context of depression.

Data was collected using both a pen-and-paper and an online questionnaire. An information sheet opened both questionnaire formats, and informed the participant that the study was voluntary and anonymous, that their data would be stored securely, and they could withdraw at any stage before returning the completed questionnaire. It also explained that a list of helplines was available as the last page of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is included as Appendix A.

**Pen-and-Paper**

Data collection was done in 3 evening classes in Dublin Business School. In all cases, the author introduced himself and explained that the questionnaire was part of his studies. In each case, the questionnaire was given at the start of the class. Two of these were at 8pm, and one was at 6.15pm. The selection of helplines was given out at the same time. This was not stapled to the rest of the questionnaire, so the participant could discretely take it home. One of the classes involved was the current class of the author.

**Online**

The questionnaire was developed using google docs. The online questionnaire was circulated on facebook, by friends, and only appeared on the timelines of friends or in groups of which the author
was not a member. The list of helplines was visible at the end of the questionnaire and did not require completion.

**Data analysis**

The data analysis in this study was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 22: A fine piece of software, if ever there was one.
Results

_The biggest reward for a thing well done is to have done it._

Voltaire

Descriptive Statistics

The sample consisted of a total of 118 individuals, 85 females, 27 males and 6 respondents who failed to give their gender. The majority (70, 59%) were aged between 30 and 39. 27 were aged less than 30 and 15 were aged greater than 39. Thus, the majority of the sample consisted of participants who had been in the job market for 10 years or more. 73 (62%) were currently studying part-time.

With regard to the dream job questions, 22 stated they were currently in their dream job, 27 stated that they were currently or in the past in their dream job, 43 stated that they believed they were on a career path that led to their dream job while 80 believed they would one day attain their dream job. These responses are summarized below in Figure 2.

![Figure 2: Bar charts for each of the dream job attainment questions](image)
Table 1: Dream job themes from open-ended questions. Dream jobs are often enjoyable and challenging, but only rarely good craic!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyable/Promoting happiness/something to look forward to</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting/Challenging/Fulfilling/meaningful</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well paid/Well enough paid</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others/Making a difference</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match values, identity or talents</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoting personal growth</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career progression</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conducive to work/life balance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays/Working Hours/Perks/Location/Environment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety/Flexibility</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attainable</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In harmony with nature</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low stress</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low risk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not much work</td>
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<td>Craic!</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Responses to the open-ended question “What does the term dream job mean to you?” were grouped into themes, mostly by extracting adjectives. A frequency table of responses by theme is given in Table 1 above. Note there was often more than one theme per respondent. The most common dream job titles were teacher (4), lecturer (4) and some form of social worker (3). 33% of all teachers (4/12) and 100% of all lecturers described their role as a dream job. Though uncertain, it is likely that the lecturers in this sample were lecturers in Computer Science, so this suggestive result may not generalize to other disciplines.

Though there was not sufficient time to classify dream and current roles according to a published classification system, the author developed their own simple system, and found that no-one working in the services industry (e.g., waitress, cashier) were in their dream job (0/6), while both of those working in the military or emergency services (a Garda and a Fire fighter) described their job as their dream job.

**Inferential Statistics**

Histograms and distribution statistics were obtained for each of the scalar variables to ascertain whether parametric or non-parametric inferential analyses were appropriate. The average response for self-efficacy was 31.89, with a standard deviation of 4.6. This is close to the mean found by the instrument’s authors across numerous studies (29) (Schwarzer, 2014). The responses were somewhat left skewed (skewness -.34, with a median of 31.5), but well within acceptable (somewhat arbitrary) thresholds discussed online (GraphPad, 2015; ResearchGate, 2016). The sample contained no extreme outliers. A histogram of self-efficacy responses is shown in Figure 3.
The average response for sociotropy was 93.8, with a standard deviation of 23.4. This was comparable to the levels found in other studies (100 in Rose and Anastasio, [2014] and 93 in Desmet *et al.*, [2010]) The distribution is symmetrical, but somewhat leptokurtic (kurtosis 1, again within acceptable levels. There were 2 low outliers, at 20 and 30. A histogram of sociotropy responses is shown in Figure 4.
The average response for autonomy was 87.9, with a standard deviation of 21.85. This was high relative to the levels observed in other studies (82 in Rose and Anastasio, 2010 and 66 in Desmet et al., 2010). The distribution closely approximates a normal distribution, though there were two low outliers (20 and 27) and one high outlier (150). A histogram of autonomy responses is shown in Figure 5.
1. There will be a significant difference in the self-efficacy of those who have and have not attained their dream job.

Dream job attainment

An independent samples t-test found that there was a statistically significant difference between the self-efficacy of those who were (M = 34.76, SD = 4.22) and were not (M = 31.25, SD = 4.45) currently in their dream job (t(112) = 3.3, p = .001, CI (95%) 1.4 – 5.62). The null hypothesis can be rejected.

Dream job expectation

An independent samples t-test found that there was a statistically significant difference between the self-efficacy of those who did (M = 32.51, SD = 4.64) and did not (M = 30.4, SD = 4.22) believe they
would attain their dream job in the future \((t(111) = 2.301, p = .023, \text{CI (95\%) } .3 – 3.93\)). The null hypothesis can be rejected.

**Past dream job attainment**

An independent samples t-test found that there was a statistically significant difference between the self-efficacy of those who were \((M = 33.76, SD = 5.41)\) and were not \((M = 31.37, SD = 4.23)\) in their dream job in the past \((t(33) = 2.04, p = .05, \text{CI (95\%) } .01 – 4.77)\). Note that Levene’s Test was significant here, so equal variances were not assumed.

**Career path leading to dream job**

There was no significant difference between the self-efficacy of those who were or were not on a career path leading to their dream job. The null hypothesis can be accepted.

**2. There will be a significant difference in the sociotropy and autonomy of those who have and have not attained their dream job.**

**Dream job attainment**

The relationship between sociotropy score and whether someone was ever in their dream job \((M = 85.92, SD = 5)\) or not \((M = 96.08, SD = 22.4)\) very closely approached significance, so detailed statistical results are presented here: \((t(113) = -2, p = .051, \text{CI (95\%) } -20.36 – .05)\).

On further investigation, it was found that the relationship was likely based upon the sociotropy subscale “Concern about what others think”, which likewise had a relationship that approached significance with “Currently in dream job” \((p = .06)\) and “Ever in the past in dream job” \((p = .058)\). No other subscale showed any relationship. We choose to reject the null hypothesis here, because we’re so close!
There was no relationship between autonomy and DJA. The null hypothesis can be accepted.

**Dream job expectation, past dream job attainment and career path leading to dream job**

There was no significant difference between the sociotropy and autonomy and of those who expected future DJA and those that did not. The null hypothesis can be accepted. The same results was obtained for past dream job attainment and career path leading to a dream job. In both cases, the null hypothesis can be accepted.

3. **Those high on sociotropy who are not in their dream job will be more likely to state that it is because of work relationships or parent/peer/friend influence**

As the number of respondents who answered yes to peer influence was quite small (6), a non-parametric test was chosen. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that there was a significant difference between the sociotropy of those who did (Mean Rank = 89) and did not (Mean Rank = 56.3) cite peer influence as a reason for career path choice (U = 141, p = .019).

For comparison purposes, an independent samples t-test was also run. It found that there was a statistically significant difference between the sociotropy of those who did (M = 117.83, SD = 24.52) and did not (M = 92.46, SD = 22.72) cite peer influence as a reason for their career path choice (t(113) = 2.65, p = .009, CI (95%) 6.43 – 44.32).

As the number of respondents who answered yes to parental influence was quite small (10), a non-parametric test was chosen. A Mann-Whitney U test revealed that there was a significant difference between the sociotropy of those who did (Mean Rank = 81.5) and did not (Mean Rank = 55.8) cite parental influence as a reason for career path choice (U = 293.5, p = .022).

For comparison purposes, an independent samples t-test was also run. It found that there was a statistically significant difference between the sociotropy of those who did (M = 110.9, SD = 23.76) and did not (M = 92.15, SD = 22.82) cite parental influence as a reason for their career path choice.
(t(113) = 2.48, p = .015, CI (95%) 3.74 – 33.76). The null hypothesis can be rejected for both of these relations.

4. **There will be a significant difference in the probability of different genders and age groups attaining their career aspiration or expecting to attain**

No significant difference between age groups or genders was found in any of the dream job questions. The null hypothesis can be accepted. Chi-square tests found no relationship between gender and any of the dream job questions. In fact, results were very similar across gender. 18.5% of males and 20% of females reported that they were currently in their dream job. 63% of males and 71.4% of females believed they would attain their dream job in the future. Finally, 52% of males and 44.7% of females reported choosing their current job due to personal interest.

Chi-square tests found no relationship between age and any of the dream job questions.

5. **Those currently undertaking postgraduate study are less likely to be in their dream job**

There was no relationship between current study and being in one’s dream job. However, a Chi-square test for association found that there was a weak positive association (.218) between believing that one will attain their dream job at some time in the future and whether one is currently studying (X2(1, N = 117) = 5.56, p = .018).

6. **Those who chose their current career path based on intrinsic motivators (e.g., personal interest) are more likely to be in their dream job**

Numerous relationships were found between reasons for choosing one’s current career and dream job question responses. The null hypothesis can be rejected for all the six relationships below.

**Intrinsic motivation**
A Chi square test for association found that there was a significant moderate positive association (.346) between being in one's dream job and personal interest being a factor in choosing one's career path (X2(1, N = 118) = 14.16, p = <.001).

A Chi square test for association found that there was a significant strong positive association (.55) between being on a career path leading to one's dream job and personal interest being a factor in choosing one's career path (X2(1, N = 118) = 35.1, p = <.001).

A Chi square test for association found that there was a significant moderate positive association (.35) between being in one's dream job at some time in the past and personal interest being a factor in choosing one's career path (X2(1, N = 118) = 14.46, p = <.001).

**Extrinsic motivators**

A Chi square test for association found that there was a significant weak negative association (-.229) between being in one’s dream job and remuneration being a factor in choosing one’s career path (X2 (1, N = 118) = 6.2, p = .013).

A Chi square test for association found that there was a significant weak negative association (-.258) between being in one’s dream job and job security being a factor in choosing one’s career path (X2 (1, N = 118) = 7.85, p = .005).

A Chi square test for association found that there was a significant moderate negative association (-.32) between being on a career path leading to one’s dream job and job security being a factor in choosing one’s career path (X2 (1, N = 118) = 11.84, p = .001).

7. **There will be a relationship between self-efficacy and being influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.**

An independent samples t-test found that there was a significant difference between the self-efficacy of those who did (M = .29.62, SD = 5.23) and did not (M = 32.41, SD = 4.31) cite
remuneration and benefits as a reason for not being in their current dream job ($t(112) = -2.57, p = .011, CI (95%) -4.94 – -0.64$). The null hypothesis can be rejected.
Discussion

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams

Eleanor Roosevelt

Aims of the Study

The main aim of this study was to explore personality and self-image variables that were associated with dream job attainment (DJA). A literature review identified self-efficacy, sociotropy and autonomy as promising variables in this context. A number of lesser hypotheses were also explored, with regard to gender, age and intrinsic motivation.

Summary of Findings

Despite differences in sample size and composition, this study somewhat closely replicated one of the main findings from the LinkedIn dream job study (Williams, 2012). LinkedIn found that 30% of participants were in their dream job or their dream job industry, while the present study found that 18.5% were in their dream job, 22.7% were in their dream job at some stage and 36% believed they were on a path leading to their dream job. This finding suggests that DJA may be quite stable between samples, and depending on precise definition, may range from 1/3 to 1/5 of the general population.

For the majority of those that do not acquire their dream job, job security and pay are two potent motivators. Of those not in their dream job, 41.2% cited job security as a deciding factor and 19.6% cited remuneration. Based on the open ended questions in this study, some considered that they didn’t really choose their career, and that circumstances dictated: “Fell into career path that progresses well and pays well”, “Only option”, “Was in a job I hated and took first new job that came my way”, “took first job available due to financial pressure”, “laziness, indecision”, “Just happened”. Others cited a lack of qualifications or study decision making: “Didn’t repeat leaving and should
have”, “Poor career guidance and choices at school”, “Don’t have qualification”, “Didn’t study subject for dream job”.

**Self-Efficacy (Hypothesis 1)**

Self-efficacy was found to predict DJA in the past and present. As defined by Bandura (1994), those with high self-efficacy believe they can achieve goals that they set themselves and are more likely to persevere in the face of difficulty. Attaining the qualifications and skills to be eligible for employment can be challenging, and dream jobs are often those that are more competitive (e.g., pilot and astronaut [LinkedIn Corporate Communications Team, 2012]). Other common dream jobs, based upon the LinkedIn study, such as scientist and writer, are in the arts and science fields, where other difficulties emerge, such as ill-defined career progression and lower pay relative to other fields that require similar academic level (LinkedIn Corporate Communications Team, 2012).

A positive relationship between higher self-efficacy and attainment of one’s dream job was suggested by the literature, where higher self-efficacy predicts numerous occupational outcomes, such as salary, hierarchical status (Abele & Spurk, 2009) and job performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). The mechanism whereby this effect occurs was also suggested by the literature, those with higher self-efficacy are more persistent in the face of difficulties (Hackett & Betz (1995) and more engaged with one’s college studies (Komarraju, 2014). The positive contribution of these factors outweighed the potentially negative influence of high self-efficacy leading to high aspirations that are difficult to satisfy (Bandura et al., 2001).

**Sociotropy/Autonomy (hypothesis 2 and 3)**

The relationship between sociotropy and DJA was very close to the threshold of significance. This was expected due to the correlation of Sociotropy with dysfunctional interpersonal behaviour (Sato & McCann, 2007), and stress generation (Nelson et al., 2001). Sociotropy has been shown to make it more difficult to leave home to study (Beck et al., 2003). Occupations in the age of technology are becoming more and more specialized, requiring advanced study that is often only available in the
universities of large cities (for example, in Ireland, neuroscience is only offered as a degree by 3 institutions: TCD, UCD and UCC.)

Though slightly hampered by a low number of responses, non-parametric tests showed that sociotropy was associated with an increased likelihood of citing peer and parental influence on career choice. To some extent, these variables are overlapping, as the definition of sociotropy involves being dependent on others and having concern for their opinions (Beck et al., 1983). However, this finding demonstrates that Sociotropic attitudes have a real influence on important life choices, such as career choice.

Autonomy was not related to any dream job question. As noted in the Introduction, autonomy may work for and against DJA, so that no effect is visible. Autonomous individuals may be more single minded and focused but they may also have relationship problems with colleagues and superiors, due to an inability to compromise or communicate (Beck et al., 1983), which may frustrate career progress.

Gender, studying and age (hypothesis 4 & 5)
The results of the present study are suggestive that DJA is one occupational outcome that does not suffer a gender gap: males and females were equally likely to be in their dream job. Likewise, there was no difference in dream job attainment for those studying and not studying. Perhaps many of those studying are looking to expand their knowledge of their current field, rather than change field. Many of those who are not studying are also not actively pursuing their dream job, as they have chosen to focus on other aspects of life.

No relationship between any of the dream job questions and age was found. This is unintuitive for a number of reasons. Firstly, older participants have had more time to attain their dream job. Also, for those not in their current dream job, younger participants have more time left at work, so should be more likely to be on a career path leading to their dream job or attain it in the
future. Possibly the sample was too small to discover such an effect or another confounder may be involved.

Many participants responded that they were not in their dream job or on a path to their dream job, but imagined themselves attaining their dream job in the future. This was true even for those in older age categories. It is possible that optimism plays a role here, or that it is important for one to believe they will one day attain their dream job to maintain self-esteem. Various theories in social psychology (Tesser, 2000) relate to the general tendency to protect self-esteem, and to avoid acknowledging evidence that damages it.

Intrinsic/Extrinsic motivation (hypothesis 6 & 7)

As suggested by the popular literature (Greene, 2012; Robinson and Aronika, 2009), and self-determination theory (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007), those who were in their dream job were more likely to have chosen their path due to the intrinsic motivator “personal interest”. Also, those not in their dream job were more likely to have chosen their path due to the extrinsic motivators “job security” and “remuneration”. Both the popular literature and the qualitative aspects of the present study suggest that the key aspect of a dream job is a sense of fulfilment, challenge and personal agency that comes with actually being interested in the work. Conversely, choosing a career path for money or job security is likely to lead to a choice of roles that limits creativity and self-expression, for example, by working for an already large corporation with a rigid corporate structure.

This study confirmed the hypothesis that direct parent and peer influence reduces the likelihood of DJA, but this does not preclude the possibility that other effects described in the literature, such as dysfunctional interpersonal behaviour (Sato & McCann, 2007) also have an effect. This could be the subject of future research.

One interesting finding of the study that was not initially hypothesized is that numerous respondents not currently in their dream job nonetheless chose their current career based on personal interest (37%, as compared to 82% of those in their dream jobs). This suggests that there is
a hierarchy of jobs, each differing in how interesting they are to the individual, and that the individual trades off level of interest with other factors, such as job security and pay.

Strengths

The study had numerous strengths, based on its novelty and methodology

1. This study was one of few in the literature to address specific attainment, as opposed to attainment level (Mello, 2008).
2. The study utilized personality and self-image variables to predict DJA, rather than environmental factors such as SES (Ashby & Schoon, 2010), gender (Mello, 2008) and ability level (Schoon and Parsons, 2002).
3. The study collected mature aspirations, while most previous research focused on childhood aspirations, which have been shown to be unstable (Trice, 1991).
4. The study utilized widely-used and well-validated measures. This adds confidence to results and facilitates comparison to other work. Much previous research used single-question or self-developed measures (Schoon 2001) that make quantitative analysis and comparison difficult.
5. Though a disadvantage for generalizability, the large number of participants studying part-time was quite aware of their dream job and its characteristics, possibly as they were pursuing it through study.
6. The study included potential confounder variables such as age, gender and subjective career importance. Though they did not affect results in the current sample, they may skew larger, more general samples.
Limitations

The major limitations of the study relate to the sample and the content of the questionnaire.

Sample

The convenience sample lacks the external validity (i.e., the ability to generalize the results to a wider population) of a random sample. A convenience sample is likely to over-represent some groups while under-representing others. In our sample, psychology students, evening students in general, and females are over-represented. A second limitation of the sample is size. Power analysis (Cohn, 1992) suggests that to identify an effect with a confidence level of 95%, it is necessary to have a sample of over 600. For some yes/no answers, the yes and no groups were of unequal size, which in some cases made the running of parametric tests inappropriate. Finally, in a larger sample it would be possible to randomize the order of the three main sections of the questionnaire to demonstrate the absence of order effects.

Questionnaire

The content of the questionnaire was limited by the quality of access to the participants, which was in turn limited by time constraints. An ideal study would have asked many more questions, split over more than one session, to avoid participant fatigue. Numerous common confounding variables were omitted for the sake of brevity. An ideal study would include SES, family status, educational attainment and subject of study, and parental employment. The latter would have allowed for related hypotheses to be explored: whether parental employment predicts offspring aspirations and employment.

Numerous authors argue that self-efficacy is a domain-specific construct and should be measured as such. Bandura et al (2001), for example, used a domain-specific measure which contained 79 questions. This was considered too long for the current study.
Future work

The most obvious piece of future work would be to address the limitations of the previous study, especially by increasing the size of the sample, and make it more representative, and sufficiently large to enable parametric tests throughout.

As aspirations and employment changes over the lifespan, a longitudinal design is ideal (Ashby & Schoon, 2010). Longitudinal designs allow childhood aspirations to be compared to adult outcomes. It also enables the observation of aspiration change (Trice, 1991) and allows for extra variables to be included, such as parental aspirations. As the present study was limited to one time point, it could only address correlations and not cause-effect relationships.

A longitudinal design also allows for other predictors of DJA to be studied. For example, knowledge of the job market and the daily tasks involved in different jobs in adolescents could be correlated with later DJA as role knowledge affects career aspiration (Trice & Knapp 1992).

Career importance was included in the questionnaire, but there was not enough time to complete a full analysis of this variable’s relationship to others. Career importance was included to allow for the fact that for some people work is their highest priority, while it is not for others.

Other personality predictors were considered, and could be used in future studies. For example, risk-taking behaviour (Stanford et al., 1996), self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965) and personality traits (Goldberg, 1990)

Based upon the finding that many who are not in their dream job nonetheless chose their current career based on personal interest, a future study could explore this aspect in more detail. Participants could be asked to list a number of jobs that are interesting to them, and outline why they did not choose each of the ones that are above their current role.

If the relationship between sociotropy and DJA was confirmed in a follow up study, mechanisms of sociotropy’s effect could be explored, such as those described earlier. Also,
sociotropy could be used as a predictor of other occupational outcomes such as salary and job satisfaction (Abele & Spurk, 2009).

Based upon insights from responses to open-ended questioning, other multiple choice options could be added to the questionnaire, especially for reasons that participants are not in their dream job. Common open-ended answers centred on themes of an absence of conscious choice, being restricted by circumstances and poor career planning.

**Conclusion**

This study was novel in identifying significant differences in dream job attainment in individuals with different levels of self-efficacy and sociotropy. Previous research had focused on career attainment levels, rather than specific attainment, and had typically used environmental predictors such as socio-economic status and parental aspiration. The relationship between sociotropy and dream job attainment is near-threshold, so requires more confirmation in future research. If it is significant, however, it is a novel finding in the research literature and expands the applicability of the sociotropy concept to other aspects of life beyond prediction of mental health predilection. Other findings include an association between typical intrinsic and extrinsic motivators and dream job attainment. The positive outcome of this study points the way to more investigation of personality predictors of dream job attainment.
References


ResearchGate, 2016. What is the acceptable range of skewness and kurtosis for normal distribution of data?


Appendix A – Questionnaire

My name is Ashley Sterritt and I am conducting research on behalf of Dublin Business School’s Department of Psychology as part of my studies.

You are invited to take part in this study and participation involves completing and returning the attached questionnaires. Participation is completely voluntary and so you are not obliged to take part. Participation is anonymous and confidential, as your name is not given. Thus, it will not be possible to withdraw from participation after the questionnaire has been collected.

The questionnaires will be securely stored and data from the questionnaires will be transferred from the paper record to electronic format and stored on a password protected computer. By completing and submitting the questionnaire that you are consenting to participate in the study. Should you require any further information about the research, please contact

If you experience any discomfort in answering these questions, you may withdraw from participation in this study at any time before returning the questionnaire. The questionnaires ask personal questions, which may cause some minor negative emotion. We’d like to reassure you that the questions are mainly taken from existing measures that have been widely used in psychology research, and all questions have been ethically reviewed by Dublin Business School psychology lecturers. If any of the questions do raise difficult feelings for you, you may contact the support services listed on the final page.
Demographic information

Gender (circle applicable): Male Female

Age group (circle applicable):
20-29  30-39  40-49  50-59  60-65
For the purposes of this questionnaire, we define “dream job” as the job you’d like to have if you were unconstrained, or only slightly constrained, by factors such as money or family ties. However, it should also be a job you’ve seriously considered and at some stage considered attainable. We all wanted to be an astronaut, but that’s not what we have in mind!

1) Are you currently in your dream job? Yes / No
2) What is your dream job title? __________________________________________
3) Current job title __________________________________________
4) On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest value, how important is your career to you? ______
5) Does your current career path lead to your dream job? Yes / No
6) Do you see yourself ever acquiring your dream job? Yes / No
7) Were you ever in your dream job? Yes / No
8) If you answered no to (1) above, why? Choose one or more of the following options
   □ Current role is not dream role
   □ Poor relationship(s) at work
   □ Peer/Friend influence
   □ Parental influence
   □ Remuneration and benefits
   □ Working conditions
   □ Other _____________________
9) Why did you choose your current career path? Choose one or more of the following options
   □ Personal interest
   □ Remuneration
   □ Peer/Friend influence
   □ Parental influence
   □ Job security
   □ Other _____________________
10) Are you currently enrolled in an undergraduate or postgraduate degree? Yes/ No
11) What does the term “dream job” mean to you? What attributes does a “dream job” have?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Here are a number of statements about personal characteristics. Please read each one carefully, and indicate whether you agree or disagree, and to what extent, by circling a number.

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<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly disagree</th>
<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I often put other people’s needs before my own.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>I tend to keep other people at a distance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>I find it difficult to be separated from the people I love.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>I am easily bothered by other people making demands of me</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>I am very sensitive to the effects I have on the feelings of other people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I don’t like relying on others for help.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>I am sensitive to criticism by others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>It bothers me when I feel that I am only average and ordinary.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I worry a lot about hurting or offending other people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>When I am feeling down I don’t like to be offered sympathy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>It is hard for me to break off a relationship even if it is making me unhappy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>In relationships, people are often too demanding on one another.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>I am easily persuaded by others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>14.</td>
<td>I usually view my performance as either a complete success or a complete failure.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>I try to please other people too much.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I don’t like people to invade my privacy too much.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I find it difficult if I have to be alone all day.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>It’s hard for me to take</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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instructions from people who have authority over me.

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<td>19. I often feel responsible for solving other people's problems.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I often handle big decisions without telling anyone about them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. It is very hard for me to get over the feelings of loss when a relationship has ended.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. It is hard for me to have someone dependent upon me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. It is very important to me to be liked or admired by others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I feel badly about myself when I am not actively accomplishing things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25. I feel I have to be nice to other people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. It is hard for me to express admiration or affection.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I like to be certain that there is somebody close I can contact in case something unpleasant happens to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. It is difficult for me to make a long-term commitment to a relationship.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. I am too apologetic to other people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. It is hard for me to open up and talk about my feelings and other personal things.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. I am very concerned with how people react to me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. I have a hard time forgiving myself when I feel I haven’t worked up to my potential.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I get very uncomfortable when I’m not sure whether or not someone likes me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>34. When making a big decision, I usually feel advice from others is intrusive.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. It is hard for me to say “no” to other people’s requests.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I resent it when people try to direct my behaviour or activities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. I become upset when something happens to me and there’s nobody around to talk to.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Personal questions from others usually feel like an invasion of my privacy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. I am most comfortable when I know my behaviour is what others expect of me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. I am very upset when other people or circumstances interfere with my plans.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. I often let people take advantage of me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. I rarely trust the advice of others when making a big decision.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. I become very upset when a friend breaks a date or forgets to call me as planned.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. I become upset more than most people I know when limits are placed on my personal independence and freedom.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. I judge myself based on how I think others feel about me.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. I become upset when others try to influence my thinking on a problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. It is hard for me to let people know when I am angry with them.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. I feel controlled when others have a say in my plans.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please read the sentences below and select an answer for each statement which indicates how much the statement applies to yourself.

1 = **Not at all true**  2 = **Hardly true**  3 = **Moderately true**  4 = **Exactly true**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I can usually handle whatever comes my way.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Thank you for participating in this study. If nothing else, you’ve made one psychology student happier and more likely to graduate😊*
Support services contact details

Aware (Your supporting light through depression)
Support Line 1890 303 302  Available Monday – Sunday, 10am to 10pm
http://www.aware.ie/help/support/support-line-information/

Samaritans Ireland
Support Line: 116 123  Free, 24/7, 365 days/year
http://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us

Appendix B - Personal Style Inventory scoring sheet

Personal Style Inventory- Scoring
The following items score on the following scales:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern about what others think</td>
<td>7 13 23 31 33 39 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency</td>
<td>3 11 17 21 27 37 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasing others</td>
<td>1 5 9 15 19 25 29 35 41 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionism/self-criticism</td>
<td>8 14 24 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for control</td>
<td>4 12 18 22 36 40 44 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive separation</td>
<td>2 6 10 16 20 26 28 30 34 38 42 46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Every item is scored 1-6 corresponding to the labels “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

**SOCIOTROPY** = concern about what others think + dependency + pleasing others

**AUTONOMY** = perfectionism/self-criticism + need for control + defensive

---

**Appendix C - General Self-Efficacy Scale scoring sheet**

**Scoring**

Add the scores together from all 10 items. The higher the total the greater the person’s generalized sense of self-efficacy.