Person–Organization Fit, Job Choice Decisions, and Organizational Entry

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To investigate job seekers' and new employees' subjective person–organization (P-O) fit perceptions, we studied 96 active job seekers across three time periods, from their initial job search activity to their intended turnover from the jobs they accepted. Hypotheses were motivated by P-O fit, job choice, and organizational entry research and centered around two questions: What are the determinants of job seekers' and new employees' P-O fit perceptions, and how important are P-O fit perceptions in job choice decisions and work attitudes relative to job attributes? Results indicated that job seekers' P-O fit perceptions are predicted by the congruence between their values and their perceptions of recruiting organizations' values but not by their demographic similarity with organizational representatives. Results also suggested that P-O fit perceptions predict both job choice intentions and work attitudes, even after controlling for the attractiveness of job attributes. Finally, results suggested that job seekers can manage their future work attitudes by weighing P-O fit in their job choice decisions. © 1996 Academic Press, Inc.

People select environments that fulfill their needs, a process resulting in person–environment fit (Diener, Larson, & Emmons, 1984; Pervin, 1989). Beginning with Tom (1971), self-selection also has been supported in the context of organizational choice; job seekers' prefer organizations that have the same "personality" as they do. In fact, the proposition that individuals make

job choice decisions based on person–organization (P-O) fit comprises the attraction component of Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model.

Empirical evidence supports the proposition that job seekers are affected by congruence between their personalities and organizations' attributes (Bretz, Ash, & Dreher, 1989; Burke & Deszca, 1982; Cable & Judge, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Turban & Keon, 1993). One clear strength of this research literature is its experimental approach (e.g., policy capturing) where job seekers rate the attractiveness of hypothetical organizations, permitting researchers to make strong causal inferences that P-O fit can affect job choice decisions. As Judge and Bretz (1992) suggested, however, research must move beyond demonstrating that P-O fit *can* affect job choice decisions and begin examining how job seekers acquire and utilize fit perceptions during actual organizational entry processes. Accordingly, the present paper examines two critical but essentially unaddressed questions concerning P-O fit: What are the determinants of job seekers' and new employees' P-O fit perceptions, and how important are P-O fit perceptions in the context of job choice decisions and work attitudes relative to job and organizational factors?

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Job Seekers' P-O Fit Perceptions

Job seekers prefer organizations where their personal characteristics are aligned with organizational attributes (Cable & Judge, 1994; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Judge & Bretz, 1992). An implicit assumption of this research is that job seekers develop perceptions concerning their degree of fit with organizations. However, almost no research has examined job seekers' subjective P-O fit perceptions or the determinants of those

perceptions (Rynes *et al.,* 1991). In addition to the basic theoretical importance of the question, the implications of how applicants obtain P-O fit impressions are direct for recruiting organizations—if desired applicants consistently self-select out of an organization's hiring process based on a perceived lack of fit, it is critical to know the source and accuracy of those perceptions. Although a number of person and organization characteristics may affect job seekers' P-O fit perceptions (e.g., goal congruence, personality congruence), the present study focuses on the types of congruence which have received the most attention in recent P-O fit research: organizational values and relational demography.

Values congruence. An important aspect of both individuals and organizations that can be compared directly and meaningfully is values (Barley, Meyer, & Gash, 1988; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991; Schein, 1990). Values are enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state is preferable to its opposite, thereby guiding individuals' attitudes, judgments, and behaviors (Chatman, 1989, 1991; Rokeach, 1973).

Theoretically, the attraction component of Schneider's (1987) ASA model suggests that job seekers base their P-O fit perceptions on organizations' values, and that they make job choice decisions based on these perceptions. Locke (1976) hypothesized that the degree to which a work environment allows value attainment affects job satisfaction. Thus, perceived values congruence between job seekers and organizations should indirectly influence organizational attractiveness, a relationship demonstrated empirically by Judge and Bretz (1992) in their study of hypothetical organizations. These researchers suggested that future research should examine the effects of value congruence in evaluations of actual organizations, and should determine whether values congruence affects job seekers' subjective fit perceptions.

H1a. The congruence between job seekers' perceptions of an organization's values and their perceptions of their own values positively affects their perceived person–organization fit with that organization.

Demographic similarity. A second important component of organizational fit is demographic similarity (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Jackson, Brett, Sessa, Cooper, Julin, & Peyronnin, 1991; Rynes *et al.,* 1991). Individuals who are demographically similar to other organizational members (in terms of age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.) appear to enjoy important benefits that less similar individuals are less likely to receive (Pfeffer, 1983). Theoretically, individuals with similar attributes and experiences benefit from improved com-

munication and liking, which in turn affect job attitudes and organizational outcomes (Mael, 1991; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1989). Empirical research has demonstrated that demographic similarity affects turnover (Jackson *et al.,* 1991; O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989), performance ratings (Judge & Ferris, 1993), and role ambiguity (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989).

Jackson *et al.* (1991) integrated Pfeffer's (1983) organizational demography model and Schneider's (1987) ASA model. Specifically, Jackson *et al.* proposed that "demographic attributes are powerful determinants of both perceptions of similarity and perceptions of person–organization fit" (p. 676) and found support for the selection and attrition components of the ASA model. Furthermore, Jackson *et al.* suggested that job seekers should perceive greater P-O fit with organizations when they interact with demographically similar organizational representatives. Organizational recruiters' demographic characteristics may be important in job choice decisions because applicants have little opportunity to learn about organizations prior to working in them and must make inferences based on overt indicators (Rynes & Miller, 1983; Schwab *et al.,* 1987). Recruiter characteristics transmit initial signals which job seekers use to make judgments about organizations (Powell, 1991; Rynes, Heneman, & Schwab, 1980; Rynes & Miller, 1983; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). Inferences about organizations that are based on recruiters are valid to the extent that organizations send recruiters who are representative of the successful and dominant organizational cohort (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Rynes *et al.,* 1991).

Some indirect evidence exists that interviewer–applicant demographic similarity may affect applicants' impressions' of organizations (Liden & Parsons, 1986; Rynes *et al.,* 1991; Taylor & Bergmann, 1987). However, this research only considers race and gender while relational demography is based on similarity in experiences stemming from many demographic attributes including age, gender, race, educational level and curriculum, and social economic status (Jackson *et al.,* 1991; Pfeffer, 1983; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Tsui *et al.,* 1989). Furthermore, no research has examined the effects of relational demography on P-O fit perceptions as proposed by Jackson *et al.* (1991). Thus, based on past theory and research,

H1b. Demographic similarity between job seekers and organizational recruiters positively affects job seekers' perceived person–organization fit.

Perceived P-O Fit and Job Choice Decisions

As discussed above, the internal validity of experimental research on job choice decisions and P-O fit is

persuasive (Bretz, Ash, & Dreher, 1989; Cable & Judge, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Turban & Keon, 1993). However, a potential drawback of these designs is generalizability, because experimental designs generally cannot include many of the factors known to be relevant to job choice decisions, and may offer more information to respondents than is possible in actual job choice contexts (Cable & Judge, 1994; Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Miller, 1983). The only published research to date examining actual companies when investigating the effect of P-O fit on organizational attractiveness was conducted by Tom (1971).

Using an adjective check list to describe job seekers and organizations, Tom (1971) found that individuals described themselves as more similar to their most preferred organization than their least preferred organization. However, many of Tom's (1971) respondents were not actually seeking jobs with the organizations they rated, which limits the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, Tom's (1971) analysis consisted of a *t* test comparing perceptions of two extreme organizations (respondents' most- versus least-preferred organizations) without controlling for other components of job choice decisions, further limiting our understanding of P-O fit perceptions and job choice decisions. To extend the generalizability of past job choice research, we hypothesize that controlling for job attributes and perceived person–job fit,

> *H2.* Applicants' perceptions of person–organization fit will affect their job choice intentions.

Employees' P-O Fit Perceptions

In addition to job search and choice, the process of organizational entry includes the initial work experiences of new employees (Vandenberg & Self, 1993; Wanous, 1980). Thus, it is important to continue examining the antecedents and consequences of P-O fit perceptions after job seekers have entered organizations. Research indicates that values congruence between organizations and employees results in a number of positive work outcomes (Bretz & Judge, 1993; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991), even after controlling for person–job fit (Chatman, 1991). Although the relationship between values congruence and work outcomes certainly is important, no past research has examined employees' subjective *perceptions* of P-O fit. An important development of existing P-O fit research is to examine the P-O fit construct as it is interpreted by employees and to investigate the determinants and outcomes of employees' subjective P-O fit perceptions.

Determinants of P-O fit perceptions.   Anecdotal evidence suggests that many employees do not sense a

"fit" with their organizations; however, what is meant by fit often is ambiguous (Bretz, Rynes, & Gerhart, 1993). Although research has examined the determinants of employees' congruence with their occupation (e.g., Holland, 1985), no empirical research to date has investigated the determinants of employees' perceptions of fit with their organizations. Theory suggests that, similar to the predictors of job seekers' P-O fit perceptions described above, perceived values congruence between employees and organizations should affect employees' P-O fit perceptions (Chatman, 1989; Schneider, 1987).

In addition to examining whether values congruence affects employees' P-O fit perceptions, it also is important to determine *when* perceived congruence is established. In an organizational entry context, it is important to determine whether a job seekers' values interact with an organization's culture to predict their subsequent P-O fit perceptions after joining that organization. However, most P-O fit research has calculated values congruence using data collected *after* employees started working in their organizations, leaving the determinants of values congruence undefined (e.g., Bretz & Judge, 1993; Chatman, 1991; Downey, Hellriegel, & Slocum, 1975; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991). For example, employees may experience P-O fit with an organization not because they chose an organization where they "fit" during job search, but because subsequent organizational socialization practices affected their values, their perceived fit, or both (Chatman, 1991; Mortimer & Lorence, 1979). However, theory suggests that job seekers' pre-entry values should predict their post-entry perceptions of fit (Wanous, 1980). Thus, based on past theory,

> *H3a.* Perceived values congruence between job seekers and their subsequently chosen organizations positively affect their perceptions of person–organization fit as employees.

Implicit in much P-O fit research is the assumption that applicants actively can establish P-O fit, and thus their future job satisfaction, through self-selection based on fit (e.g., Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Schneider, 1987; Wanous, 1980). Currently, vocational psychologists counsel job seekers to enter occupations that match their interests (e.g., Holland, 1985), and to accept jobs that utilize the skills that they possess (e.g., Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). If individuals also can increase their future satisfaction by choosing organizations with cultures that match their values, vocational counseling could be broadened to advise job seekers to consider the values of recruiting organizations in their career decisions. Although no empirical research has examined whether job seekers can influence their subsequent P-O fit, we hypothesize that employees placing

more emphasis on P-O fit in their job choice decisions will experience greater P-O fit than those considering P-O fit less in their job search (Kristof, 1996). Presumably, job seekers who place more emphasis on P-O fit are more likely to solicit information about organizations' values and use this information to select in to or out of organizations based on their fit with those values (Schneider, 1987; Wanous, 1980).

H3b. Job seekers placing more emphasis on P-O fit in their job choice decisions will experience greater P-O fit after organizational entry than job seekers placing less emphasis on fit.

Outcomes of employees' P-O fit perceptions. Employees sharing the values of their organizations are more committed to their organizations, are more satisfied with their jobs, and are less likely to quit (Bretz & Judge, 1993; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991). Because indexes of "fit" have been calculated to date without considering employees' *subjective* impressions of P-O fit, however, it is unclear whether employees' P-O fit perceptions predict work outcomes. Past conceptualizations of fit assume that congruence between employees (in terms of values, demographics, or experiences) affects job attitudes due to stronger interpersonal relationships (e.g., Byrne, 1969; Mael, 1991; Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). These conceptualizations permit values congruence to affect work outcomes implicitly (e.g., through improved communication with co-workers), without necessitating employees' explicit awareness that they share the values of their organization and its members (e.g., Jackson *et al.,* 1991). Schneider's (1987) ASA approach, conversely, suggests that employees are cognizant of their values congruence with their organizations, and can be expected to leave organizations where they perceive a mismatch (also see Wanous, 1980). Accordingly, an important expansion of P-O fit research is to examine whether employees' organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions are a function of their explicit P-O fit perceptions.

Finally, when examining organizational entry, an employee's willingness to recommend their organization as a good place to work is an important variable to consider. Research indicates that a large percentage of new job applicants come from acquaintances of existing employees, and that referred applicants often demonstrate the best performance and lowest turnover after being hired (e.g., Wanous & Colella, 1989; Ullman, 1966). Recommendations of organizations appear especially critical in the context of a job placement agency such as the career office of a university, where organizations' reputations may be based on how they are described by existing or former employees (e.g.,

alumni may be contacted about their current organizations). Furthermore, employees hired for shorter periods, such as summer interns, return to career offices and exchange information with other job seekers. The following hypotheses follow from the above discussion:

H4. Employees perceiving more P-O fit with their organization will (a) experience greater organizational commitment, (b) experience greater job satisfaction, (c) report lower intentions to quit, and (d) be more likely to recommend their organization as a good place to work than employees who perceive less P-O fit with their organization.

Control Variables

Job seekers' P-O fit perceptions. When predicting job seekers' subjective fit perceptions we controlled for type of position (full-time versus intern) because these groups might have different perceptions of P-O fit. Also, consistent with Chatman (1991), employees' demographic attributes (sex, race, and age) were included to control for the possibility that some groups were more likely to perceive that they fit.

P-O fit and job choice decisions. Because H2 concerned the effects of P-O fit on job choice intentions, relevant control variables were used to provide better estimates of the true effect of fit perceptions. As recommended by Chatman (1991) and Rynes and Gerhart (1990), applicants' perceptions of how well their skills matched the job's requirements were controlled because some overlap is believed to exist between P-O fit and person–job fit. Also, because job choice intentions are influenced by job attributes (e.g., pay, location, etc.), these variables were controlled in the analysis (Jurgensen, 1978).

Relevant applicant characteristics also taken into account. Consistent with past research (Cable & Judge, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1992), individuals' grade-point averages and levels of work experience were expected to negatively influence the probability of accepting a job and were controlled for in the analysis. Because job seekers might be more attracted to any job in a tight labor market, the perceived level of job opportunities also was included as a control variable. Consistent with Cable and Judge (1994), demographic characteristics (e.g., race, gender) were instituted as controls. Because individuals seeking different types of positions (full-time versus summer internship) might face somewhat different labor markets, a dummy variable representing job type was created and included in the prediction of job choice decisions.

Employees' P-O fit perceptions. When predicting employees' P-O fit perceptions, their perceived job opportunities were included because job seekers with

more job options presumably can chose better fitting organizations (Chatman, 1991, 1989). Also, consistent with Chatman (1991) and O'Reilly *et al.* (1991), employees' demographic attributes were included to control for the possibility that some groups are more likely to perceive that they fit.

Outcomes of employees' P-O fit perceptions. To provide better estimates of the effects of perceived P-O fit on work attitudes, applicants' perceptions of how well their skills matched the job's requirements were controlled (Chatman, 1991; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Past research indicates that work attitudes also are related to employees' attitudes towards their pay, supervisor, coworkers, and the image of their organization (e.g., Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Lee & Mowday, 1987; Locke, 1976). Because the effects of P-O fit on work attitudes have not been established relative to job attributes, it appears to be an important extension of past research to control for job attribute attractiveness when examining P-O fit. Finally, to control for the possibility that full-time and internship employees had different work attitudes, type of position was taken into account.

METHOD

Overview of Data Collection

Data on job seekers and recruiting organizations were collected in three stages from multiple sources, which are described next.

Time 1. During the spring of 1994, 35 organizations recruited for full-time and paid internship positions in the industrial relations school of a large northeastern university. Recruiters were contacted and asked to participate in the study, and 20 recruiters from 18 organizations (51% response rate) reported their demographics in response to a survey.

An average 14 applicants interviewed with each organization (total number of interviews was 506), and the career office provided a confidential list of each organization's interviewing schedule. Each job seeker received a survey immediately following their interview about that organization. Respondents reported the attractiveness of each job's attributes (e.g., location, salary), their perceived fit with the company and the job, and their perceptions of the company's values. Confidentiality of individuals' responses was assured, and participation was voluntary. Three-hundred twenty surveys were returned. Available data on nonrespondents (degree, gender, grade-point average, work experience) were collected from applicants' resumes, which were on file for recruiters in the career office, and no significant differences were found between respondents and nonrespondents on these variables.

Respondents' ages ranged from 19 to 45 years with an average of 23.4 years. Fifty-six percent of respondents were women, and 70% were Caucasian. Degree-related work experience ranged from 0 to 19 years, with an average of 1.5 years. Grade-point averages ranged from 2.3 to 4.0, with a mean of 3.5. Fifty-one percent of the job seekers were undergraduates, 59% were interviewing for internship positions, and 41% were seeking full-time positions. T tests revealed that full-time and intern employees differed on only two variables: Intern job seekers rated organizations' images higher ($t = 2.13$, $p < .03$) and also rated their fit with recruiting organizations higher ($t = 2.16$, $p < .03$) than full-time job seekers. Although type of position was entered as a control variable in all analyses, longitudinal data indicated that the level of work did not vary between position type: The annualized salaries for full-time and internship positions were $36,912 and $36,625, respectively ($t = .01$, *ns*).

Time 2. After completing the spring recruiting cycle, the job seekers (described above) completed a survey assessing their individual differences (e.g., demographics, values, grade-point averages), the importance of P-O fit in their job search and choice decisions, and their final job choice decision. Of the entire group of 129 interviewing job seekers, 96 completed both the survey about themselves and at least one survey about a recruiting organization (e.g., both Time 1 and Time 2), resulting in a response rate of 75%.

Because some of these data were used in conjunction with data collected during Time 1, the causal relationships between the constructs are suspect (e.g., it is possible that the job search process affected people's values rather than their values affecting their job search). However, the applicant characteristics in question are believed to be stable across time (e.g., biographical information, values, grade-point average, work experience), such that similar responses would have been given during the first stage of data collection. To verify this assertion, applicants' resumes were used to confirm reported grade-point averages and years of work experience. The mean correlation coefficient between applicants' self-reports and their resumes was .97, and the average difference between the two sources were 3 months of relevant work experience and .01 grade-point average. These data suggest that applicants' self-reported characteristics were stable and accurate, at least in terms of these variables.

Time 3. The former job seekers (described above) were mailed a final survey approximately 6 months

after the Time 2 survey. Respondents to this survey had been working for an average 5.25 months ($SD = 1.25$) in their organizations, and all internships had been completed. The survey assessed respondents' perceived fit with their organization and job, and their job attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction). The former job seekers also reported the attractiveness of their jobs' attributes (e.g., location, salary, etc.), and their perceptions of their companies' values. Those individuals that worked in summer internship positions reported turnover intentions on a slightly different format than full-time employees (differences are described in the measures descriptions).

Sixty-eight of the respondents who completed the Time 2 survey also completed this survey. Six nonrespondents reported that they were not working (e.g., pursuing further education). All relevant data on individuals not responding to this survey (e.g., age, gender, work experience, perceived job opportunities, attraction to chosen organization, P-O fit with chosen organization, importance of P-O fit in job choice, etc.) were compared to respondents, and no significant differences were found between the two groups.

Measures

Organizations' values. The Organizational Culture Profile (OCP; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991) was used in the present study because it was developed expressly to assess P-O fit (O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991) and has been advocated as a method to investigate P-O fit in organizational entry contexts (Chatman, 1989, 1991). Consistent with past research, job seekers reported their perceptions of recruiting organizations' cultures by sorting values into nine categories ranging from "most characteristic of this organization" to "least characteristic of this organization" during the Time 1 data collection. Employees (formerly job seekers) described their organizations' values with the same scale (Time 3 data collection).

In the present study, the number of items in the original OCP was reduced from 54 to 40. A pilot study with job seekers suggested that several of the items were too similar for the task of describing organizations after an initial interview (e.g., tolerant and adaptable). To reduce the number of items, 10 organizational researchers were given the OCP and were asked to make the scale more manageable by grouping similar values together but retaining each value that appeared to be truly unique. Each respondent removed at least 15 items, and only the values that respondents unanimously agreed were very similar were removed. The 40 values used in the reduced OCP appear in the Appendix.

Applicants' values. The reduced OCP (described above) also was used to assess applicants' values. During the Time 2 data collection, applicants sorted the values into nine categories ranging from "most characteristic" to "least characteristic" according to the question "How characteristic is this attribute of me?"

Perceived person–organization fit. For the Time 1 surveys, job seekers' subjective perceptions of the fit between their values and an organization's values was measured with the question, "To what degree do you feel your values 'match' or fit this organization and the current employees in this organization?" Responses were anchored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *completely.* Although one-item measures are not inherently deficient (Judge & Ferris, 1993; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983), their reliability is questionable. To verify and extend the measurement validity of the one-item P-O fit scale, two additional items were added in the Time 3 data collection, when employees' P-O fit perceptions were assessed ("My values match those of current employees in organization," and "Do you think the values and 'personality' of this organization reflect your own values and personality?"). The resulting internal consistency estimate for the three-item scale was .87. Furthermore, post-hoc analyses indicated that the single-item measure (as used in the Time 1 data collection) predicted work outcomes identically to the three-item measure.

Perceived person–job fit. The Time 1 surveys assessed job seekers' perceptions of how well their abilities met a job's requirements with the question, "To what degree do you believe your skills and abilities 'match' those required by the job?" Responses were anchored on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *completely.* Again, we verified the measurement validity of the one-item scale during the Time 3 data collection by adding two additional questions when assessing employees' person–job fit perceptions ("To what degree is your job performance hurt by a lack of expertise on the job?" and "To what degree do you think you possess the skills and abilities to perform this job?"). The internal consistency estimate for the 3-item scale was .68, and post-hoc analyses again revealed that the single-item measure (as used in the Time 1 data collection) predicted work outcomes almost identically to the three-item measure.

Attractiveness of job attributes. The specific job attributes examined in this study were derived from past research (e.g., Jurgensen, 1978; Locke, 1976; Turban, Eyring, & Campion, 1993), and included location, promotion opportunity, pay level, benefits, company image, co-workers, security, supervisor, and type of work.

Respondents rated each of these attributes independently for each job according to the statement "Please evaluate the aspects of this job to the best of your knowledge" on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *very unfavorable* to 5 = *extremely favorable.* Respondents reported the attractiveness of these job attributes both for recruiting organizations when they were seeking jobs (Time 1 data collection) and for the organizations that they eventually joined (Time 3).

Consistent with past research (e.g., Locke, 1976; Powell, 1984), many of the job attributes were significantly correlated (pay and benefits, supervisor and peers, etc.). Following the methodology recommended and employed by Powell (1984), the job attributes were analyzed using principal components (factors were extracted when eigenvalues were greater than 1). Three interpretable factors emerged: rewards (comprising pay, benefits, and promotions), image (comprising image, supervisor, peers, and type of work), and security (comprising job security and location). Almost identical factor structures were found across two survey contexts (reported by job seekers about recruiting organizations and by employees about their jobs), accounting for 66% and 58% of the respective variances. Accordingly, these three standardized factor scores ($M = 0$, $SD = 1$) are used to control for job attribute attractiveness throughout the study.

Importance of P-O fit in job choice. The importance of P-O fit in individuals' job choice decisions was assessed during the Time 2 data collection with two items. First, job seekers responded to the question "In general (with no specific organization in mind), when you evaluate a job, how important is fit (values, personality, interests, and goals match those of current employees in the organization)." Responses were to a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 = *completely unimportant* to 5 = *extremely important.* Job seekers also responded to the question "To what degree is your job search based upon the 'match' or interpersonal fit between your values, personality, and goals and those of the current employees in the organization?" Responses were to a 5-point scale that ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *completely.* The internal consistency estimate of this 2-item scale was .91.

Job choice intentions. Respondents' job choice intentions were assessed during the Time 1 data collection with the statement "Please rate the likelihood that you would accept a job offer from this organization, if it were offered." Responses ranged from 1 = *very unlikely* to 5 = *very likely.*

Demographic characteristics. Applicants' and recruiters' demographic characteristics were assessed with specific survey items. Questions included age, gender, race, number of children, socioeconomic status, place of undergraduate education, and undergraduate major. Consistent with past research (e.g., Cornfield, 1991), socioeconomic status was assessed by forming a factor score from three items: Father's occupational status, and father's and mother's educational level (ranging from 1 = *less than high school* to 6 = *received a Ph.D.*). Occupation status was assessed with the Nam–Powers' 1980 census scores, which has demonstrated favorable reliability and validity in past research (see Miller, 1991). In the present study, each sample resulted in a single factor that explained an average 72.5% of the variance when subjected to a principal components factor analysis. The three items resulted in a reliability estimate of .81 and .80 for the applicant and the interviewer samples, respectively.

Perceived job opportunities. During the Time 2 survey, job seekers estimated their job opportunities according to the statement "Please give your best estimate of your employment opportunities in your relevant job market at the present time." Responses were to a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = *no alternatives* to 5 = *many alternatives.*

Organizational commitment. During the Time 3 data collection, commitment was measured with O'Reilly and Chatman's (1986) 12-item scale (e.g., "I feel a sense of 'ownership' for this organization rather than being just an employee"), which has demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity in past research (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991). The internal consistency estimate of this scale was .85.

Job satisfaction. As recommended and used in past research (e.g., Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995), general or overall job satisfaction was measured with three items during the Time 3 data collection. These measures included the Gallup Poll measure of job satisfaction, the non-graphic version of the G. M. Faces scale (Scarpello & Campbell, 1983), and an adapted version of the Fordyce Percent Time Satisfied Item (Diener, 1984). The internal consistency estimate of this standardized 3-item scale was .86. Because responses were to different scale formats, we standardized the items before combining them.

Intent to leave. Intentions to leave an organization were measured during the Time 3 data collection with the 4-item scale described by O'Reilly *et al.* (1991) (e.g., "How long do you intend to remain with this organization?"). Because many job seekers accepted summer internship positions, these survey items were adapted slightly for these respondents (e.g., "Assuming that

your summer internship was a full-time job, how long would you intend to remain with this organization?"). The internal consistency estimate of this 4-item scale was .74. Because responses were to different scale formats, we standardized the items before combining them.

Willingness to recommend organization.   During the Time 3 data collection, employees' willingness to recommend their organization to others was assessed with the questions, "How likely would you be to recommend your organization to your friends as a good place to work?" and "Would you tell your friends *NOT* to work for your organization?" (reverse scored). The internal consistency estimate of this two-item scale was .90.

Computation of congruence scores.   Several hypotheses tests required the calculation of perceived values congruence scores (e.g., H1 and H3a). Consistent with the method recommended and used in past research (Chatman, 1989, 1991; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991), perceived values congruence scores were calculated by correlating two values profiles assessed with the OCP. Thus, to examine the effect of perceived values congruence on job seekers' subjective P-O fit perceptions, it was necessary to calculate fit scores based on (1) applicants' perceptions of organizations' values after interviewing with them and (2) applicants' perceptions of their own values. To mitigate potential common-method variance concerns (e.g., that applicants would report an organization's values as similar to their own if they were attracted to it), perceived value congruence scores were computed with data collected 5 months apart (applicants' perceptions of organizations during the Time 1 and their self-reported values at Time 2). Similarly, when predicting employees' subjective P-O fit perceptions with perceived values congruence, we tried to mitigate concerns about priming and common-method variance by computing values congruence scores with data collected at different times: Employees' perceptions of their organizations (reported during the Time 3 data collection) were correlated with their self-reported values measured 6 months earlier (Time 2).

It also was necessary to compute scores representing the demographic similarity between job seekers and interviewers to test whether relational demography affected P-O fit perceptions (H1b). Following the method recommended and employed by Jackson *et al.* (1991) and described in Wagner, Pfeffer, and O'Reilly (1984), demographic congruence scores were obtained by calculating the Euclidean distance between applicants' and interviewers' demographic profiles. Specifically, demographic similarity scores were created by summing the squared, standardized differences between individuals'

gender, race, age, number of children, undergraduate education (major and university), and socioeconomic status.

RESULTS

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among all the job choice variables and the post-organizational entry variables appear in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. The moderate correlation between P-O fit and person–job fit indicate that they are related but distinct constructs, supporting Rynes and Gerhart (1990) and Chatman (1991). The correlations between the work attitude variables (e.g., organizational commitment, turnover intentions, etc.) also are consistent with past research (e.g., Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991).

Job Seekers' P-O Fit Perceptions

Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the predictors of job seekers' P-O fit perceptions, and these results appear in Table 3. H1a, that perceived values congruence between applicants and organizations is predictive of their P-O fit perceptions, was supported. Contrary to H1b, demographic similarity between applicants and organizational representatives had little effect on applicants' P-O fit perceptions.

Perceived P-O Fit and Job Choice Intentions

Due to the data collection approach in this study, each applicant was asked to complete a separate survey following each interview (see overview of data collection, Time 1). To control for the effects of applicant characteristics (e.g., gender, work experience) on job choice decisions, these variables (collected at Time 2) were appended to data provided on the Time 1 surveys (e.g., job choice intentions). This method is appropriate statistically and conceptually because each survey represents an independent observation, and because stable applicant characteristics may influence judgments about *each* organization (Cable & Judge, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1992). Because applicant characteristics have been duplicated, however, there may be a positive correlation between error terms which violates assumptions of regression analysis (Greene, 1993). In the present study, the Durbin–Watson statistic (*d*) confirmed the null hypothesis of no autocorrelation ($d = 1.84$, *ns*), indicating that the disturbances were not significantly correlated ($r = .08$, *ns*), and that ordinary least squares regression was appropriate.

Table 4 provides the regression results from the job choice intention analysis. Job seekers' P-O fit perceptions significantly predicted their job choice intentions,

TABLE 1
Correlations between Job Choice Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Job choice intention	3.72	1.14	—														
2. Job choice decision	0.44	0.50	.48	—													
3. Subjective P-O fit judgement	3.52	0.71	.54	.32	—												
4. Perceived values congruence (OCP)	0.13	0.24	.23	.12	.33	—											
5. Demographic similarity with interviewer	2.14	1.93	.01	−.16	.06	.05	—										
6. Subjective person–job fit judgement	3.68	0.62	.24	−.18	.35	.15	.01	—									
7. Organizational security perceptions	0.00	1.00	.41	.24	.32	.08	.01	.04	—								
8. Organizational rewards perceptions	0.00	1.00	.16	.00	.15	.17	.22	.11	.00	—							
9. Organizational image perceptions	0.00	1.00	.39	.23	.49	.25	.10	.20	.00	.00	—						
10. Grade-point average	3.50	0.37	.01	−.31	−.02	.05	.00	.01	−.10	.03	.11	—					
11. Work experience	1.67	2.92	−.06	−.16	−.06	−.13	.00	.05	−.12	−.11	−.07	.00	—				
12. Perceived job opportunities	4.06	0.84	−.13	−.37	−.01	.00	−.09	.21	−.06	−.01	−.03	.07	.22	—			
13. Applicant gender (male = 1)	0.44	0.50	−.02	.23	−.05	.02	−.02	.00	.02	.01	−.09	.04	.02	−.04	—		
14. Applicant race (white = 1)	0.67	0.47	−.01	−.03	.02	.02	−.27	.06	.00	−.17	.13	.35	.11	.15	.04	—	
15. Full-time position	0.41	0.49	−.11	−.27	−.14	−.03	−.03	.05	−.05	−.04	−.15	−.28	−.04	−.04	.05	−.07	—

Note. N = 273; correlations greater than .13 are significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). For job choice decision, N = 41.

supporting H2. As expected, each of the factors representing the attractiveness of the job attributes positively and significantly predicted applicants' job choice intentions. Consistent with past research, individuals perceiving more job opportunities were less willing to accept a job. Job seekers' perceptions of how well their skills matched the duties of the job (perceived person–job fit) had little effect on their job choice intentions.

Although H2 concerned the effects of perceived P-O fit on job choice decisions, we predicted job seekers' *intentions* rather than actual job choice decisions. Reports of intended job choices may be quite different from actual choices, and little research has examined how job preferences are converted into choices (Rynes, 1991; Rynes *et al.,* 1983). Unfortunately, data on actual job choice decisions were limited due to the infrequency of job offers. The timing of collecting perceptual data (e.g., organizational values) about actual job choice decisions also is difficult because job seekers' evaluations of organizations may shift after receiving offers and accepting positions or after being rejected (Lawler, Kuleck, Rhode, & Scorensen, 1975).

The data collection approach used in the present study permitted a small-sample examination of the relationships between intentions and actual job choice decisions. In forty-one cases, the following three criteria were met: (1) job seekers reported their perceptions of organizations *prior* to receiving job offers or rejections, (2) job seekers received job offers from those rated organizations, and (3) data were available on job acceptance or rejection decisions of those organizations. Consistent with past research (Kraus, 1995), the relationship between intentions and behaviors was relatively strong and significant ($r = .48$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, as indicated in Table 1, the variables used to predict job choice intentions behaved similarly in the context of actual job choice decisions. Job seekers' perceived P-O fit with organizations, measured prior to receiving job offers, shared the strongest relationship with actual job choice decisions ($r = .32$, $p < .02$). These findings suggest that results from the job choice intentions analysis may generalize to actual choices about jobs.

Employees' P-O Fit Perceptions

The predictors of employees' P-O fit perceptions were tested using ordinary least squares regression and the results appear in Table 5. H3a, that perceived values congruence between job seekers and their subsequently chosen organizations positively affect their perceptions of P-O fit as employees, was supported. H3b, that job seekers who place greater emphasis on P-O fit in their job choice decisions experience greater P-O fit after or-

TABLE 2

Correlations between Post-organizational Entry Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Turnover Intentions	0.00	3.33	—												
2. Job satisfaction	0.00	2.65	-.65	—											
3. Willingness to recommend organization	10.91	2.91	-.60	.76	—										
4. Organizational commitment	51.50	10.43	-.48	.62	.64	—									
5. Perceived values congruence (OCP)	0.21	0.20	-.19	.23	.25	.37	—								
6. Subjective P-O fit judgment	10.35	2.69	-.63	.68	.69	.72	.42	—							
7. Subjective person–job fit judgment	8.13	2.34	-.35	.32	.26	.08	-.05	.16	—						
8. Organizational security perceptions	0.00	1.00	-.17	.13	.23	.20	-.03	.07	-.06	—					
9. Organizational rewards perceptions	0.00	1.00	-.25	.18	.26	-.01	.08	.08	.45	.00	—				
10. Organizational image perceptions	0.00	1.00	-.55	.77	.68	.57	.27	.65	.12	.00	.00	—			
11. Full-time position	0.45	0.50	.09	-.15	-.11	-.23	-.27	-.12	-.15	.13	-.02	-.17	—		
12. Perceived job opportunities	3.97	0.83	-.20	.06	.03	-.08	-.13	-.06	.26	-.18	.32	-.08	-.08	—	
13. Importance of P-O fit	7.45	1.39	.00	-.07	.03	.19	-.01	.21	-.28	-.17	-.04	.08	.08	-.01	—

Note. N = 65; correlations greater than .24 are significant at the .05 level (two-tailed).

TABLE 3

Regression Estimates Predicting Job Seekers' Subjective Person–Organization Fit Perceptions

Variable	β	$SE\,(\beta)$	p Value
Congruence between job seekers' values and their perceptions of organizations' values	.26	.07	.00**
Demographic similarity between job seekers and interviewers	.05	.07	.42
Job seeker race	.02	.07	.75
Job seeker sex	−.08	.07	.26
Job seeker age	−.05	.07	.44
Full-time position	−.13	.07	.06
R^2	.11		.00**
Ajusted R^2	.08		

Note. $n = 205$.
** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

ganizational entry than job seekers who place less emphasis on P-O fit, also was supported. Results also indicated that men reported more fit with their organizations than women, although this difference was not quite significant.

Outcomes of Employees' P-O Fit Perceptions

Table 6 depicts the results of the analyses concerning the relationships between employees' P-O fit perceptions and their work attitudes, which were tested with ordinary least-squares regression. H4a–4d were supported, indicating that employees' perceived P-O fit perceptions significantly predict their organizational commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and willingness to recommend their organization to others. Person–job fit perceptions also positively and significantly predicted employees' job satisfaction and turnover intentions but not their organizational commitment or willingness to recommend their organizations. As expected, several of the job attribute factor scores positively and significantly predicted employees' work attitudes.

Mediation Analysis

Although not explicit in the hypotheses, the model articulated in the present paper suggests that job seekers' and employees' subjective P-O fit perceptions mediate the effect of perceived values congruence on job choice intentions and work attitudes. Thus, perceived values congruence may affect organizational entry, but only as it is subjectively interpreted as P-O fit. To test this possibility, we conducted a mediation analysis as recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986). Specifically, we calculated the direct, indirect, and total effects of

TABLE 4

Regression Estimates Predicting Job Choice Intentions

Variable	β	SE (β)	p Value
Person–organization fit perceptions	.20	.07	.00**
Person–job fit perceptions	.07	.06	.22
Organizational rewards perceptions	.13	.05	.02*
Organizational image perceptions	.20	.06	.00**
Organizational security perceptions	.30	.05	.00**
Grade-point average	.03	.06	.60
Work experience	.06	.05	.24
Perceived job opportunities	−.12	.05	.03*
Applicant race (White = 1)	−.02	.06	.72
Applicant gender (Male = 1)	−.01	.05	.82
Full-time position	−.02	.05	.67
R^2	.44		.00**
Adjusted R^2	.40		

Note. n = 234.

 * p < .05, two-tailed.

** p < .01, two-tailed.

perceived values congruence on job choice intentions and each work attitude. The proportion of the influence that was mediated was calculated by dividing the indirect effect by the total effect. As Table 7 indicates, much of the effect of perceived values congruence on the outcomes was mediated through job seekers' and employees' subjective impressions of P-O fit (M = 70% mediation). In fact, only when examining employees' turnover intentions was perceived values congruence not significantly mediated through subjective P-O fit perceptions.

DISCUSSION

Results from this study suggested that job seekers' subjective P-O fit perceptions emanate from the congruence between their perceptions of organizations' and their own values. Furthermore, job seekers' subjective P-O fit perceptions significantly predicted their job choice intentions with effect sizes comparable to other important aspects of jobs (e.g., rewards). These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Schneider (1987) and also confirm and extend past empirical research on job choice decisions by demonstrating that perceived values congruence affects organizational attractiveness through job seekers' subjective P-O fit perceptions (Cable & Judge, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1992).

Contrary to theory, job seekers' P-O fit perceptions were not affected by their demographic similarity with organizational representatives. Although past research indicates that many recruiter characteristics may offer

TABLE 5

Regression Estimates Predicting Employees' Subjective P-O Fit Perceptions

Variable	β	SD (β)	p Value
Congruence between job seekers' values and their perceptions of their organizations' values	.41	.12	.00**
Importane of P-O Fit in Job Search	.26	.12	.02*
Perceived Job opportunities	.03	.12	.42
Job seeker race	−.14	.12	.12
Job seeker sex	.23	.12	.06
Job seeker age	.01	.09	.96
Full-time position	.02	.12	.85
R^2	.29		.00**
Adjusted R^2	.19		

Note. n = 60.

 * p < .05, one-tailed.

** p < .01, one-tailed.

TABLE 6

Regression Estimates Predicting Organizational Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Recommendation, and Turnorver Intentions

Variable	Organizational			Job satisfaction			Willingness to recommend organization			Turnover intentions		
	β	SE (β)	p Value	β	SE (β)	p Value	β	SE (β)	p Value	β	SE (β)	p Value
Person–organization fit perceptions	.58	.11		.26	.09	.01**	.37	.10	.00**	-.41	.12	.00**
Person–job fit perceptions	-.02	.10	.84	.18	.08	.03*	.08	.09	.39	-.21	.10	.05*
Organizational rewards perceptions	.18	.09	.04*	.12	.07	.10	.21	.08	.01**	-.15	.09	.11
Organizational image perceptions	-.05	.10	.59	.08	.08	.32	.20	.09	.02*	.13	.10	.23
Organizational security perceptions	.18	.10	.12	.59	.09	.00**	.43	.10	.00**	.26	.12	.03*
Full-time position	-.16	.09	.08	-.01	.07	.88	-.01	.10	.92	-.01	.09	.88
R^2	.59		.00**	.71		.00**	.67		.00**	.52		.00**
Adjusted R^2	.55			.68			.64			.47		

Note. n = 68.
* p < .05, two-tailed.
** p < .01, two-tailed.

information about organizations to job seekers (e.g., Powell, 1991; Rynes *et al.,* 1980, 1991), this sample of job seekers did not appear to use demographic similarity with recruiters as a signal about their fit with organizations. Because overt demographic characteristics may contribute more to perceived P-O fit than subtle characteristics, we recomputed the demographic similarity variable using only gender, race, and age. None of these similarity indices predicted perceived P-O fit separately or when combined as a single similarity index. These weak results could be due to restricted variance on the interviewer attributes, but this does not appear to be a problem in the present study: Interviewers' ages ranged from 24 to 54 ($M = 35$, $SD = 7.6$), 56% were women, and 73% were white. It is possible that an initial 30-min interview is not enough time for the outcomes of relational demography, such as improved communication, to develop (Tsui *et al.,* 1989). Unfortunately, the present research did not examine demographic similarity with peers and supervisors after individuals began working in organizations. Future research should continue to investigate the effects of demographic similarity to establish whether P-O fit perceptions are affected by demographic similarity after organizational entry (e.g., Jackson *et al.,* 1991), and when demographic similarity begins to affect work attitudes and turnover decisions (e.g., O'Reilly *et al.,* 1989; Tsui *et al.,* 1989).

Interestingly, results from this paper imply that job seekers place far less emphasis on person–job fit than P-O fit when they make job choice decisions. However, it is possible that these results are due to constrained variance of the person–job fit variable. Most employment interviews are conducted with job seekers who have either been prescreened by recruiters or who self-select themselves into interviewers based on the fit between their skills and a job description. Thus, it appears that one of the unique benefits of the employment interview is the opportunity for job seekers to learn more about the culture and values of an organization after they have acquired preliminary information about the job. In the present study, the standard deviation for P-O fit perceptions was .71 and the standard deviation for person-job fit perceptions was .62. Although the difference between these numbers is not great, it does fit the trend of results suggesting that P-O fit may be more important in the content of the employment interview than person–job fit.

Addressing the transition from job search to organizational entry, results indicated that new employees' subjective P-O fit perceptions are predicted by the congruence between their values prior to joining an organization and their perceptions of their organizations after

TABLE 7

Regression Estimates Testing Mediation of Values Congruence on Outcome Variables

Variable	Job choice intention	Organizational commitment	Job satisfaction	Willingness to recommend organization	Turnover intentions
Direct effects	.07	.06	.07	.05	.09
Indirect effects	.17**	.31**	.16**	.20**	.10
Total effects	.24**	.37**	.23*	.25*	.19
% Mediation	71	84	70	80	53

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

working for several months. These findings support past research suggesting that job seekers may enhance their future P-O fit by relying upon their values as a means of evaluating organizations (e.g., Bowen *et al.,* 1991; Schneider, 1987; Wanous, 1980). This proposition is strengthened by the finding that job seekers placing more emphasis on P-O fit in their job choice decisions were more likely to experience P-O fit after joining the organization. Thus, it may be possible to extend vocational psychology, which to date has concentrated primarily on matching people with jobs and occupations (e.g., Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Holland, 1985), to encompass congruence between job seekers' and organizations' values.

Results from this study also indicated that employees' P-O fit perceptions share a strong relationship with their work attitudes, even after controlling for the direct effects of job attributes. Consistent with past theoretical and empirical research (e.g., Chatman, 1989, 1991), employees' person–job fit perceptions positively and significantly predicted their job satisfaction and turnover intentions but not their organizational commitment or willingness to recommend their organizations to others. Thus, the present study corroborates that person–organization fit and person-job fit are distinct constructs with different antecedents and consequences.

Finally, results from this study extend past research on the P-O fit construct by demonstrating that job seekers' and employees' subjective P-O fit perceptions mediate the effect of perceived values congruence on job choice intentions and work attitudes (Chatman, 1989, 1991). Thus, perceived values congruence appears to affect organizational entry, but only as perceived values congruence is interpreted as P-O fit by job seekers and new employees.

Limitations and Strengths

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. Although job seekers who focused on P-O fit experienced more positive work attitudes than job seekers not placing importance on P-O fit, better research methods are needed to examine the antecedents of this result. The present study is inconclusive as to whether applicants placing more weight on P-O fit actually achieve greater value congruence, or whether they are simply more likely to report P-O fit with any organization they join (a self-fulfilling prophecy). It also is possible that job seekers' responses to the survey question about the importance of P-O fit in their job choice decisions affected their later responses as employees, as it would create cognitive dissonance to claim that P-O fit was important but then not achieve it. Future research measuring the importance of P-O fit, perceived P-O fit, and actual values congruence is needed to replicate these findings and demonstrate the relationships between the importance of P-O fit during job choice decisions and future attitudes as employees.

Several findings from this study should be interpreted with caution due to the nature of the data collection. First, we assessed organizational culture with individuals' perceptions of culture rather than actual culture (e.g., across multiple organizational members). Although it is important to consider the knowledge that individuals' have available to them when they make decisions, it also would have been interesting to investigate the effects of "actual" values congruence on job seekers (Kristof, 1996). Similarly, it is possible that job seekers reacted to our surveys about organizations' values such that they focused on values more than they would have in the absence of a study. Caution also must be used when interpreting the effects of P-O fit perceptions on job choice intentions and work attitudes. Although we attempted to control for the competing variables suggested by past research, P-O fit perceptions and the outcome variables were measured with a common method at the same time. Thus, as with most field studies in this area, interpretations about causality are precarious. Finally, it should be noted that respondents to our surveys may have been affected

by the need to maintain cognitive consistency. Specifically, it is possible that when employees completed the Time 3 survey concerning their organizations' values and their fit with the organizations' values, they remembered how they completed the survey about themselves six months earlier. Similarly, it is possible that employees remembered their reported importance of P-O fit during the Time 2 survey, and felt compelled to maintain consistency when they reported their P-O fit during Time 3. Thus, future research is needed to substantiate the relationships between the importance of P-O fit, perceived values congruence, and subjective P-O fit perceptions.

The sample size also may represent a limitation of this study, because it precluded powerful tests of interaction variables. For example, the model implicit in this research indicates that the importance of P-O fit moderates the effect of P-O fit perceptions on job choice intentions. In a post-hoc analysis, we tested this interaction by computing an interaction variable and entering the new interaction term into the regression equation that produced the results shown in Table 4. When the interaction term was added to the equation, however, neither the importance of P-O fit or the interaction term was significant. The importance of P-O fit also might be expected to moderate the relationship between P-O fit judgments and work attitudes. Again, however, when we entered the interaction term to the regression analyses testing H4a–d, the interaction variable was not significant in any of the analyses. Past research has indicated that large sample sizes often are required to detect the effects of moderator variables, and thus the null results from these interaction variables may highlight a weakness in the present research.

Another potential weakness of this study concerns the assessment of values and demographic congruence between job seekers and organizations through profile similarity indices. Although profile similarity indices have been recommended and used by P-O fit researchers (e.g., Chatman, 1989, 1991; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991) and person-perception researchers (e.g., Bem & Allen, 1974; Pelham, 1993), they also have been criticized (e.g., Edwards, 1993). In fact, Edwards (1993) indicated that fit researchers should only examine specific dimensions of fit rather than entire profiles, should use normative rather than ipsative measures, and should use polynomial regression to examine P-O fit. However, the distinct advantages of the Q-sort (representing values profiles) and the Euclidean distance (representing demographic profiles) measures is that they allow for holistic comparisons across multiple value dimensions rather than sequential comparisons, and that they are

commensurate with existing conceptualizations of P-O fit (Bedeian *et al.,* 1994; Bem & Allen, 1974; O'Reilly *et al.,* 1991). Also, it was necessary to use an ipsative, idiographic measurement approach (Chatman, 1989; Pelham, 1993) which prohibited the use of polynomial regression (Edwards, 1993). Fortunately, problems with profile similarity assessment (e.g., loss of data, lack of specificity) imply that these methods provide conservative, uninflated estimates of true relationships (Bedeian *et al.,* 1994; Pelham, 1993). Future research is needed, however, to determine if a limited number of values and demographic characteristics can adequately and meaningfully describe a wide range of job seekers and organizations, thus permitting the use of nomothetic measurement and polynomial regression analyses.

The possible limitations of this study are offset by a number of strengths. This study provided a comprehensive investigation of P-O fit throughout the organizational entry process. The determinants of P-O fit perceptions were examined both during job search and after working in an organization, and the effects of fit perceptions were found on five theoretically predicted constructs ranging from job choice intentions to turnover intentions. Finally, this study examined several variables which are theoretically relevant to P-O fit perceptions (e.g., demographic similarity, importance of P-O fit in job search), but which have not been examined to date in this context.

This research also added generalizability to past research on the relationships between P-O fit and job choice decisions (Cable & Judge, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Turban & Keon, 1993). Data were collected from active job seekers about organizations that they were actively pursuing, and surveys were administered to job seekers immediately following their interviews. Also, to provide more accurate estimates of the antecedents and consequences of P-O fit perceptions, we included in our analyses the attributes of individuals (e.g., perceived job opportunities) and jobs (e.g., pay level, location) that past research suggests are critical determinants in job choice decisions and work attitudes.

Related, this study attempted to avoid alternative explanations of results through a number of methodological procedures. Self-report biases and survey priming were reduced by collecting data at different times and from different sources. Interviewer-supplied data were combined with data reported by applicants to calculate demographic similarity scores, perceived values congruence was calculated with data collected 6 months apart, and several variables reported by applicants were confirmed against their resumes. Finally,

job choice intentions were linked to actual choices with a subset of the data to confirm that the importance of P-O fit did not decrease for actual job choice decisions.

Implications and Future Research

For job seekers, results indicated that an important component of future work attitudes is the perceived congruence between their values and those of the organization they join. These results imply that job seekers should collect and evaluate information about recruiting organizations' cultures in addition to aspects about specific jobs (e.g., location, type of work). However, future research is needed to establish which sources of information provide job seekers with the most valid profiles of recruiting organizations' values (e.g., interviewers, company literature, current employees, etc.).

It also is possible that different groups attach different meanings to P-O fit. Because full-time job seekers may have different P-O fit goals than internship job seekers, we controlled for this difference in all analyses in the present study even though there was no relationship between job type and the *reported* importance of P-O fit. However, when we estimated separate regression equations for the full-time versus the internship job seekers, we found some differences between these groups of job seekers for Hypotheses 1 and 2. Specifically, the effect sizes increased for full-time job seekers both when predicting P-O fit judgments with perceived values congruence (internship: $\beta = .20$, $p < .01$; full-time: $\beta = .36$, $p < .01$) and when predicting job choice intentions with subjective P-O perceptions (internship: $\beta = .12$, $p < .09$; full-time: $\beta = .32$, $p < .01$). Although clearly exploratory, these post-hoc analyses indicate stronger relationships between values congruence, P-O fit perceptions, and job choice intentions for full-time job seekers. However, a test of the post-organizational entry variables did not reveal a similar trend. Future research should define the conditions under which P-O fit operates during organizational entry.

Results also suggested that recruiters should consider the values they signal to job seekers about their organizations. Theoretical and empirical research suggests that organizations can maximize performance when employees share values and a strong culture is established (e.g., Barney, 1986; Govindarajan, 1989). Because job seekers appear to base their job choice decisions on perceived values congruence, and because P-O fit is predictive of work attitudes, organizations should present accurate information to applicants about organizational values and culture. Just as research on realistic job previews suggests that organizations can increase employees' satisfaction and tenure when they provide accurate information about jobs

(e.g., Vandenberg & Scarpello, 1990; Wanous & Colella, 1989), it appears that recruiters might positively affect organizational values congruence and work attitudes when they provide clear, accurate information about values (Bowen *et al.,* 1991; Kristof, 1996; Wanous, 1980).

To examine the degree of consistency in the signals that recruiting organizations conveyed about their values in the present study, we calculated the average inter-item correlation between job seekers' perceived values of the organizations with which they interviewed. Across 30 organizations (with an average of nine respondents rating each organization), the average inter-item correlation was .22 ($SD = .11$, $p < .01$). Although this inter-person reliability estimate is statistically significant, it represents the upper bound of validity, suggesting that job seekers' perceptions of organizations' values often are inaccurate. Furthermore, for the 13 job seekers who eventually received and accepted job offers with organizations that they had completed surveys about during their initial interviews (Time 1), the average inter-item correlation was .39 ($SD = .15$, $p < .01$). Although exploratory, these between-person and within-person reliability estimates may indicate that job seekers' initial impressions of organizations' cultures are somewhat invalid, and that recruiters may be sending different signals to different applicants at different times.

Theories of communication (e.g., Weick, 1979) depict this situation as "noisy" because the signals that job seekers receive about organizations' values are relatively unpredictable. However, the range of inter-person agreement about recruiting organizations' values ranged from $r = .00$ to $r = .41$ ($p < .001$), and the test–retest (within-person) reliability estimates ranged from $r = .18$ (ns) to $r = .58$ ($p < .001$). These estimates indicate that although substantial noise exists in the signals that organizations send to job seekers about their values, some organizations have much clearer signals than others. To the extent that recruiters can improve the perception–reality link (e.g., reduce noise) with realistic organization profiles, job seekers can self-select in to or out of organizations based on accurate perceptions of P-O fit, presumably helping organizations maintain better long-term relationships with employees (Wanous, 1980). It would be interesting for future research to establish whether realistic organization previews are most effective for organizations with particularly distinctive cultures (Chatman, 1989). However, research also is needed to determine the degree to which applicants "parrot back" the values that recruiters espouse in an attempt to manage perceived fit (Ferris & Judge, 1991).

Finally, because this paper is the first to examine job seekers' and employees' subjective perceptions of P-O fit, and because the sample was relatively small and homogeneous, replication if these findings represents an important contribution for future research. Clearly, the scope of this study also should be extended to determine the antecedents, or sources, of job seekers' work values and culture preferences. In fact, we currently are examining personality traits as sources of work values and culture preferences on a larger, less-homogeneous group of job seekers. Similarly, research investigating the sources of job seekers' perceptions of company cultures (including product image, marketing, and recruiting practices) would refine our understanding of P-O fit in job choice decisions.

APPENDIX

The Reduced Set of Items Used on the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP)

Adaptability	Decisiveness
Stability	Being competitive
Being reflective	Being highly organized
Being innovative	Achievement orientation
Quick to take advantage of opportunities	A clear guiding philosophy
Taking individual responsibility	Being results oriented
Risk taking	High performance expectations
Opportunites for professional growth	Being aggressive
Autonomy	High pay for good performance
Being rule oriented	Security of employment
Being analytical	Praise for good performance
Paying attention to detail	Being supportive
Confronting conflict directly	Being calm
Being team oriented	Developing friends at work
Sharing information freely	Being socially responsible
Being people oriented	Enthusiasm for the job
Fairness	Working long hours
Not being constrained by many rules	Having a good reputation
Tolerance	An emphasis on quality
Informality	Being distinctive

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