

Person-Organization Fit and the Theory of Work Adjustment: Implications for Satisfaction, Tenure, and Career Success

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The Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) posits a relation between person-environment fit and job satisfaction and tenure. However, typical studies of fit have relied on occupational environments or general organizational descriptions. The present study extends the TWA by examining person-environment fit in organizational settings that are described with a greater level of specificity than has typically been the case. Moreover, although the TWA indicates that work rewards play a moderating role in determining job satisfaction, theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that person-organization fit may have a direct influence on extrinsic measures of career success such as salary and job level attained. Therefore, in addition to testing several tenets of the TWA, the present study provides a preliminary examination of the relation between person-organization fit and career success. Results provide additional support for the efficacy of the TWA. © 1994 Academic Press, Inc.

The Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) posits that individuals and environments impose requirements on one another and that "successful" work relations are the result of adjustments intended to create a state of correspondence between individual and environmental characteristics (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). Although the theory has primarily been used to study person-occupation fit, it was clearly intended to apply to specific organizational settings as well. In fact, because "a job is a localized version of an occupation which fixes the practice of that occupation in time and space" (Thompson, Avery, & Carlson, 1968), the existing body of support generated for the TWA seems directly applicable to the developing body of research on person-organization fit.

According to the TWA, job satisfaction represents the individual worker's subjective evaluation of the degree to which his or her requirements are met by the work environment. Proposition III of the theory clearly

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states that correspondence (or "fit") between individual and organizational characteristics should induce job satisfaction. Furthermore, job tenure is the most basic indicator of satisfaction because it purportedly represents a state in which the individual finds the work environment to be acceptable (satisfaction), and the environment finds the individual to be acceptable (satisfactoriness). Therefore, tenure is indicative of stable correspondence between the person and the work setting (Dawis, *in press*; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984).

Person-environment fit has been extensively studied in the vocational behavior literature (for reviews see the 1987 special issue of this journal, and more recently, Hackett, Lent, & Greenhaus, 1991), and has been related to several occupational outcomes (Assouline & Meir, 1987; Mount & Muchinsky, 1978; Rounds, Dawis, & Lofquist, 1987; Spokane, 1985). Considerable research also has linked person-environment fit to many positive organization-specific outcomes. For example, fit has been shown to have implications for job involvement (Blau, 1987), organizational commitment (Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989), individual health and adaptation (Moos, 1987), job performance (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990), and work attitudes (Smart, Elton, & McLaughlin, 1986). Fit has also been shown to affect both applicant preferences and behaviors (Bretz, Ash, & Dreher, 1989; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991) and recruiter perceptions of applicant suitability (Bretz, Rynes, & Gerhart, 1993; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). These outcomes suggest that those who fit are more likely to be attracted to the organization, be favorably evaluated by established organizational members, display greater work motivation, and perform better than those who do not.

A related question that has not been adequately answered is whether people who fit the particular organizational environment to which they belong achieve higher levels of career success than those who do not. Although this relation has not been explicitly tested, the tenets of interactional psychology (e.g., Murray, 1938), the speculations of respected scholars (e.g., Holland, 1985; Olian & Rynes, 1984; Schneider, 1987), and empirical research demonstrating that person-organization fit results in positive work-related outcomes (e.g., Blau, 1987; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Cladwell, 1991), strongly suggest an affirmative response. Both the theoretical foundations of the TWA and the related research suggest that individuals will seek out, find comfort, and flourish in environments that support their specific preferences. Therefore, a reasonable extension of the TWA suggests that individuals who fit the organizational environment should, over time, achieve higher levels of success than those who do not.

The rationale for these beliefs, and for the general propositions of the TWA are consistent with interactional psychology. Fit implies a state of congruence between individual and environmental characteristics. Early

interactionist perspectives on motivational psychology viewed person-environment fit in terms of need-press associations (Murray, 1938). In this context, needs represent the determinants of behavior in individuals and can be inferred from how the individual feels, behaves, or reacts. Press represents the environmental determinants of behavior and implies what the environment can do for an individual, to facilitate or hinder the fulfillment of needs or the accomplishment of goals (Hall & Lindzey, 1970; Murray, 1938). Therefore, work motivation is assumed to be maximized when individual characteristics fit organizational environments. Since motivation interacts with abilities to affect performance (Steers & Porter, 1983), and performance is closely linked to both pay and promotions in most organizations (Milkovich & Wigdor, 1991), person-organization fit should affect not only satisfaction and tenure, but also measures of career success such as salary and job level achieved.

Other motivational theories posit relations that are consistent with the TWA but also suggest that fit should contribute to career success. Specifically, reinforcement theory predicts that individuals tend to seek out, prefer, and remain in environments in which positive reinforcements are maximized (Lofquist & Dawis, 1969; Vroom, 1964). Organizations use reinforcements to shape individual behavior to be consistent with existing norms. Holland (1985) has argued that, over time, reinforcements constrain individual behavior to be consistent with organizational desires. That is, the individuals who display the proper behaviors and attitudes (i.e., those who fit) should stay longer, be more satisfied, and have the indicators of career success bestowed upon them.

Similarly, expectancy theory also is consistent with the TWA in explaining how fit may result in tenure and satisfaction (Dawis, *in press*), and it too suggests a strong linkage between fit and career success. The theory posits that individuals will tend to engage in activities perceived most likely to yield valued outcomes. As applied to work motivation and performance, fit between individual preferences and organizational conditions presumably affect outcome valences. Additionally, since environmental conditions can either facilitate or hinder the use of particular knowledge, skills, and abilities, and the expression of particular needs, values, and personality characteristics, the match between individual and organizational attributes should affect the perceived probability that effort will lead to performance. Finally, individuals form instrumentality perceptions from the historical record of what the organization rewards. Therefore, expectancy theory predicts that individuals who meet some level of satisfactoriness will subsequently be rewarded for possessing these characteristics. In other words, those who fit will flourish.

From an organizational-level perspective, Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition hypothesis also is consistent with the TWA in predicting positive relations between fit, satisfaction, and tenure. Schneider argues

that not only do organizational environments shape individual behaviors through the reward systems in place, but individual needs and values also shape what the organization chooses to reward. The key premise is that individuals are not "assigned" to organizational settings, rather they self-select in and out on the basis of fit. Those who fit stay, contribute, and are subsequently rewarded by the organization, while those who do not fit leave.

Psychological and political influence processes also may be powerful, fit-based determinants of tenure, satisfaction, and success (Janis, 1972). Specifically, those who fit are socially and politically supported by the organization's members and systems, while those who do not are ostracized and undermined (Schreiber, 1983). Therefore, those who fit are more likely to receive the support necessary to perform well, thereby increasing the likelihood that their performance will lead to extrinsic indicators of success, such as pay increases and promotions to higher job levels. They also are likely to encounter more comfortable and supportive working environments than those who do not fit, and are therefore likely to possess higher levels of satisfaction and tenure.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to test three hypotheses. The first two follow directly from the theoretical and empirical support for the TWA suggesting that person-occupation fit predicts tenure and satisfaction (Assouline & Meir, 1987; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Mount & Muchinsky, 1978; Rounds et al., 1987; Smart et al., 1986; Spokane, 1985). This study attempts to extend the theory by examining the degree to which similar relations are true with respect to person-organization fit. Therefore we hypothesized that person-organization fit would positively predict tenure (H1), and that person-organization fit would positively predict satisfaction (H2).

Our third hypothesis is consistent with the tenets of motivational psychology discussed above but is inconsistent with predictions made by the TWA. The TWA assumes that indicators of career success (salary, job level attained) are organizational rewards that interact with individual values and needs to determine fit, and through fit affect satisfaction and tenure. However, as discussed above, many accepted theories of motivation predict that person-organization fit will have a direct effect on these measures of success. Moreover, person-organization fit has been shown empirically to be related to many variables that have themselves been shown to influence career success. For example, individual differences in cognitive ability (Dreher & Bretz, 1991), motivation (Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991), human capital acquisitions (Whitely et al., 1991), familial obligations (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), and demographic influences such as socio-economic status, marital status, and gender (Dreher, Dougherty, & Whitely, 1985) all have been shown to effect career success. Similarly, organizational-level variables such as career or

promotion systems (Stumpf & London, 1981), early career challenge (Kaufman, 1974), mentoring (Dreher & Ash, 1990), and socialization (Feldman, 1981; Reichers, 1987) also have been shown to effect individual career success. However, in spite of the previously discussed theoretical support for the effect of person-organization fit on career success, and empirical research indicating that fit has positive work-related outcomes, no research has directly examined this relation. Therefore, one purpose of this study was to provide a preliminary test of the hypothesis (H3) that person-organization fit exerts a main effect on certain indicators of career success (salary level, job level).

METHOD

Subjects and Procedure

Graduates from two large industrial relations programs were surveyed. Questionnaires assessed respondents' career success, factors which previously have been shown to affect career success, the existing organizational environment, and preferences for different organizational environments. The sample included all 651 past graduates from the industrial relations program at a large Midwestern university, and all 1980 through 1986 graduates ($n = 1561$) from the industrial relations school of a large Northeastern university. The study was conducted with the support of the schools' placement and alumni relations directors, who provided mailing labels and included a cover letter asking graduates to participate. Confidentiality of individual responses was assured, and respondents were promised a summary of the results. From the Midwestern sample, 301 surveys were returned (46%), and from the Northeastern sample, 572 surveys were returned (37%). Overall, 873 of the 2189 deliverable surveys were returned (40%). The response rates achieved compare favorably with past survey research (Dillman, 1983). Moreover, although empirical data for non-respondents were not available, placement office records and expert opinions of placement office directors suggested that the respondents adequately represented the survey population. That is, we noticed no systematic differences between respondents and the known characteristics of the population such as average salary, gender, age, race, geographic location, or industry.

Sixty-three percent of respondents were male, 66% were married, and their average age was 34.8 years. Twenty-three percent of respondents reported having experienced a significant interruption in their careers. Seventy-four percent reported being from middle class or upper middle-class backgrounds. Respondents worked an average of 49.8 h/week, spent an average of 5 h/week caring for dependents, and on average spent 8.7 h/week performing household chores. Average tenure in respondents' job was approximately 4 years, and the typical respondent was working

in a job 4.2 levels above entry level. Respondents had averaged 3.35 promotions, with an average of 1.65 of those with their current employer. Average salary of respondents was \$66,508/year. Fifty-eight percent of respondents reported being at least moderately satisfied with their job; 82% reported being at least slightly satisfied with their life in general.

Measures

Satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured by the G. M. Faces Scale, a single-item measure of overall job satisfaction that has been shown to compare favorably with faceted measures of this construct (Kunin, 1955; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983; Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969). In completing the Faces scale, respondents check one of six faces, ordered from sad to happy, which best expresses satisfaction with the job in general. Although the reliability of single-item measures is often questioned, single-item responses are considered appropriate when individuals are asked to make summary judgments about their own level of satisfaction or affect (Scarpello & Campbell, 1983). In comparing several job satisfaction scales, Scarpello and Campbell (1983) concluded that the G. M. Faces scale was not unreliable as a measure of job satisfaction, and in many cases might be the best measure of overall job satisfaction. Moreover, modifications of the scale have also been shown to be reliable and valid in circumstances, such as life satisfaction and training reaction, where subjects are asked for affective reactions to environmental stimuli (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Bretz & Thompson, 1992; Judge & Hulin, in press).

Career success. Salary and job level, defined as number of positions above entry level, were used as measures of extrinsic career success.

Person-organization fit. Recent research has examined person-organization fit from four general perspectives. First, fit has been presumed to be an extension of the traditional selection paradigm that assessed the degree to which individual knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) matched job requirements (e.g., Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). Second, fit has been defined as the degree of congruence between individual needs and organizational reinforcement systems and structures (e.g., Moos, 1987). Recent evidence suggests that employers tend to distinguish themselves on the basis of reward (pay and mobility) contingencies (Gerhart & Milkovich, 1989), and it has been demonstrated that these contingencies are differentially appealing to applicants and employees (Bretz et al., 1989; Moos, 1987). Third, fit has been defined as the match between individual value orientations and organizational culture or values (e.g., Chatman, 1989). Work values (particularly achievement, honesty, concern for others, and fairness) have been shown to exert powerful influences over perceptions of fit and work-related behavior (Chatman, 1989; Judge & Bretz, 1992). Finally, fit has been described in terms of individual personality and perceived organizational image or personality (Bowen, Led-

ford, & Nathan, 1991; Tom, 1971). Respondents who have not been primed by researcher-generated preconceptions generally include all of these conceptualizations in their descriptions of what fit means to them (Bretz et al., 1993; Rynes et al., 1991).

Therefore, fit was assessed using two questionnaires that contained 15 items which examined fit from the four conceptualizations delineated above. One questionnaire asked respondents to indicate (using a 5-point Likert-type scale; 1 = not at all true, 5 = definitely true) how descriptive each statement was regarding their current organizational environment. The other questionnaire asked respondents to indicate (again using a 5-point Likert-type scale) how well corresponding statements described them personally. Fit was operationalized as the sum of the differences between responses to corresponding items on the two questionnaires. For example, regarding fit between individual needs and organizational reinforcement systems, the item "this organization pays on the basis of individual performance" on the organizational questionnaire coincided with the item "I believe people should be paid on the basis of their individual performance" on the individual questionnaire. Similarly, regarding individual and organizational values, the item "fairness is an important consideration in organizational activities" on the organizational questionnaire coincided with the item "fairness is an important consideration to me" on the individual questionnaire. In order to make high values indicate fit, we took the reciprocal of the summed differences between individual preferences and organizational characteristics. The complete list of items eliciting job perceptions and individual preferences is provided in Table 1. While this measure of fit is untested, it appears to capture the environmental specificity intended by the TWA.

Other variables. Other variables, including tenure, access to a mentor, hours worked per week, familial obligations (number of hours per week spent in fulfilling household duties and caring for dependents), hours per week spent in family leisure activities, intention to remain in the organization (as a proxy for commitment), highest educational degree achieved, socioeconomic status (1 = working class to 5 = upper class), whether the respondent worked in a line or staff position, whether the respondent had experienced a significant career interruption (and the length of the interruption), marital status, gender, grade-point average, industry in which the respondent was employed, and the university from which the respondent graduated, were measured by specific questions on the survey.

RESULTS

Because the internal consistency of our measure of person-organization fit has not been previously determined, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis on each of the component scales (work perceptions and individual

TABLE 1
Items Used to Construct Person-Organization Fit Scale

Job and organization perception items	
1.	This organization pays on the basis of individual performance.
2.	This organization has a profit or gain sharing plan.
3.	This organization makes promotions based mostly on individual performance.
4.	This organization encourages competition between employees.
5.	This organization encourages and rewards loyalty.
6.	Teamwork and cooperation are valued and rewarded here.
7.	When the organization has a good year it pays bonuses to the employees.
8.	People generally have to work in groups to get their work done.
9.	This organization offers long-term employment security.
10.	This organization has a "fast-track" program.
11.	This organization has/follows a promote-from-within policy.
12.	The typical employee here works very hard to fulfill work expectations.
13.	There is an emphasis on helping others.
14.	Fairness is an important consideration in organizational activities.
15.	When mistakes are made it is best to be honest and "take your lumps"
Individual preference items	
1.	I believe people should be paid on the basis of their individual performance.
2.	When organizations make profits, I think they should share some of it with employees.
3.	I believe promotions should be made on the basis of individual performance.
4.	I believe competition between employees creates a healthy working environment.
5.	I believe organizational loyalty should be encouraged and rewarded.
6.	I believe teamwork and cooperation are valuable and should be rewarded.
7.	When the organization has a good year I think it should pay bonuses to the employees.
8.	I think it is better to work in groups to get work done.
9.	I believe organizations should offer long-term employment security for their employees.
10.	I think organizations should have "fast-track" programs for their "best" employees.
11.	I think organizations should try to promote-from-within whenever it is possible.
12.	I try very hard to fulfill work expectations.
13.	I place a high emphasis on helping others.
14.	Fairness is an important consideration to me.
15.	When I make mistakes, I am honest about it and "take my lumps".

preferences) and on the difference measures. In all three cases, the hypothesized one-factor solution was confirmed. For work perceptions the average factor loading was .419 and all loadings were significant at the .05 level. The fit statistics were: χ^2 divided by degrees of freedom = 5.08, goodness of fit index = .933, adjusted goodness of fit index = .892, root mean square residual = .063. For individual preferences the average factor loading was .325 and all loadings were significant at the .05 level. The fit statistics were: χ^2 divided by degrees of freedom = 3.60, goodness of fit index = .949, adjusted goodness of fit index = .927, root mean square residual = .052. For the scale consisting of difference scores the average factor loading was .383 and all loadings were significant at the .05 level. The fit statistics were: χ^2 divided by degrees of freedom = 4.78, goodness

of fit index = .932, adjusted goodness of fit index = .901, root mean square residual = .061. In all cases, these statistics represent sufficiently good fit to the one-factor solution.

Because difference-scores have been widely used to represent the gap between desired and actual states (i.e., person-environment fit), we also operationalized fit in this manner. However, difference-scores have been criticized for yielding results that may be ambiguously interpreted because they fail to control for the independent influence of the person or the environment (Edwards, 1991; Hesketh & Gardner, 1993; Wall & Payne, 1973). Therefore, on the final step of the hierarchical regressions we examined the effects of fit using three methods. In method A the summed difference scores were entered. In method B, the vector of difference scores were entered. In method C, the vector of job perceptions, the vector of individual preferences, and the vector of their interactions were entered to determine the unique variance explained by each component in the context of the others. Because the purpose of this study was to examine how correspondence between individual and organizational profiles account for variance in job satisfaction and tenure, and because attribute-level analysis is inconsistent with the TWA (Hesketh & Gardner, 1993), the regression coefficients for the individual variables in these vectors are not reported. They are, however, available from the authors upon request.

The correlations between variables are provided in Table 2. Table 3 presents the hierarchical regression results and corresponding changes in variance explained for hypotheses 1 and 2 which examined the effects of fit on tenure and satisfaction. Variables were entered in blocks identified as (1) demographic influences, (2) human capital characteristics, (3) job and organizational characteristics, (4) industry dummy variables, and (5) person-organization fit. As predicted by the TWA, person-organization fit significantly explained additional variance in tenure and in job satisfaction beyond the effects accounted for by the other variables, although the effect was substantially more powerful for satisfaction. Also, consistent with Edwards (1991) and Hesketh and Gardner (1993), the amount of variance explained by fit increased as the fit variable was decomposed. Operationalizing fit as the summed difference scores (method A) accounted for an additional 1% of variance in tenure and an additional 12% of variance in job satisfaction. The vector of difference scores (method B) accounted for an additional 4% of variance in tenure and an additional 22% of variance in job satisfaction. Finally, examining the independent effects of job perceptions, individual preferences, and their interactions (method C) explained an additional 11% of variance in tenure (i.e., $.04 + .05 + .02$) and an additional 32% of variance in job satisfaction. The pattern of variation explained by perceptions, preferences, and the interactions suggests that person-organization fit has an important effect on

TABLE 2
Correlations between Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1 P-O FIT	—	.09	-.36	-.23	-.16	-.03	-.12	-.06	-.09	-.05	-.06	.12	.03	.05	-.12	-.09	.06	.08	.07	-.20	-.03	-.18
2 Job tenure		—	.05	.13	.16	.02	.01	.18	-.14	.15	.04	.11	.05	-.32	-.02	-.03	.02	-.04	.00	-.09	.12	.15
3 Job satisfaction			—	.07	.17	.06	.03	.04	.06	.10	.00	-.03	.00	-.01	.03	.09	.04	-.02	-.04	.15	.02	.14
4 Salary				—	.39	.09	.10	.17	-.01	.16	.01	.17	.09	-.09	.27	.05	-.10	-.10	-.07	.03	.14	.14
5 Job level					—	.15	.05	.09	-.07	.20	.08	-.13	-.02	-.01	.20	.07	.02	.01	-.02	.02	-.01	.21
6 Number of children						—	.03	.18	.06	.39	.03	-.03	.07	-.11	.02	-.05	.40	.07	.02	.03	.04	.19
7 Race (white)							—	-.00	.12	.06	-.00	.00	.06	.04	.03	.01	.04	.04	.00	-.10	.03	.03
8 Gender (male)								—	-.14	.18	.06	.10	.04	-.24	.15	.01	-.12	-.14	-.11	-.02	.09	.09
9 Socio-economic status									—	-.09	-.11	.08	-.07	.18	.07	.08	-.06	-.03	-.00	.05	.05	-.08
10 Married										—	-.01	.07	.05	-.09	.03	.11	.23	.04	.03	-.03	.06	.13
11 Master's degree											—	-.59	.39	-.34	-.10	-.01	-.01	-.04	-.03	-.01	-.01	.06
12 Ph.D. degree												—	.02	.06	.13	-.00	-.05	-.02	.00	-.01	.14	-.03
13 Grade point average													—	-.35	.07	-.01	.03	.02	.05	-.03	.05	.12
14 University attended (midwest)														—	.05	.03	-.01	.04	.02	.03	.01	-.15
15 Hours worked per week															—	-.01	-.15	-.08	.03	.07	.14	.15
16 Hours of family leisure per week																—	.17	-.02	.04	.05	-.02	-.01
17 Hours of dependent obligations per week																	—	.15	.13	-.05	-.02	.09
18 Career interruption																		—	.50	.01	-.05	-.11
19 Length of interruption																			—	-.00	-.04	-.03
20 Access to a mentor																				—	.05	-.02
21 Line position																					—	-.00
22 Intention to stay																						—

Note. Decimals omitted. Correlations greater than .10 are significant at the .01 level and those greater than .07 are significant at the .05 level. Due to space limitations, industry correlations are not reported but are available upon request. Listwise deletion yielded $N = 513$.

TABLE 3
Hierarchical Regression Results for the Effects of Fit on Tenure and Job Success

	Tenure						Job satisfaction					
	β	SE β	R^2	Adj R^2	Change		β	SE β	R^2	Adj R^2	Change	
					R^2	F					R^2	F
Step 1: Demographic			.03	.03	.03	3.54***			.02	.02	.02	1.56
Number of children	-.02	.05					.07	.05				
Race (White)	.10	.04					.06	.05				
Gender (male)	.11**	.05					-.03	.05				
Socio-economic status	-.09**	.04					.07	.05				
Married	.10**	.05					.06	.05				
Step 2: Human capital			.15	.12	.11	7.38***			.04	.01	.03	1.54
Master's degree	-.03	.06					-.10	.06				
Ph.D. degree	.15***	.05					-.06	.06				
Grade point average	-.02	.05					.09	.05				
University attended (midwest)	-.30***	.05					.01	.05				
Hours worked per week	-.04	.04					.08	.05				
Hours of family leisure per week	-.03	.04					.11**	.05				
Hours of dep obligations per week	.04	.05					.02	.05				
Career interruption	-.01	.05					.03	.05				
Length of interruption	.07	.05					-.07	.05				
Step 3: Job and organizational			.19	.16	.05	4.66***			.10	.06	.06	5.21***
Access to a mentor	-.06	.04					.16***	.04				
Line position	.09**	.04					.00	.04				
Intention to stay	.04	.04					.08*	.05				
Salary	-.01	.05					.01	.05				
Job level	.20***	.05					.14***	.05				
Number of promotions	.00	.05					.04	.05				

Step 4: Industry			.23	.19	.04	3.90***			.11	.06	.01	1.05
Mining, construction, & agriculture	-.02	.04					.01	.04				
Manufacturing	-.09**	.05					.03	.05				
Trans., communication & util.	-.08*	.04					-.05	.05				
Wholesale and retail trade	-.01	.04					-.01	.04				
Finance and insurance	-.02	.04					.03	.05				
Service	.13***	.05					.09	.05				
Public administration	.10**	.04					-.03	.05				
Step 5: Person-organization fit												
A: Composite fit index	.12***	.04	.24	.20	.01	6.76***	.39***	.04	.23	.18	.12	75.51***
B: Vector of difference scores			.27	.20	.04	1.39			.33	.27	.22	9.37***
C: Vector of job perceptions			.29	.22	.05	1.67**			.36	.30	.25	9.44***
Vector of ind. preferences			.33	.25	.05	1.91**			.41	.33	.05	2.28***
Vector of interactions			.35	.23	.02	0.60			.47	.38	.06	2.92***

Note. $N = 522$.

*** $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$, * $p < .10$.

TABLE 4
Hierarchical Regression Results for the Effects of Fit on Salary and Job Level

	Salary						Job level					
	β	SE β	R^2	Adj R^2	Change		β	SE β	R^2	Adj R^2	Change	
					R^2	F					R^2	F
Step 1: Demographic			.05	.05	.05	5.57***			.05	.05	.05	5.70***
Number of children	.05	.05					.09*	.05				
Race (White)	.07	.04					.01	.04				
Gender (male)	.13***	.04					.02	.04				
Socio-economic status	.01	.04					-.05	.04				
Married	.12**	.05					.16***	.05				
Step 2: Human capital			.16	.14	.11	7.58***			.15	.13	.10	6.82***
Master's degree	.14**	.06					-.02	.06				
Ph.D. degree	.14***	.05					-.17***	.05				
Grade point average	-.00	.05					-.04	.05				
University attended (midwest)	-.02	.05					.02	.05				
Hours worked per week	.28***	.04					.26***	.04				
Hours of family leisure per week	.03	.04					.09**	.04				
Hours of dep obligations per week	-.12**	.05					-.04	.05				
Career interruption	-.02	.05					.05	.05				
Length of interruption	-.02	.05					-.02	.05				
Step 3: Job and organizational			.26	.23	.10	13.21***			.27	.24	.11	19.18***
Access to a mentor	.01	.04					-.01	.04				
Line position	.03	.04					-.03	.04				
Intention to stay	-.03	.04					.14***	.04				
Number of promotions	.02	.05					.31***	.04				
Job level	.34***	.05					—	—				

	.28	.24	.02	1.76*	.28	.24	.01	1.37
Step 4: Industry								
Mining, construction, & agriculture	.01							
Manufacturing	-.09**							
Trans., communication & util.	-.03							
Wholesale and retail trade	-.04							
Finance and insurance	.08**							
Service	-.02							
Public administration	-.05							
Step 5: Person-organization fit								
A: Composite fit index	.18***	.04	.31	.27	.03	19.96***	.08**	.29
B: Vector of difference scores			.33	.29	.05	1.99***		.37
C: Vector of job perceptions			.33	.27	.05	2.27***		.36
Vector of ind. preferences			.35	.27	.02	0.82		.41
Vector of interactions			.36	.25	.01	0.41		.43
								.25
								.31
								.30
								.34
								.33
								.01
								.09
								.07
								.05
								.01
								.389***
								3.79***
								3.33***
								2.47***
								0.58

Note. N = 522.

*** p < .01, ** p < .05, * p < .10.

job satisfaction, and is consistent with Hesketh and Gardner's (1993) findings that job perceptions explained the majority of the variance accounted for by fit. For tenure, however, individual perceptions explained as much variance (4.7%) as did work perceptions (4.1%), although the interaction terms did not significantly explain additional variance.

The same general pattern emerges regarding the relation between fit and extrinsic measures of career success, although the results are not as strong (Table 4). The summed difference scores (method A) explained an additional 3% of variance in salary and an additional 1% of variance in job level attained. The vector of difference scores (method B) explained an additional 5% of variance in salary and an additional 9% of variance in job level attained. Finally, the independent effects of job perceptions, individual preferences, and their interactions (method C) explained an additional 8% of variance in salary and an additional 13% of variance in job level attained. Job perceptions appear to account for more variance than do individual preferences, and in neither case did the interactions explain a significant amount of additional variance. This suggests that person-organization fit may not exert a direct effect on these variables.

In order to depict the practical effects of fitting versus not fitting the organization, a median split was performed on the person-organization fit variable and mean differences between those who fit and those who did not were examined using *t* tests. Those who fit were significantly different from those who did not fit on three of the four dependent variables (Table 5). Respondents who fit better, on average, earned 22% higher salaries, worked at a job level 11.6% higher, and reported a 15% higher level of job satisfaction than those who fit less well than average.

Because the data are cross-sectional in nature, it is possible that in addition to person-organization fit affecting career outcomes, these outcomes also influence person-organization fit. As pointed out by James, Mulaik, and Brett (1982), sound causal inferences necessitate examining the possibility of reciprocal relations between the variables of interest. Because LISREL allows testing nested models (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1989), it is possible to examine alternative models to the hypothesized causal ordering. Specifically, if adding a causal link to the model significantly improves its fit, the original hypothesized causal ordering is rejected (Bollen & Lennox, 1991). In other words, it is possible to test whether the relation between person-organization fit and career outcomes are nonrecursive in nature. If adding a link from the dependent variables to person-organization fit does not result in a significant improvement in fit (as evidenced by the decrease in the χ^2 statistic relative to the degrees of freedom), the interpretation of the regression results as indicating the effect of fit on the dependent variables would be supported. In no case did adding a link from the dependent variables to person-organization

TABLE 5
Group Differences on Indicators of Career Success

Dependent variable	<i>N</i> = 737 Overall		<i>N</i> = 345 High fit		<i>N</i> = 392 Low fit		<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>		
Job satisfaction	4.48	1.11	4.82	0.90	4.11	1.16	4.76	.000
Years of tenure	3.91	4.90	4.05	4.94	3.68	4.32	1.10	.272
Salary	66508	43450	73632	52411	59109	24648	4.76	.000
Job level	4.21	1.77	4.48	1.80	3.97	1.66	4.03	.000

fit result in a significant improvement. Thus, the inferences based on the regression results appear to be valid.

A potential criticism of this study may be that the relations were observed due to common method variance. One means of addressing this problem is Harman's (1967) one-factor test. The one-factor test entails entering all the independent and dependent variables into a factor analysis. If a single factor emerges, or if one general factor accounts for a majority of the variance, then common method variance is judged to be a substantial problem (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). In order to test this, all variables reported in Table 2 were entered into a factor analysis. Thirteen factors emerged with eigenvalues greater than 1, no factor explained more than 9% of the variance, and a general factor did not account for a majority of the variance in the predictor and criterion variables (e.g., there was no factor which revealed a clear pattern of method loadings). This evidence suggests that a common method factor is not a viable explanation of the relations observed.

DISCUSSION

This study provided an examination of the TWA using an operationalization of the organizational environment that better captures the situational specificity intended by the theory. The hypothesized influences of fit on tenure (H1) and job satisfaction (H2) were supported. The study also provided a preliminary test of the relation between fit and extrinsic measures of career success. To avoid omitted variable problems, the relation between fit and success was examined in the context of other variables that have been previously shown to affect career success. The composite fit index suggested that extrinsic success may be influenced by the degree to which the individual fits into the organization, although when decomposed the amount of variance explained was small and not significant. Thus, consistent with the TWA, it appears that salary and job level may be indirectly affected by person-organization fit. The present findings have implications for both individuals and organizations. Each are discussed in turn.

For many years, researchers have theorized that fit between individuals and their organizations should contribute to both individual and organizational success. For example, Olian and Rynes (1984) discussed a framework for basing staffing decisions on the degree of fit between individual and organizational characteristics, and in doing so speculated that "the relative effectiveness of employees with particular attitudes, values, or personality traits is likely to vary with differences in organizational strategy" (p. 175). The presumption was that those who fit would succeed and contribute to the success of the organization while those "who are not well matched to organizational conditions (e.g., people with low tolerance for ambiguity in prospector organizations) are less likely to be

effective performers in those organizations" (Olian & Rynes, 1984, p. 178). The present results support this proposition.

In fact, the results indicate that individuals should be very concerned about the degree to which they fit in their organization. Since fit appears to lead to higher levels of both satisfaction and extrinsic success, the consequences of not fitting may be quite serious. The current results are consistent with prior research and may help explain some of the behaviors that have been associated with fit and misfit. For example, fit has been shown to relate to a number of positive work-related outcomes including higher job involvement (Blau, 1987), greater organizational commitment (Meglino et al., 1989), lower turnover (O'Reilly et al., 1991), and improved health and adaptation (Moos, 1987). These outcomes are quite understandable in the context of the current study. It makes sense that those who experience extrinsic success would be more involved in their jobs, display greater commitment, and be less likely to leave than those who do not. It also makes sense that higher levels of job satisfaction would be associated with lower turnover and more functional adaptive behaviors (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991). It would appear then, that individuals should consider fit-based career management strategies. Those who find themselves in organizations where they do not fit should consider the potentially limiting effects this might have on their career prospects.

Since fit has potentially long-term benefits, it would appear that fit-based job search strategies are preferred. Previous research (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Rynes et al., 1991) has indicated that job applicants make entry decisions on the basis of perceived fit. It seems that fit would be most beneficial early in one's organizational tenure. To the extent that fit contributes to sponsorship decisions, it would lead to more challenging early career assignments, mentoring relationships, and fast-track promotion ladders. Since early career success has been shown to affect later career success (Dreher & Bretz, 1991), the logic of basing job choice decisions on immediate fit seems compelling.

Organizations might want to consider the potential benefits from selecting on the basis of fit. Since fit appears to lead to higher levels of job satisfaction, selecting individuals who fit would presumably result in a more satisfied work force. Given the relation between satisfaction and other work attitudes and behaviors (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991; Locke, 1976), organizations might benefit in some very tangible ways from actively attracting and selecting those who fit.

This study has some limitations that should be discussed. Regarding mail surveys, although higher response rates would have been better, ours were acceptable and within the range typically observed in survey research. Because funding for this study was limited, a follow-up mailing that would likely have increased the response rate was not possible. The potential shortcomings of mail surveys may have been offset however by this tech-

nique's ability to allow us to examine the relations between fit and career outcomes in many different organizations—a consideration missing from many previous studies of fit (Edwards, 1991).

Also, the data is self-reported so it is possible that self-report variance biased the observed relations. Self-report variance is considered to be most problematic when attitudinal data is related to other attitudinal data (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Therefore, the relation between fit and satisfaction should be interpreted more cautiously than the relation between fit and extrinsic success. However, the results of the one-factor test suggested that common method variance is not a substantial limitation in the results, and the use of difference scores to operationalize fit should control for unmeasured dispositional or mood-oriented constructs that ostensibly would influence the individual's assessments of both the organization and themselves.

On the other hand, the use of difference scores introduces its own problems. Specifically, they fail to account for the independent effects of the person or the environment (Edwards, 1991). We attempted to overcome this problem by examining several operationalizations of fit on the final step in the hierarchical regression analyses. By decomposing the fit composite and examining the independent effects of the vectors of job perceptions, individual preferences, and their interactions we avoided the problematic interpretation of difference scores. Moreover, because the TWA suggests that fit is determined by congruence along a profile of dimensions, this approach also avoided the primary disadvantage of analyses at the attribute level (Hesketh & Gardner, 1993).

The absence of longitudinal data also represents a potential limitation of this study. The causal relation between fit and success might be best understood by first measuring fit and subsequently assessing success at a later point in time. However, since career success is a phenomenon that evolves over several years, this data collection strategy would be very difficult and would suffer from its own shortcomings (e.g., attrition). In the current study, an attempt was made to address the causality issue by employing nonrecursive causal techniques. While covariance structure models do not provide proof of causality, the LISREL results do suggest that the direction of causality was from fit to career success.

Finally, in regard to the survey methodology, the ordering of questions was not balanced. That is, all respondents completed the work perceptions questionnaire prior to completing the individual preferences questionnaire. Although we intentionally did not balance the administration because we believed that asking about individual preferences prior to job perceptions would cause a serious confound, it is possible that job perceptions confounded preferences. Future research should consider balancing the administration and testing for possible priming effects.

The use of a single-item measure of job satisfaction also raises the issue

of reliability. Although the Faces scale has been shown to be a reliable and valid measure (e.g., Scarpello & Campbell, 1983), unreliability should serve to attenuate the relation between fit and job satisfaction. Therefore, if the data generated by the Faces scale were unreliable, a more reliable measure would have generated even stronger relations between fit and the dependent variables. Nevertheless, future research should use faceted measures to determine if fit has differential effects on the various facets of job satisfaction.

It is also worth noting that the construct of person-organization fit is not fully understood. For example, there are literally hundreds of individual difference attributes that might be examined in pursuit of person-organization fit (a taxonomy of individual differences is proposed by Owens & Schoenfeldt, 1979). Recent research reveals four different general conceptualizations of fit based on congruence between (1) individual knowledge, skills, and abilities and job requirements, (2) individual needs and organizational reinforcement systems and structures, (3) individual value orientations and organizational culture or values, and (4) individual personality and perceived organizational image or personality. However, even the assumption of congruence may not be necessary in describing fit. Muchinsky and Monahan (1987) have proposed a distinction between complementary and supplementary fit. The former describes fit in the traditional congruency framework, while the latter describes a condition in which the person who "fits" is different on key attributes and therefore fills an existing void. Unfortunately, there is little empirical basis for choosing among these orientations. While the current study incorporated many of these conceptualizations in the operationalization of fit, a common understanding of the construct would improve the quality of this line of inquiry and contribute to our understanding of the antecedents and consequences of person-organization fit.

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