An Integrative Analysis of Person–Organization Fit Theories

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This study provides an integrative analysis of three approaches to person–organization (P–O) fit theory and measurement: values congruence and personality congruence (supplementary fit measures), and work environment congruence (a needs–supplies fit measure). Commensurate measures of each aspect of fit were collected from 105 employees in six organizations in the western United States. Values congruence and work environment congruence were both related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but personality congruence was not. All three fit measures were related to employees’ intent to remain with their employer, although this effect was generally mediated by satisfaction and commitment. When multiple fit measures were used in a single analysis, values congruence and work environment congruence had the strongest and most consistent effects on the outcome measures. These results suggest a revised, multidimensional model of P–O fit.

Introduction

Person–organization (P–O) fit research examines the phenomenon of hiring “people” (not just KSAs) for “organizations,” not just jobs (Chatman, 1989). P–O fit attempts to understand selection processes that occur beyond KSA matching, and offers the potential for a more flexible and comprehensive approach to employee selection (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Cable & Judge, 1997; Kristof, 1996). Recruiters often rely on implicit P–O fit judgments to distinguish between qualified candidates by determining fit with the organization’s values or congruence on personality with the organization (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994; Dipboye, 1992; Kristof-Brown, 2000). However, recruiters’ perceptions of fit are often inaccurate, and these inaccurate perceptions of fit have been shown to be more predictive of hiring decisions than the actual fit between an applicant and an organization (Cable & Judge, 1997). Increased accuracy in fit measurement is crucial for recruiters to obtain the beneficial outcomes of P–O fit.

The importance of P–O fit for organizations is indicated by significant relationships between P–O fit and turnover (Chatman, 1991; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; Cable & DeRue, 2002), work attitudes (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Cable & DeRue, 2002), organizational citizenship behaviors (O’Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Cable & DeRue, 2002), teamwork (Posner, 1992), ethical behavior (Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt, 1985), stress (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1982), and work performance (Tziner, 1987). However, P–O fit research has developed relatively independently along parallel lines of research, without comparison tests to determine the relative validity and utility of different approaches to P–O fit, or their incremental validity and utility when used in combination. This situation leaves unanswered questions regarding what is the true content domain of P–O fit, how fit should be measured and operationalized, and which approach or combinations of approaches most accurately predict outcomes. As Bretz, Rynes, and Gerhart (1993) note: “... there has been no clear empirical basis for selecting one conceptualization of fit over another (e.g. values over needs, personality over skills), and certainly no empirical justification for studying one aspect to the exclusion of the others . . . fit is clearly multidimensional . . .” (p. 324).

This paper seeks to extend the P–O fit research in two distinct ways: (1) by examining whether P–O fit is multidimensional through the use of multiple approaches to fit on a single data set; and (2) by testing whether P–O fit effects on outcome variables may be more complex than direct relationships. Figure 1 provides a model that will be tested in this paper. The model proposes direct and indirect
relationships between three P–O fit approaches and outcome variables.

**An Integrative Model of P–O Fit**

The model provided in Figure 1 is based on Kristof’s (1996) conceptualization of the multidimensional nature of P–O fit. This paper empirically examines two of the approaches to P–O fit proposed by Kristof: supplementary fit (measured by values congruence and personality congruence), and needs–supplies fit (measured by work environment congruence) to determine if they have unique or differential effects on employee satisfaction, commitment, and intention to remain with the organization. The theoretical and empirical support for the relationships proposed in the model are described below.

**Direct Relationships Between P–O Fit and Employee Attitudes**

*Supplementary Fit and Employee Attitudes.* Supplementary fit occurs when a person “supplements, embellishes, or possesses characteristics which are similar to other individuals” in an environment (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987, p. 269). Investigations of supplementary fit have focused on measuring the similarity between fundamental characteristics of people and organizations. The most frequently used operationalization of this perspective on fit is the congruence between individual and organizational values (Kristof, 1996). Individuals use values to make choices, including those regarding their participation in organizations. Organizations use values to develop a culture that maintains guidelines for acceptable employee beliefs and behaviors. The correspondence between the individual’s values and the organization’s existing value systems represents one measure of P–O fit (Cable & Judge, 1996; Chatman, 1991; O’Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991).

The two attitudes repeatedly analyzed in the P–O fit literature are employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. Prior research supports the relationship between values congruence and satisfaction and commitment as documented for executives in the public sector (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991), junior-level accountants (Chatman, 1991), and MBA students, middle-level managers, and senior accountants (O’Reilly et al., 1991). The model portrayed in Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between fit measures and employee attitudes. However, as noted by Rynes and Gerhart (1990), “…we would expect value congruence to be only one of several key components of fit” (p. 30).

H1: Values congruence is directly and positively related to employee satisfaction and commitment.

**Personality Congruence and Employee Attitudes.** Personality congruence is another approach to supplementary P–O fit, whereby current employees possess a “personality prototype” of an “ideal” successful member of the organization, which is used as the standard to judge personality fit (Chatman, 1991; Kristof, 1996). This approach has its foundations in social identity theory in that individuals actuate their self-concepts through choosing membership in organizations of similar individuals (Tsui, Egan, & O’Reilly, 1992).

Research suggests that personality congruence is related to individual attitudes. A meta-analysis conducted by Assouline and Meir (1987) found that congruence between a subject’s personality type and the modal personality type in his/her environment was significantly correlated ($r = .29$) with satisfaction. A more recent meta-analysis of 15 P–O fit studies by Verquer, Beehr, and Wagner (2001) found that personality congruence was significantly correlated with employee satisfaction and organizational commitment. Further, the potential for the use of a commensurate measurement instrument utilizing the “big five” personality factors (Barrick & Mount, 1991) provides advantages in that the factors are quite robust (across longitudinal and across observer studies in different age, sex, race, and language groups), and meta-analytic evidence demonstrates that some of the factors are consistently predictive of job-related criteria (Barrick & Mount, 1993; Barrick, Mount, & Strauss, 1993). Based on the theory and research reviewed, this study posits that personality congruence has a direct and positive influence on employee satisfaction and commitment.

H2: Personality congruence is directly and positively related to employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

**Needs–Supplies Fit, Work Environment Congruence and Employee Attitudes.** Fit has also been operationalized as a state of congruence between individual and environmental characteristics, often referred to as need-press associations (Murray, 1938) or needs–supplies fit (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). Press or supplies refer to the environmental determinants of behavior, specifically, how the work environment helps or hinders the fulfillment of an employee’s needs. Needs–supplies fit suggests that work motivation is maximized when individual characteristics fit organizational environments (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). Higher levels of satisfaction and commitment have been shown to result from P–O
fit conceptualized from a needs–supplies perspective (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Downey, Hellriegel, & Slocum, 1975; Tziner, 1987).

This study utilizes Moos’ (1981, 1986, 1994) Work Environment Scale (WES) climate measure, as it provides commensurate measurement scales that examine the congruence between an individual’s “real” perceptions of the environment (reinforcements provided by the organization) and the individual’s “ideal” perceptions of an environment (an individual’s needs). Although Moos’ work climate measures have been suggested as a useful tool in assessing P–O fit, such research has not yet been undertaken in an organizational setting (Bretz & Judge, 1994).

H3: Work environment congruence is directly and positively related to employee satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Comparing the Measures of P–O Fit

An underlying question in the P–O fit literature is whether fit is multidimensional (Bretz et al., 1993; Kristof, 1996). The only study using multiple measures of P–O fit to determine relationships with employee attitudes and turnover intentions was Bretz and Judge (1994), which found a significant cumulative effect on employee satisfaction using multiple measures of P–O fit but did not disentangle the effects of each type of fit. As a result, the multidimensional nature of P–O fit in predicting attitudes and outcomes has not been thoroughly examined. Just as personality, culture, and climate represent different constructs in research on organizations, derivative approaches used in measuring P–O congruence are likely to represent conceptually distinct facets of fit. Further, the various conceptualizations of fit may differentially predict particular dependent variables (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Through the examination of multiple measures of fit in a single study, a more comprehensive picture of fit will be attained.

H4: Values congruence, work environment congruence, and personality congruence will each account for unique variance in the prediction of employee satisfaction and commitment.

Indirect Relationships Between P–O Fit and Employee Retention

In addition to the attitudinal outcomes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, turnover (or its inverse, employee retention) has been suggested as a consequence of poor P–O fit. However, the empirical P–O fit literature has examined the direct relationship between fit and an employee’s intention to remain (Chatman, 1991; O’Reilly et al., 1991). The literature on employee turnover suggests that the relationship is indirect, that fit influences turnover (and intentions to remain/leave) through job dissatisfaction and lack of commitment (Farkas & Tetrick, 1989; Huselid & Day, 1991; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Mueller, Wallace, & Price, 1992; Tett & Meyer, 1993). As a result, this research posits that the effects of fit measures on employees’ intentions to remain with an organization are mediated by employees’ attitudes.

H5: Employee satisfaction and commitment mediate the relationship between value, personality, and work environment congruence, and employee intention to remain with an organization.

Method

Participants

Subjects were sampled from sales positions in six different organizations in the western United States. Organizations with greater than 10 employees in a single position were solicited for their participation in the research. The sample was a convenience sample, as all sales organizations that chose to participate were included in the sample. To enhance statistical power, every employee in the position analyzed for each organization was included as a subject. The sample consisted of 75 sales representatives from a high technology database service provider, 10 bookstore representatives, 27 cosmetic sales representatives, 30 telemarketers, 11 health insurance personnel, and 10 employees in retail. One hundred and five complete responses were obtained, a response rate of 64%.

Multiple organizations and positions were used in the analysis for two reasons. First, research on P–O fit has proceeded under the assumption of universality, each approach arguing validity across job contexts. Fit research has not examined the possibility of a contingency approach whereby different fit measures may be more effective in different work environments or settings. Second, the sample’s variety of organizations and industries allows for increased external generalizability of results.

Measures

Values Congruence. Values congruence was measured using the same procedures used by Chatman (1991) and O’Reilly et al. (1991). The organizational culture profile (OCP; Chatman, 1989) was used to measure the work values of the employee and the dominant work values of the organization. Each subject completed two OCP Q sorts. In the first Q-sort subjects were asked to describe the values that would exist in their “ideal” organization, and in the second Q-sort they described the value system they felt currently exists in the organization. Data provided by all of the subjects within each organization were averaged to form an organizational profile. The overall fit of the individual’s work values to the organization’s values was
calculated by correlating the ratings of the items in the two profiles.

Personality Congruence. Personality fit was operationalized using the five-factor approach to the structure of personality (Digman, 1990), as measured with the NEO-FFI Form S (Costa & McCrae, 1991). As suggested by Chatman (1991), subjects completed a profile of the “ideal personality” – the personality of a successful firm member. Similar to the approach used by Chatman (1991) for the OCP, data provided by all of the subjects within each organization were averaged to form an organizational profile. A reliability coefficient (coefficient α) was computed for each data site’s ideal personality profiles, indicating shared assignment of meaning within each organization. The individual also assessed his/her own personality. The overall fit of the individual’s personality to the personality of the prototypical successful firm member was calculated by correlating the ratings of the items in the two profiles.

Work Environment Congruence. The work environment scale (Moos, 1994) was used to measure salient characteristics of the work environment. The WES consists of two forms, the ideal form (Form I) used to measure subjects’ perceptions of their ideal work environment, and the real form (Form R) that measures subjects’ perceptions of the current work environment. The responses received from each organization on the real form were averaged to form a composite measure of employee perceptions of the current work environment. The overall fit of the individual’s needs with the reinforcements provided by the organizational environment was calculated by correlating the ratings of the composite measure of the real work environment for each organization with each individual’s ideal work environment ratings.

Dependent Variables. The short form of the Minnesota satisfaction questionnaire (MSQ; Weiss, Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1967) was used to measure overall employee satisfaction. Organizational commitment was measured using the scale developed by O’Reilly and Chatman (1986). Intention to remain was measured using a scale developed and used in previous P–O fit research by O’Reilly et al. (1991).

Control Variables. A review of the P–O fit literature indicated significant relationships between the following demographic control variables and dependent variables used in this study: age, gender, race, and marital status. The organizational demography literature argues that demographic characteristics can influence employee outcomes through self-categorization and social identification processes similar to those involved in P–O fit (Wharton, 1992). This paper follows the lead of other research in the P–O fit area by controlling for demographic variables to determine the unique contributions of P–O fit measures.

Empirical research also suggests that organizational outcomes are influenced by an employee’s human capital (Singer & Bruhns, 1991; Cable & Judge, 1996). The theory of human capital states that how well individuals fare in organization depends not only on their innate characteristics of value to employers, but also on how well they acquire new characteristics (Jarrell, 1993). Investments in education and work experience have value for employers, and such investments are controlled for to determine the unique variance contributed by the P–O fit measures. As significant relationships have been indicated between the following human capital variables and relevant-dependent variables in P–O fit research, they have been controlled for in this study: highest educational degree achieved, grade point average, and tenure with the organization. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and inter-correlations for all of the variables are reported in Table 1.

Procedure

Data collection consisted of two surveys. Each subject completed an employee survey, which provided data on the control variables, the dependent variables, the employee’s “ideal” work environment, the value set of their “ideal” organization, and their assessment of the “ideal” personality for successful performance in the organization. After a minimum of 1 week subsequent to completion of the first survey, subjects completed a second employee survey that measured their perceptions of their personalities, the organization’s existing value set, and work environment. Surveys were completed on company time and collected by the investigator.

Results

Direct Relationships Between P–O Fit Approaches and Employee Attitudes

Zero-order correlations were examined to understand the relationships between each P–O fit approach and employee satisfaction and commitment. The zero-order correlations indicated significant relationships between values congruence and employee satisfaction ($r = .44$, $p < .01$; see Table 1) and commitment ($r = .33$, $p < .01$), providing support for hypothesis 1. Work environment congruence was also significantly correlated with employee satisfaction ($r = .33$, $p < .01$) and commitment ($r = .38$, $p < .01$) providing support for hypothesis 3. Personality congruence, however, was not significantly correlated with employee satisfaction ($r = .04$, ns) or commitment ($r = .08$, ns). Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Comparing the Measures of P–O Fit

Hypothesis 4 proposed that each aspect of P–O fit would account for unique variance in employee satisfaction and
commitment. In predicting satisfaction and commitment, the control variables in the first step did not produce significant $R^2$s ($R^2 = .11$, ns; see Table 2). However, the second step in the analyses with the fit measures entered simultaneously into the regression equation, produced a significant $R^2$ increment of 19% for satisfaction ($\Delta F(11, 94) = 5.58, p < .01$) and a 13% increment for commitment ($\Delta F(11, 94) = 3.71, p < .05$). Values congruence ($\beta = .40, p < .01$) and work environment congruence ($\beta = .23, p < .05$) were significant predictors of satisfaction. Both values ($\beta = .24, p < .01$), and work environment congruence ($\beta = .25, p < .05$) were also predictors of commitment. Personality congruence was not a significant predictor of either attitude. Overall, the results provide partial support for hypothesis 4.

The Relationships Between Fit Measures, Mediators, and Outcome Variables: P–O Fit and Intention to Remain with the Organization

Hypothesis 5 suggested that employee satisfaction and commitment would mediate the relationship between fit measures and employee intentions to remain with the organization. The process for detecting mediated relationships in hierarchical regression recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used to test this hypothesis. Hierarchical regression analyses were constructed to predict an employee’s intention to remain with the organization. In the first step, control variables were entered into the equation, and in the second step, employee satisfaction and commitment were added to the equation. Finally, the fit measures were entered. In regression terms, employee satisfaction and commitment are suggested as mediators when (a) the regression coefficients for the P–O fit measures are significant in predicting employee satisfaction and commitment (as indicated by the results of the previous analyses), (b) the regression coefficients for the fit measures are significant in predicting employee intention to remain with the organization, (c) the regression coefficients for the fit measures are no longer significant in predicting intention to remain after adjusting for the satisfaction and commitment variables in the equation.

Predicting Employee Satisfaction and Commitment. As indicated in the results for hypothesis 4, when the fit measures were entered simultaneously, values congruence and work environment congruence were significant predictors of employee satisfaction. Personality congruence was not a significant predictor of either attitude.

Predicting Employee Intention to Remain with the Organization. In predicting employee intention to remain, the control variables entered in the first step did not produce a significant $R^2$ ($R^2 = .17$, ns; see Table 2). In the next step, a significant $R^2$ increment of 25% was produced in the analysis with P–O fit measures, $\Delta F(11, 94) = 8.68,$
Values congruence ($\beta = .39, p < .01$), personality congruence ($\beta = .21, p < .05$), and work environment congruence ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) were all significant predictors of intention to remain. The third step entering satisfaction and commitment into the equation produced a $R^2$ increment of 18%, $\Delta F(13, 92) = 12.92, p < .01$. $\beta$'s indicated that satisfaction was the significant attitudinal predictor of intention to remain ($\beta = .35, p < .01$). In the full equation, values congruence ($\beta = .21, p < .05$), and personality congruence ($\beta = .20, p < .05$) remained significant predictors of intention to remain, although values congruence experienced a regression coefficient reduction of 46% (.39 vs. .21) when satisfaction and commitment were entered into the equation. Work environment congruence ($\beta = .01, ns$) did not remain a significant predictor after the inclusion of the attitudinal variables into the equation.

The results of the analyses for predicting employee intention to remain indicate that satisfaction and commitment fully mediate the relationship between work

### Table 2. Repression analyses for person–organization fit measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Predicting satisfaction</th>
<th>Predicting commitment</th>
<th>Predicting intent to remain</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. GPA</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Marital status</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Perceptual external prospects</td>
<td>-.30*</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
<td>-.29*</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Tenure</td>
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<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Race</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Age</td>
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<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.03</td>
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<td>8. Education level</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>-.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
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<td>.11</td>
<td>.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
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<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.65</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Values congruence</td>
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<td>.24*</td>
<td>.39**</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Personality congruence</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.23*</td>
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<td>11. Work environment congruence</td>
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<td>.25*</td>
<td>.23*</td>
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<tr>
<td>$R^2$ change</td>
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<tr>
<td>$F$ change</td>
<td>5.58**</td>
<td>3.71*</td>
<td>8.68**</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Satisfaction</td>
<td>.35**</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Commitment</td>
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<td>$F$ change</td>
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<td><strong>Full equation</strong></td>
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<td>1. Gender</td>
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<td>2. GPA</td>
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<td>3. Marital status</td>
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<td>4. Perc. ext. prospects</td>
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<td>13. Commitment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
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<td>.59</td>
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<tr>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>2.45**</td>
<td>1.87*</td>
<td>6.64**</td>
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*Note: Unless otherwise indicated, table values are standardized regression coefficients at each step.  
*p < .05, **p < .01.*
environment congruence and intention to remain, and partially mediate the relationship between values congruence and intention to remain. However, an examination of the regression coefficients indicates that personality congruence was not significantly mediated by the attitudinal variables (.21 vs. .20), indicating a direct effect of personality congruence on intention to remain. Figure 2 provides a graphic depiction of the relationships found in this study.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that P-O fit is multidimensional, as multiple approaches to fit were significant on a single data set. When the three P-O fit measures of values congruence, work environment congruence, and personality congruence were entered simultaneously, values congruence (a supplementary fit measure) and work environment congruence (a needs–supplies fit measure) were each found to be significant predictors of employee satisfaction and commitment (as suggested in Figure 1). This study also indicates that relationships between different P-O fit measures and dependent variables may be more complex than direct relationships. The model examined the potential for the attitudinal variables of satisfaction and commitment to mediate the relationship between P-O fit measures and employee turnover intentions. The results were mixed. Employee satisfaction and commitment were found to mediate the relationship between work environment congruence and turnover intentions, however, personality congruence and values congruence had direct effects on intention to remain (although values congruence was partially mediated by employee attitudes) (see Figure 2).

Consistent with prior research, values congruence was the most consistent and effective predictor of employee outcomes (Boxx et al., 1991; Chatman, 1991; O’Reilly et al., 1991; Verquer et al., 2001). Values congruence was a direct and significant predictor of employee satisfaction, commitment, and intention to remain with an organization. The consistency of results for values congruence relative to the other aspects of P-O fit seems to be a prevailing trend in the P-O fit literature (Verquer et al., 2001).

However, the primacy of values congruence as a predictor of employee attitudes over a personality congruence measure using the “big five” factors is perplexing. Personality is trait-based, and has been considered to be more stable measure than values over time as it consists of substantial internal, dispositional, or genetic causes (Dollinger, Leong, & Ulicni, 1996; Rowe, 1987), whereas values change as they are susceptible to a variety of learned influences (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Judge & Cable, 1997). Ryan and Kristof-Brown (2003) note that “. . . personality-based P-O fit should have at least as strong, if not a stronger, influence on individuals’ attitudes and behaviors than would values-based fit” (p. 6).

We speculate that attraction–selection–attrition (ASA) theory may be playing a role in our results (Schneider, 1987a, b). ASA theory states that individuals select situations based on their personalities, and personality may drive the formation of organizational cultures and work environments. It is possible that values fit (measured by the OCP) and work environment fit measures more closely represent situational variables, as organizational value sets, cultures, and work environments are created through the ASA process of personality congruence over time.

Judge and Kristof-Brown (2004) noted a potential relationship between personality, situation, and attitudes whereby “. . . personality affects outcomes like satisfaction through situational choices – people choose situations based on their personality, and these situational choices influence outcomes directly” (p. 22). Further, the OCP measure of values has been viewed by its authors as representing “. . . easily interpretable patterns of personality and cultural preferences” (O’Reilly et al., 1991, p. 502). A study by Judge and Cable (1997) indicated significant relationships between Big Five personality traits and cultural preferences. Thus, it may be that personality fit is the only true measure of similarity between organizations and individuals, and the value congruence measures, work environment fit measures, and goal-congruence measures frequently used in P-O fit research are derivatives of personality fit through the ASA process in an organization. The effects of personality congruence may be expressed through their defining of organizational cultures, goals, and work environments over time. A productive area for future research would be longitudinal studies examining relationships between personality, culture, work environment, and organizational outcome variables to determine interrelationships and causality.

A potentially related explanation is that the lack of findings on personality fit resulted from a measurement issue that may have additional theoretical implications. In operationalizing culture and work environment congruence, subjects were asked to provide assessments of their ideal value set and work environment – measurements of perceived deficiencies in the organization. However, personality congruence was assessed by examining the difference between an employee’s personality and the

Figure 2. A revised model of person–organization fit
aggregate assessment of the perceived organizational reality of a “successful personality” – which may represent a more direct comparison of similarity or supplementary fit. It is possible that the OCP approach to measuring values congruence more closely indicates a form of situational needs-supplies congruence rather than similarity or supplementary fit, as it represents employee concerns (needs) over psychological deficiencies in the organization. Thus, values and work environment fit may have represented needs-supplies congruence, implying that supplementary fit approaches such as personality fit are less predictive of organizational outcomes. Although many argue for the relevance of personality fit on employee outcomes, a meta-analysis of 15 P–O fit studies conducted by Verquer et al. (2001) found that values congruence consistently had stronger relations with outcomes than did other types of congruence (including personality).

Initial empirical support was also provided for the WES (Moos, 1994) as an effective P–O fit measurement instrument. The significant contribution of work environment congruence to the prediction of employee satisfaction and commitment when multiple fit measures were used indicates its potential incremental contribution to understanding the effects of P–O fit. The results also have implications regarding Moos’ (1975, 1976) assertions that characteristics of work environments and interactions between work environments and people are important for employee retention. The fully mediated effects of work environment congruence on employee intention to remain indicate that retention operates through the effects of work environment congruence on employee perceptions of satisfaction and commitment.

Another important implication of these results pertains to how individual differences affect withdrawal outcomes. Conventional thinking has been that individual differences in values and personality affect turnover and absence primarily through their effect on attitudes such as satisfaction and commitment. This conclusion is primarily a result of the failure of individual difference variables to explain a significant portion of variance in withdrawal outcomes (Rosse & Noel, 1995). However, most withdrawal researchers have not utilized measures that use commensurate measurement in the consideration of the interactions between individuals and their environments, as do measures of P–O fit. Moreover, it may be overly simplistic to assume that any single individual difference variable, acting in isolation from consideration of its relevant environment, would have significant effects on complexly determined withdrawal cognitions and behaviors. Commensurate-measurement approaches to P–O fit provide a more comprehensive picture of the “chemistry” resulting from congruence between individual differences and organizational situations and may indicate potential to explain more of the variance in withdrawal cognitions and behavior.

Commensurate-measurement approaches possess the additional advantage of providing an indirect measurement approach to determining P–O fit, in that they assess perceived fit on the same content dimensions collected at multiple points in time. The general superiority in predictive validity of commensurate measures of noncommensurate measures has been demonstrated empirically (Cherrington & England, 1980). Whereas Cable and DeRue’s (2002) research indicated the potential of multiple fit measures (values fit and needs-supplies fit) to influence employee outcomes, direct measures of P–O fit were used, which are more likely to be influenced by consistency biases and common method bias than are indirect measures.

The results of this study, particularly the significance of values congruence on employee attitudes and intentions to remain, provide some practical implications for the selection context. Recent studies in P–O fit indicate that recruiters often vary in the criteria they use to judge and applicants’ fit (Kristof-Brown, 2000), and that recruiters may use themselves as idiosyncratic individualized benchmarks in judging P–O fit (Judge & Ferris, 1992). The use of pre-existing validated fit measures in the recruiting process may provide the structure for a more comprehensive analysis of actual fit. Organizations may benefit from self-administering the fit measures used in this study to determine if there exists distinct organizational cultures, work environments, or personalities that can be used in formulating more precise P–O fit interview questions or screening instruments. A more effective employee selection process might include a values congruence screening using the OCP in the stages of the selection process that occur closer to the ultimate decision (i.e., second interviews, site visits, etc). However, potential adverse impact concerns would need to be addressed. It is possible that certain value sets (or fit measures) may be linked to demographic or protected-class characteristics, providing the roots of adverse impact.

**Study Limitations**

Common method variance is a potential limitation of the study. One factor that may mitigate this concern is that data collections for each survey instrument within each data site were separated by a minimum of 1 week. This study also did not address the possibility of reverse causality between fit and outcomes. However, Chatman’s (1991) research utilized a repeated measures design to examine the longitudinal effects of values congruence, and the results indicated stability in the relationships between fit and several individual outcome variables.

Also, this study did not include a measure of P–O goal congruence. Goal congruence has indicated potential as a significant commensurate fit measure in the prediction of workplace outcomes (Vancouver, Millsap, & Peters, 1994; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991). Future research should examine the influence of goal congruence measures relative...
to values, personality, and work environment congruence in the prediction of employee attitudes and retention.

Finally, the use of correlations as fit indices must be viewed with caution. Using correlations for each individual to predict outcomes of fit or congruence has been viewed as a flawed measure of fit (Edwards, 1994). Edwards noted problems with conceptual ambiguity and discarded information, and advocated for the development of three-dimensional response surface models that map the raw data into unconstrained functional forms. However, use of Edwards’ technique in this study was limited by the use of the OCP, an ipsative value measurement instrument necessary to avoid the social desirability response bias associated with Likert-type value scales (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Further, one of the contributions of this study is the simultaneous investigation of multiple dimensions of P–O fit, which would not be possible with polynomial regression as the different dimensions could not be directly compared. Finally, Edwards’ tests of constrained vs. unconstrained models requires a sample size and power beyond that provided by this sample. Finally, some researchers have argued that difference scores represent fit in a conceptually distinct manner from Edwards’ technique of analyzing the component parts (Tisak & Smith, 1994).

In conclusion, this study provides support for the ability of P–O fit instruments to predict employee attitudes and intention to remain. In an analysis that included multiple measures of P–O fit, values congruence proved to be a direct and significant predictor of employee satisfaction, commitment, and intention to remain with an organization. Work environment congruence was a direct predictor of employee satisfaction and commitment, its influence on an employee’s intention to remain with an organization mediated by attitudes. Personality congruence directly predicted an employee’s intention to remain with an organization. Further research in this area should improve our understanding of the P–O fit process and its effects in the workplace.

References


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