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Investigating the Role of Goal Orientation in Job Seekers'
Experience of Value Congruence

Abstract

There is still limited understanding of how goal orientations influence the association between value congruence (VC) and organizational attraction for job seekers. We address this issue by investigating the impact of individuals' goal orientations on the VC–attraction relationship. Our investigation using different measurement approaches to congruence across two studies also allowed us to examine the implications of different methods to operationalizing VC in job search contexts. Two prominent types of goal orientation in job search: learning-approach goal orientation (LAGO) and performance-avoid goal orientation (PAGO), were hypothesized to moderate the relationship between VC and organizational attraction. In study 1, value congruence based on direct molar perceptions displayed a stronger positive relationship with attraction among low LAGO individuals. Study 2 using separate atomistic judgments of person and organizational values also demonstrated that LAGO moderates the effects of VC on attraction. However, the form of moderation effects varied across different types of work values (i.e. relationships and security). These findings demonstrate the need to contextualize the study of job seekers' VC within a goal-striving context, where different ways of operationalizing VC can also shed more light on the psychological processes underlying judgments of congruence.

Keywords: value congruence; job search; goal orientation, organizational attraction;
person-environment fit; Singapore

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Experience of Value Congruence

Many employers recruit and select talent using work values as a criterion (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Similarly, individual job seekers are attracted to prospective employers based on how well their values match with those of the company (Cable & Judge, 1996; Yu, 2014). Past organizational research has highlighted the significant role of *value congruence*, or the similarity between the values of employees and of the organizations when it comes to understanding how individuals are influenced by factors emanating from both the person and environment (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996). This is especially relevant within the context of job search and organizational choice as several meta-analyses have identified person-organization (PO) fit, which has mostly been conceptualized in the form of value congruence (Kristof, 1996; Chatman, 1989), as one of the most important predictors of organizational attraction (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin & Jones, 2005; Uggerslev, Fassina & Kraichy, 2012). Value congruence creates positive expectations among job seekers about the quality of future employer relationships. For instance, value congruence signals that one will experience need fulfillment as well as have the opportunity to affirm and express one's own values in an employment relationship (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Yu, 2014).

Whereas the role of value congruence in attracting job seekers is well-established, the current understanding of this relationship is incomplete. In particular, there is still a lack of understanding of the factors that influence the strength of this relationship. Until recently, research in value congruence and person-environment (PE) fit in general has tended to ignore the boundary conditions that moderate the strength of fit-to-outcome relationships (Edwards, 2008). However, several studies of late have uncovered contextual and individual moderators of the fit

and value congruence experience. Studies, for example, have identified national culture, quality of leader – follower relationship (LMX), individual conscientiousness trait, and even other types of person-job based fit as moderators of the relationship between PE fit and outcomes (Boon & Biron, 2016; Oh, Guay, Kim, Harold, Lee, Heo & Shin, 2014; Resick, Baltes & Shantz, 2007). Such research on moderators may be especially relevant for fit-to-attraction relationships because past meta-analyses suggest that the strength of such relationships can vary significantly within and across studies. For instance, Chapman and colleagues (2005) report a 95% confidence interval of the correlation between person-organization (PO) fit and attraction ranging from .37 to .56. Thus, we aim to contribute further to such breakthroughs to explain such heterogeneity in effects by examining employee goal orientation as a boundary condition in the experience of value congruence and its relationship with organizational attraction.

Goal orientations have been described as dispositional mental frameworks that determine how individuals interpret and respond to achievement situations (Farr, Hoffman, & Ringenbach, 1993). A learning orientation is associated with seeking environments with the goal of developing mastery of skills and abilities whereas a performance orientation indicates a desire to seek favorable judgments and avoid unfavorable judgments from others (Dweck, 1986). Job search is essentially one such achievement situation as well as a goal-driven process, where job seekers are often driven by goals of finding quality employment within an organization. Considering these underlying concerns of achievement toward employment goals is thus important for research dealing with the psychological and perceptual experience of job seekers. Unfortunately, these goal-striving concerns are conspicuously absent in most research on value congruence among job seekers. Given that goal orientations influence the cognitive processing of information about organizations like their culture and values encountered during the job search

process (Boswell, Zimmerman & Swider, 2012, Drenzo & Greenhaus, 2011; Kanfer, Wanberg & Kantrowitz, 2001; Van Hove & Saks, 2008), investigating their role in shaping the experience of value congruence could thus prove fruitful to developing a more complete picture of the psychology underlying value congruence and its impact on organizational attraction. Therefore, our current study specifically investigates the moderating effect of goal orientation on the relationship between value congruence and attraction.

This approach thus makes two important contributions to existing research and practice. First, in line with recent work on moderating conditions around PE fit (e.g. Oh et al., 2014; Boon & Biron, 2016), it provides insight to the psychological trait-based boundaries governing the effects of value congruence on job seeker outcomes. It thus sets the stage for a more nuanced and holistic understanding of congruence effects in the realistic achievement-striving context of job search. Second, it offers recruiters and organizations improved understanding on the types of goal orientations that individuals possess when they use value congruence as a means of guiding their search for information and job choice during the recruitment process. Such information can be used to better calibrate attempts to use value congruence as a tool for talent attraction.

We proceed by developing a model that describes how different types of goal orientation influence the experience of value congruence during job search. This model is subsequently tested across two different samples of job seekers, employing two dominant ways of conceptualizing and operationalizing value congruence. In the first study, value congruence is measured through a molar approach, which involves directly assessing the perceived similarity between the employee's own values and the organizational values. Such an approach is useful to capture the subjective psychological experience of values-based fit purely from the job seeker's perspective. In contrast, the second study utilizes an atomistic approach where employee's values

and organization's values are assessed separately and statistical analysis is used to investigate their joint relationships on the outcome. Whereas they have often been treated as interchangeable operationalizations of the same construct in past research (e.g. Cable & Edwards, 2004; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Yu, 2014; Yu, 2016), Edwards and colleagues (2006) have also suggested that these two approaches to measuring congruence could actually be capturing very distinct psychological phenomena. Thus, our research also contributes by serving as a critical analysis of the relative utility of these two approaches in the same context of job search and organizational attraction. Findings across these two studies offer initial promise for the further integration of goal orientations into value congruence research.

Hypotheses Development

Value Congruence and Organizational Attraction

Values are 'general beliefs about the importance of normatively desirable behaviors or end states' (Rokeach, 1973; Edwards & Cable, 2009). Individuals are continuously guided by their own values across a range of decisions and behaviors; at the same time, organizations also provide a set of values that indicate what is important in their working culture and how employees should behave. The similarity between the values held by the individuals and organizations is thus known as *value congruence*.

Value congruence is conceptualized as a form of person-environment fit (P-E fit), which broadly refers to the extent of similarity, match, or congruence between the person and some form of the work environment (Edwards, 2008). Existing PE fit theory has often linked the experience of value congruence with attitudinal outcomes characterized by positive affect like organizational attraction. Schneider's (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework is among the more prominent theories dealing with such relationships, stating that persons are

differentially attracted to organizations based on interpersonal similarity. Specifically, individual attraction is driven by implicit judgments of congruence between organizational goals represented by its culture and individual traits like values and personality (Schneider, Goldstein & Smith, 1995).

The theoretical rationale underlying these positive relationships between congruence and attraction follows from earlier interpersonal similarity-attraction research in social psychology, which argues that interactions with similar others are pleasurable as they tend to affirm one's own beliefs as well as promote positive and trusting work relationships (Byrne, 1971; Davis, 1981). More recently, Yu (2014) expanded on these ideas by suggesting through an expectations-based model that value congruence brings about organizational attraction by creating positive expectations about employment with prospective employer organizations. Building on Edwards and Cable's (2009) findings that value congruence led to positive employee outcomes like job satisfaction and intent to stay through improved trust and communication, his study explored if the same type of processes operated for job seekers. Results suggest that instead of expectations for trust and communication that were identified by Edwards and Cable (2009), expectations for opportunities to affirm one's social identity through value expression and for psychological need fulfillment were the main mediators of the relationship between congruence and attraction (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Highhouse, Thornbury & Little, 2007). Hence, in line with early theory and ideas in similarity-attraction and Schneider's (1987) ASA framework, value congruence should have a positive impact on organizational attraction.

Hypothesis 1: Value congruence is positively associated with organizational attraction.

Goal Orientation in Job Search

Job search describes behavior that is directed toward acquiring information and developing relationships so as to generate employment opportunities (Boswell et al., 2012). Contemporary approaches view job search as a dynamic and self-regulated process that begins with the job seeker identifying and committing to pursuing an employment goal (Kanfer, et al., 2001). The pursuit of employment goals thus motivates job search behavior and underlies much of the effort and psychological experience during the process (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011). An aspect of goals that is particularly relevant to job search is an individual's goal orientation because goal orientations govern the self-regulatory nature of the job search process.

Goal orientation refers to an individual's dispositional goal preferences in achievement situations. Taking a social cognitive approach in which individuals use values, beliefs and goals to define themselves, Dweck (1986) stated that individuals with learning orientation seek an environment like a job with the primary goal of personal growth through learning or advancing their skills, knowledge, or abilities. In contrast, a performance orientation is aimed at gaining favorable judgments from others by performing well. Meta-analytic evidence suggests that learning orientation is associated with mostly positive outcomes such as setting goals and persisting even in the face of setbacks, whereas performance orientation predicts negative outcomes, including maladaptive performance strategies such as not being open to receiving feedback and feelings of helplessness (Payne, Youngcourt & Beaubien, 2007). Subsequent development argues that goal orientations differ along an approach-avoidance dimension where behavior can be oriented towards the achievement of success (i.e. approach) or the avoidance of failure (Elliot & Thrash, 2002). Thus, we have a 2x2 framework with four types of goal orientations: (a) learning-approach goal orientation, which is about developing competencies; (b) learning-avoid goal orientation, that is focused on avoiding not mastering something and not

developing competencies; (c) performance-approach goal orientation, that aims at demonstrating competencies to others to gain something; and (d) performance-avoid goal orientation, which is concerned about avoiding demonstration of incompetence to others and thus, avoid negative judgments (Elliot & McGregor, 2001).

In this paper, we focus on two types of orientations - learning-approach goal orientation (LAGO) and performance-avoid goal orientation (PAGO), that have particular relevance for the current context of job search. Owing to their prominence in the job search literature (van Hooft & Noordzij, 2009; Creed, et al., 2009; Wanberg, Zhu, Kanfer & Zhang, 2012), focusing on these two allows us to call upon a significant amount of existing knowledge that allows us to apply LAGO and PAGO and their respective implications for self-striving achievement motivated behavior to our current investigation on value congruence and its impact on organizational attraction among job seekers. For instance, Creed and colleagues (2009) found that a LAGO predicted both self-regulatory behavior and job-seeking intensity. This finding stems from the “growth” mindset inherent in high LAGO individuals, whereby they believe in improvement through effort as they pursue their employment goals. van Hooft and Noordzij (2009) also found that learning goals primed through training workshops can also have beneficial effects on job search intentions and behavior compared to similarly primed performance goals. Findings from Wanberg et al. (2012) also show that the approach-oriented traits associated with LAGO not only encouraged higher job search intensity, but also had positive effects on the mental health of unemployed individuals over a period of 20 weeks. In contrast, mental health declined for individuals with avoidance-oriented traits associated with PAGO over the same period. Correspondingly, Creed and colleagues (2011) also find that the negative implications of PAGO

are even likely to persist over time to have deleterious effects on career aspirations of individuals.

There has however been limited research on learning-avoidance goal orientation, let alone within a job search context. Similarly, our choice to include performance-avoid at the expense of performance-approach orientations was made based on our intention to represent two types of goal approaches that were as distinct as possible. In this respect, meta-analyses identify PAGO as the type of performance-based goal orientation that is most opposed to LAGO with both sharing a negative true-mean correlation of $-.23$ (Payne et al., 2007). This focus on LAGO and PAGO thus allowed us to both manage the scope of our investigation, as well as to investigate the widest range of possible implications that unique orientations along the ends of both learning-performance and approach-avoid dimensions could have for the value congruence – organizational attraction relationship.

Goal Orientation, Value Congruence and Organizational Attraction

Goal orientation can impact the weightage given by job seekers to value congruence due to its influence on self-regulatory and motivational processes during job search. Our research thus investigates whether the underlying motivational processes governed by goal orientations affect the importance placed on well-established considerations like person-organizational fit (i.e. value congruence) as individuals evaluate potential employers in search of suitable work environments. Specifically, we argue that LAGO and PAGO moderate the relationship between value congruence and organizational attraction because these goal orientations influence the importance that job seekers place on value congruence when assessing their attraction with future employers. It has been established that value congruence worked through developing positive expectations that job seekers can have about their future workplace (Yu, 2014). In

particular, having matching values in an employment relationship is appealing because people are able to trust and communicate more openly with coworkers in such situations (Edwards & Cable, 2009). In contrast, the lack of value congruence would imply that job seekers can expect a more difficult and challenging work environment owing to the unfamiliarity with the norms, practices, and culture of employer organizations with a different set of values. Having a learning orientation allows one to cope better and even thrive under such conditions of uncertainty because people with high levels of LAGO tend to be flexible and willing to adjust their own behaviors and be proactive when it comes to adapting to challenges (Caldwell, Herold & Fedor, 2004). An individual's goal orientation is known to be based on one's implicit theory of intelligence, such that incremental theorists are likely to believe intelligence and performance can be improved through greater efforts, thus adopting a learning goal orientation (Dweck, 1986). Individuals with high LAGO are also more able to adjust personal expectations, perceptions, and requirements to adapt to prevailing work conditions (Wan, Yang, Cheng & Su, 2013). There is also evidence that having a learning orientation makes one more accepting of diversity or the lack of similarity because it facilitates sharing and integration of new unique information (van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004).

Therefore, we argue that people with high LAGO are more tolerant of potential differences between themselves and potential employers, and the challenges posed by working in environments with diversity in ideas and approaches. In comparison to low LAGO individuals, such high LAGO individuals are more likely to view these differences as opportunities to learn through immersing themselves in unfamiliar organizational cultures and social situations. On the other hand, individuals with low levels of LAGO are likely to place higher importance to having value similarity between themselves and their employers. A lack of learning orientation implies

that such employees would like to avoid situations in which there is a mismatch of values with coworkers and the employer's organizational culture, because they prefer not to experience the stress of having to cope and adapt to such situations.

Hypothesis 2: Learning approach goal orientation moderates the relationship between value congruence and organizational attraction such that the relationship is stronger when LAGO is low compared to when LAGO is high.

Individuals with high performance-avoid goal orientation (PAGO) are predominantly concerned about not being seen as underperformers and showing their incompetence in front of others (Dweck, 1986). With a tendency to avoid mistakes and/or criticism, such individuals strive to avoid challenging assignments as well as uncertain situations because they believe that being present in uncertain situations only increases the chances of failure. It is precisely this uncertainty which is reduced when value congruence exists and individuals are in working environments characterized by values and a culture that is similar and familiar to them (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Yu, 2014). There is significant interpersonal risk involved when individuals are in situations characterized by differing values, expectations and perspectives. For instance, social interactions (e.g. sharing information, experimentation, asking for help and feedback) in situations characterized by diversity are more likely to result in embarrassment and rejection (Edmondson, 1999). Thus, high PAGO individuals will be motivated towards joining organizations where they think value congruence exists because these employers are perceived to offer safer environments, which make it easier to avoid mistakes (Parker & Collins, 2010; Yu, 2009). Thus, in order to avoid demonstrating their incompetence, people with high PAGO are likely to place high importance on value congruence when determining their level of attraction with potential employer organizations.

On the other hand, low PAGOs are less concerned about making mistakes and demonstrating incompetence. Thus, they should also be more tolerant of the risks associated with a misalignment in employee-organization values, and the possible uncertainty and challenges that such circumstances can bring (Creed et al., 2009; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996). Therefore, we expect low PAGOs to attach less importance to value congruence when evaluating how attracted they are to prospective employers.

Hypothesis 3: Performance-avoid goal orientation moderates the relationship between value congruence and organizational attraction such that this relationship is stronger when PAGO is high compared to when PAGO is low

In order to test these hypotheses, we conducted two studies employing distinct approaches of conceptualizing and measuring value congruence. In study 1, we take the *molar* approach for assessing value congruence. This approach captures the psychological subjective experience of values-based fit or congruence, and is assessed by direct judgments of the perceived similarity or congruence between the employee's own values and the organizational values. Such an approach has been referred to as an *interpretivist* method in which the goal is to understand congruence from the subject's (employee's) perspective (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). When researchers conceptualize and assess value congruence as perceived congruence i.e. molar approach, the aim is to understand how people make sense of their organizational lives, and how their own perceptions of fit (or congruence) impact their attitudes and behaviors. In contrast, Study 2 uses the *atomistic* approach in which employee's values and organizational values are assessed separately through ratings by the employee, and then person-organization fit i.e. value congruence is statistically inferred to investigate joint relationships between the employee's values, organizational values and the outcome (Edwards, Cable,

Williamson, Lambert & Shipp, 2006). This method is in line with an interactionist perspective that investigates the mathematical alignment between (self-perceived) person and environment characteristics and how it impacts individual attitudes and behaviors. Thus it represents a *post-positivist* approach that involves the researcher measuring distinct entities of person and organization, conducting analyses based on their joint relationships with outcomes, and drawing conclusions based on statistical findings (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013).

These two by far represent the dominant approaches to investigating value congruence. Often, they are used interchangeably and assumed to represent the same construct (e.g. Cable & DeRue, 2002; Cable & Edwards, 2004; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Yu, 2014; Yu, 2016). However, recent research has uncovered evidence suggesting that they could actually be capturing distinct psychological phenomena. For instance, Edwards and colleagues (2006) found low to moderate correlations when comparing fit judgments elicited using both approaches. Yet, little research has compared the relative utility of these approaches on the same outcome within similar contexts as we attempt to do in this study. Theoretically, research utilizing either approach would usually expect attraction to be positively related to the degree of congruence or fit (Chapman et al., 2005; Edwards, 2008). Our research thus represents a critical test whether such an expectation is reasonable within a job search context where individuals are evaluating potential employers. Hence, evidence from our findings contribute to knowledge of the possibly distinct experiences associated with molar and atomistic approaches to fit, which in turn can yield a more complete understanding of the value congruence construct.

Study 1

Method

A time-lagged design consisting of two surveys was conducted in a large Asian business school. We focused on a job seeker sample consisting of 437 final year undergraduate students. Working with school career counselors, researchers identified organizations that were actively recruiting on campus and thus seen as viable employers by these job seekers. Choosing employers who have a good record of consistently hiring graduates from the school helps ensure that study participants would be familiar with these companies as potential employers. 5 employers were identified through this process and randomly assigned to participants based on the match between the employer's industry and the job seeker's area of study (e.g. banking and finance, human resources, marketing, and hospitality management). This process ensured that participants would be rating employers who would be potential employers, where a banking student rated a financial institution and a marketing student rated a consumer goods company. In this way, we ensured that ratings of value congruence were obtained for organizations that were likely to be considered potential employers by our respondents¹. A list of sample employers is provided in the appendix.

We controlled for job seeker perceptions of employer familiarity to ensure that potential variance in prior knowledge of assigned employer organizations would not have a biasing effect on our results. Past research suggests that familiarity acts as a template for which individuals collect and store information and knowledge of employers (Cable & Turban, 2001). Thus, relationships between value congruence and attraction can be inflated when ratings are based on a familiar employer simply because information on these constructs can be more easily recalled (Cable & Turban, 2003). Controlling for familiarity also allows us to investigate whether

¹ The mean of familiarity for this study was 5.03 (sd=1.07) on a seven-point Likert scale. Such evidence suggests that participants in our studies were familiar enough with the employers to provide meaningful ratings of value congruence.

congruence adds any explanatory power over previously established effects of familiarity on attraction (Brooks, Highhouse, Russell & Mohr, 2003).

Participants were surveyed online at two time points, first at the beginning of their job search and a second time during the recruitment process of the assigned employers. Participants were sent emails containing links to each online survey. A \$10 reward was offered as an incentive for participation. 139 individuals responded to the first survey (31.8%). The second survey was sent only to those who responded to the first survey. In total, 113 individuals responded to both surveys (25.8 % response rate for survey 2), yielding 113 matched surveys. The students had a mean prior work experience of 8.53 months.

The actual timings of each survey were also determined based on insight garnered from career services personnel. Job seekers began the study during the early stages of their job search when perceptions of value congruence were already salient toward potential employers. For the first survey, value congruence perceptions and goal orientations were first assessed about six weeks after the beginning of their final school year during the early stage of job search when employment goals were beginning to be conceptualized and individuals could form realistic perceptions of value congruence toward potential employers. In this survey, participants rated their own goal orientations before being asked to respond to value congruence questions with respect to the particular employer organization that we have pre-assigned. Choosing organizations that were actively recruiting in the cohort and thus likely to be seen as viable employers helped ensure that job seekers had a basis upon which to form value congruence perceptions toward these potential employers. Organizational attraction was subsequently assessed three months later in the second survey when the assigned employer organizations were actively recruiting and encouraging applications. As in the first survey, participants were again

asked to rate their level of organizational attraction towards the same organization for which they had previously rated their value congruence.

Measures

Cable and DeRue's (2002) measures of perceived fit were adapted to be used in the context of job search. The measure of value congruence contained three items (e.g. "My personal values match this company's values and culture"; $\alpha = .96$). Organizational attraction was measured using Highhouse and colleagues' (2003) 5-item scale (e.g. "This company is attractive to me as a place for employment"; $\alpha = .93$). This measure has demonstrated good psychometric properties and construct validity (Lievens, Van Hove & Anseel, 2007; Lievens, Van Hove & Schreurs, 2005). The control variable of employer familiarity was measured using Collins' (2007) 4-item measure (e.g. "I can recognize this company among other employers"; $\alpha = .74$). All measures were assessed using 7-point Likert scales.

Learning-approach and performance-avoid goal orientations were measured using VandeWalle's (1997) trait-based measures. LAGO contained five items (e.g. I often look for opportunities to develop new skills and knowledge; $\alpha = .86$), while PAGO consisted of four items (e.g. "Avoiding a show of low ability is more important to me than learning a new skill"; $\alpha = .88$). Goal orientation has been examined as a stable, trait-like, individual difference characteristic (Colquitt & Simmering, 1998; Creed et al., 2009) as well as studied as a state orientation (Breland & Donovan, 2005; Dragoni, 2005). In their meta-analysis of goal orientation studies, Payne et al., (2007) found that coefficients of stability estimated for trait goal orientation were high, indicating a moderate degree of stability over time. Their results also demonstrated that goal orientations are stable at time intervals up to 14 weeks, which supported the basis of our current study design, which assessed goal orientations three months before measuring

organizational attraction. This is in line with our conceptualization of goal orientation as a stable (trait-like) characteristic in this study.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We performed a CFA to check whether a five-factor model representing unique constructs of the measured variables of value congruence, LAGO, PAGO, organizational attraction, and familiarity fitted the data. The baseline model with five factors fitted the data well ($\chi^2=310.55$, $df=179$, $TLI = 0.94$, $CFI=0.95$; $RMSEA=0.078$). Two alternative models were compared against this measurement model including: (a) A four-factor model that combined both LAGO and PAGO into a single latent factor (χ^2 diff=180.88, $df=4$, $p<.01$); and (b) a four-factor model that combined both organizational related variables of value congruence and attraction into a single factor (χ^2 diff =268.04, $df=4$, $p<.01$). Chi-squared difference tests indicate that both the alternative models had a significantly poorer fit compared to the intended measurement model. Table 1 provides a summary of fit statistics from all of these models, where both the alternative models displayed significantly poorer model fit compared to our measurement model.

Results

Table 2 displays descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability estimates. Individuals tended to have a higher learning orientation ($M=5.77$) compared to a performance orientation ($M=4.10$). In line with prevailing research, learning approach (LAGO) and performance-avoid (PAGO) goal orientations were negatively related ($r=-.33$; $p<.01$) (Payne et al., 2007). Furthermore, LAGO was also significantly related to value congruence ($r=.20$; $p<.05$) and organizational attraction ($r=.19$; $p<.05$), while PAGO was not related to either value congruence or attraction. Lastly, value congruence was positively related to organizational attraction ($r=.58$; $p<.01$).

Moderated multiple regression analysis was used to test our hypotheses. H1 predicted that value congruence would have a positive effect on organizational attraction. Multiple regression results reported in Table 3 indicate support for this relationship ($\beta = .28$; $p < .01$). Hence, results show that job seekers were more likely to be attracted to employers whom they perceived to have value congruence with.

Analyses for moderation effects are also reported in Table 3. All variables used to construct products of predictors were mean-centered prior to analysis to facilitate interpretation of moderation effects. Low and high levels of the moderator variables were represented as one standard deviation below and above the means of LAGO and PAGO respectively. Results indicate that LAGO moderated the effects of value congruence on organizational attraction ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < .05$). The forms of these interactions were probed using tests and plots of the simple slopes relating value congruence to attraction. Tests of simple slopes (i.e. conditional effects) were conducted using Dawson's (2014) excel macro. H2 argued that the relationship between value congruence and attraction would be stronger at lower levels of LAGO. The plot in Figure 1 and tests of simple slopes support the form of this moderated relationship where the effect of value congruence on attraction was stronger and more positive when LAGO was low ($b = 0.64$, $p < .01$) compared to when LAGO was high ($b = 0.02$, n.s.). In fact, value congruence was positively related to attraction for job seekers who were low in LAGO ($p < .01$), whereas this relationship was not significant for individuals with high LAGO. Overall, these results suggest strong support for H2. In contrast, H3 had no support as PAGO had no significant moderation effect.

Discussion

The results from the above study provide several important insights to how goal orientations influence the relationship between job seekers' perception of value congruence and organizational attraction. First, in line with past research, value congruence was significantly associated with organizational attraction. This positive effect of value congruence was also moderated by the learning approach goal orientation (LAGO) of the job seeker, but no significant moderation effects were observed for performance avoid goal orientation (PAGO). This finding indicates that the significance of value congruence on organizational attraction varies depending on the cognitive mindset adopted by the job seekers towards employment goals. Interestingly the plot in Figure 1 also indicates that attraction was highest when LAGO was low and value congruence was high. Thus, job seekers with low LAGO treated value congruence a very important piece of information that was used to determine their level of attraction towards an employer. Conversely, job seekers with high LAGO tended to view value congruence as less important and the lack of congruence as more of a challenge to develop personal competencies or as an opportunity for fulfilling learning experiences. These individuals could instead be more attracted to employers offering learning opportunities involving mentorship by expert professionals or participation in innovative cutting-edge projects or assignments. In all, these findings attest to the important role that goals involving future opportunities offered by employers can play in the experience of value congruence among job seekers.

Despite the insights gained from the above study, several important questions remain. First, the above study investigated the effects of job seekers' direct perceptions of value congruence. Although they are conceptually meaningful (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005), such perceptions involve a direct assessment of the degree of fit between the

individual self and the organization or job environment. As discussed earlier, Edwards and colleagues (2006) refer to such direct forms of fit measurement as molar measures. An alternative conceptualization of PE fit – the atomistic approach – involves separate measurements of person (P) and environment (E) attributes and subsequent statistical analyses to investigate the joint relationships between P, E, and the outcome (Edwards, 2002; Edwards & Parry, 1993). While the molar approach seeks an understanding of person's perceptions and the influence these thoughts have on their attitudes and behaviors (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013), the atomistic approach seeks to separately understand the values of the person and the organization (from the person's perspective) and how these calculated or combined measures of value congruence impact person's attitudes (Edwards et al., 2006). In the latter approach, value congruence implies similar (or equal) ratings on the person's values as well as on the organization's values; on the other hand, differences between the person's values and organization's values indicate a lack of congruence between the person and the organization (Edwards et al., 2006). Since recent research has argued that both molar and atomistic measures of fit capture unique and important aspects of fit (Gabriel, Diefendorff, Chandler, Moran & Greguras, 2014), it is important to investigate whether goal orientation exerts similar moderating effects on value congruence when atomistic measures are used.

Next, the direct nature of molar measures of value congruence also makes it impossible to investigate the *relative* impact of both individual and organizational values on attraction and whether goal orientation alters these relationships. Moreover, little is also known about the nature of relationships with regards to specific dimensions of the person and organization. For example, it is critical to know that what happens to organizational attraction when the individual values autonomy higher and the organization does not value autonomy as much, or vice versa.

Past research in person-environment fit has found that specific aspects of autonomy and relatedness have important implications for employee development and affective commitment (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Simmering, Colquitt, Noe & Porter, 2003). Likewise, Edwards and Cable (2009) also detected significant effects for autonomy-based value congruence on co-worker attraction. Therefore, another study was conducted to supplement the findings from the current study by investigating these remaining issues.

Study 2

Method

The key difference between study 1 and study 2 was in the measure of value congruence that was used. A similar time-lagged design to Study 1 was employed for Study 2, where two surveys were conducted among a different job seeker cohort in the same large Asian business school. As in study 1, emails containing links to the online survey were sent to participants offering a \$10 reward for participation. 252 individuals responded to the first survey (59.6% out of 423). Out of these individuals, 160 responded to the second survey, producing a response rate of 37.8%. The same procedure was adopted to identify recruiting companies who would be seen as viable employers by consulting with school career counselors, though an effort was made to select more companies this time round to create more variance in the type of companies rated. This process yielded 20 employers that were again randomly assigned to participants based on the match between the employer's industry and the job seeker's area of study. Hence, participants who were majoring in banking and finance were assigned to rate financial institutions (e.g. Credit Suisse and Citigroup), and those majoring in marketing were assigned to rate multinationals like Shell and advertising firms like Ogilvy. As this study was conducted

within the same school context, two of the employers used in this survey were also used in Study 1 (see Appendix).

Participants were again first surveyed once at the beginning of their job search and a second time during the employer's recruitment process. As in study 1, employer familiarity, atomistic value congruence and goal orientations were first assessed about six weeks after the beginning of the final school year during the early stage of jobs search when employment goals and realistic perceptions of value congruence toward potential employers could be formed². Organizational attraction was assessed in the follow up survey three months later among time 1 respondents during the active recruitment period of the assigned employer organizations.

Measures

Atomistic value congruence consists of separate measures of individual values and organizational values. Thus, this study used atomistic measures of value congruence that separately assessed person and environment entities on specific dimensions drawn from the Cable and Edwards' (2004) work values survey (WVS) and its underlying framework of the circumplex model of human values developed by Schwartz (1992) (Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). According to this model illustrated in Figure 2, values are organized around two axes differentiating basic human motivations: (a) an *openness to change* (e.g. variety and autonomy values) versus *conservation* (e.g. security and authority) axis, distinguishing values according to engaging in new intellectual and affective experiences versus maintaining certainty and protecting the status quo and; (b) a *self-enhancement* (e.g. pay and prestige) versus *self-transcendence* (e.g. altruism and relationships) axis, differentiating values in terms of advancing personal interests against improving others' well-being. The eight values listed above were

² The mean employer familiarity for this study was 4.69 (sd=1.30) on a seven-point Likert scale. As in study 1, this evidence indicates that participants in our studies had sufficient knowledge about the employers to provide meaningful ratings of organizational values

identified by Cable and Edwards (2004) as part of an effort to develop and validate the WVS (c.f. Edwards & Cable, 2009). While the complete WVS contains 8 value dimensions, we sought to manage the scope of this study by focusing on a set of four values: relationships, security, prestige, and autonomy chosen to represent the four markers along the ends of the two axes differentiating basic motivations in the WVS. Past studies have demonstrated that such an approach can still capture a comprehensive enough representation of values that are meaningful within a value congruence context (Yu, 2014). Each value dimension (e.g. relationships, security, prestige, and autonomy) was measured by three items (e.g. Sample item for value for Relationships: “Forming relationships with coworkers”; security “Being certain of keeping my job”, prestige: “Gaining respect”, autonomy: “Determining the way my work is done”).

With regards to value congruence, individual values were measured by having respondents rate the WVS items according to their perceived importance (e.g. “How important are the following things to you?”) on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 7 (extremely important). Corresponding organizational values were assessed with respect to the assigned potential employer using the same response scale. Respondents were asked “How important do you think the following things are at *company XYZ*?” This measurement approach is consistent with previous approaches that conceptualize values as the degree of importance ascribed to a certain work attribute (Kristof, 1996). Study 2 aimed to extend upon the findings from Study 1 to investigate the relative impact of individual and organizational components of value congruence on attraction. Thus, an atomistic measure of individual and organizational values that was also based on individual perceptions was deemed appropriate because of the conceptual similarity between both types of assessment used in both studies. Whereas past research has used ratings from organizational representatives for organizational values, our

current focus was on the individual's perceptions of his/ her own (person) and organization's (environment) values, and the psychological processes related to how goal orientation interacts with the person's and organization's values to impact attraction. Therefore, in line with past research relying on perceptual assessments of values to gain insight to the cognitive and affective processes through which person/ organization values impact job seekers' attitudes, both individual and organizational values were measured by ratings obtained from individual respondents (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Edwards & Cable, 2009; Yu, 2014; Vogel, Rodell & Lynch, 2016). Assessments of other variables of LAGO, PAGO, organizational attraction, and the control variable of employer familiarity utilized the same measures as those used in Study 1.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We performed a CFA to check whether the 12-factor model in which each of the above variables is represented as distinct constructs fitted our measurement model. The 12-factor measurement model fitted the data well ($\chi^2=1064.23$, $df=753$, $TLI=0.96$; $CFI=0.97$, $RMSEA=0.040$). Chi-squared difference tests evaluated the relative fit of this model with respect to four alternative models. First, an 11-factor model that facilitated the assessment of the distinctiveness of the two types of goal orientations, combining both LAGO and PAGO into a single latent factor (χ^2 diff=366.18, $df=11$, $p<.01$). Next, a model that allowed the assessment of the distinctiveness of the four dimensions of work values by combining the four individual values into one overall factor representing individual values, and similarly combining the four organizational values to form an overall factor for organizational values, forming a six factor model represented by LAGO, PAGO, attraction, familiarity, individual values, and organizational values (χ^2 diff=1454.43, $df=53$, $p<.01$); a third model to assess the distinctiveness of organization-related variables that combines variables related to the organization (four

organizational values and organizational attraction) to yield a eight factor model consisting of factors representing: LAGO, PAGO, familiarity, four individual values, and the combined organization attribute factor (χ^2 diff =1725.61, df=38, $p<.01$). Finally, a model that assesses the ability of respondents to distinguish between individual and organizational values, which combines individual and organizational values of each work value dimension into a single factor to form an eight factor model (χ^2 diff =1404.13, df=38, $p<.01$). Table 4 provides a summary of fit statistics from all of these models, where all four alternative models displayed significantly poorer model fit compared to our measurement model.

Analyses

Polynomial regression modeling was used to analyze the effects of value congruence on organizational attraction. This method allows the analysis of how elements of both person and environment jointly impact attraction, and whether the form of this relationship is consistent with one where fit exists between the two concepts (Edwards, 2002). The general form of the regression model used for such analysis is:

$$A = b_0 + b_1O + b_2I + b_3O^2 + b_4OI + b_5I^2 + e \quad (1)$$

where A represents the organizational attraction outcome, and O and I denote organizational and individual values respectively. Quadratic and product terms O^2 , OI , and I^2 were included to facilitate the analysis of fit or congruence effects through response surface methodology, which investigates how attraction varies with absolute levels of individual and organizational variables. A three-dimensional surface like the one in Figure 2 is used to depict how organizational attraction varies with O and I. Of particular interest is the shape of the surface along two lines of interest: (a) the *congruence line*, along which individual (e.g. values) and organizational (e.g. values) variables are equal, and (b) the *incongruence line* where individual and organizational

variables differ (Edwards, 1994, Edwards & Parry, 1993). Analyzing response surfaces with respect to these lines allows one to assess whether relationships between O, I, and attraction are consistent with a fit effect, where an outcome is maximized when there is fit between variables representing individual and organizational components. Specifically, evidence for a fit effect exists when the surface is downward curving along the line of incongruence, implying that the outcome is maximized along the line of congruence and decreases as organizational (O) and individual (I) values differ from each other. In addition, analysis is also conducted to see if the surface is flat along the line of congruence, which implies that the outcome does not vary when the absolute values of O and I are either high or low (Edwards & Cable, 2009). These features were tested using response surface methodology, which stipulates a set of conditions involving the regression coefficients of each independent variable in the regression model above (e.g. O, I, O^2 , OI , and I^2) (Edwards & Parry, 1993; Edwards, 2002). For instance, a downward curvature would be observed along the line of incongruence if the linear combination of coefficients $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$ is negative. Satisfying this condition would produce the surface commonly associated with PE fit that is illustrated in Figure 2. Additionally, the surface is positively (negatively) sloped along this line if $b_1 - b_2$ is positive (negative), implying that the outcome is higher (lower) when E exceeds P. Correspondingly, the linear combinations of $b_1 + b_2$ and $b_3 + b_4 + b_5$ indicate the shape of the surface along the line of congruence, where the surface is flat if both these combinations are equal to 0. These linear combinations of regression coefficients were tested using linear contrasts in regression analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). The effects of value congruence on organizational attraction were analyzed separately based on these conditions. All response surface analyses based on equation 1 controlled for employer familiarity

and were also conducted using scale-centered independent variables to aid in the interpretation of findings (Edwards & Parry, 1993).

We used Edwards and Rothbard's (1999) method based on hierarchical regression analysis to test the moderating effects of learning approach (LAGO) and performance-avoid (PAGO) goal orientations. For each analysis involving value congruence, each of the five independent variables in equation 1 was multiplied by LAGO or PAGO to generate the following equation:

$$A = b_0 + b_1O + b_2I + b_3O^2 + b_4OI + b_5I^2 + b_6M + b_7MO + b_8MI + b_9MO^2 + b_{10}MOI + b_{11}MI^2 + e \quad (2)$$

where M denotes the moderator variable (e.g. LAGO or PAGO)

A significant increase in R^2 between equations 2 and 1 would indicate a significant moderation effect, which will then be probed using surface plots similar to Figure 3. As in the case in study 1, moderator variable values of one standard deviation below and above the mean were used to represent low and high levels of the variable when probing the nature of moderation effects. This change in R^2 was again analyzed using linear contrasts to test the significance of the coefficients representing the block of higher order interaction terms involving M (e.g. b_7 to b_{11} in equation 2).

Results

Correlations are reported in Table 5. Like in Study 1, individuals tended to have a higher learning orientation ($M=5.82$) compared to a performance orientation ($M=3.74$). Organizational attraction had a positive relationship with several types of individual (e.g. security and autonomy) and organizational (e.g. relationships, security and autonomy) values across different dimensions. LAGO and PAGO were again significantly negatively related ($r=-.38$; $p<.01$).

Findings for the effects of value congruence on organizational attraction are reported in Table 6. Separate models were analyzed for the four different content dimensions of value congruence. Analyses based on the regression model featured in equation 1 suggest that individual and organizational values combined to account for significant variance in organizational attraction for all value dimensions except for prestige (model R^2 is reported in the third column from the right in Table 6). Tests of response surfaces however suggest that the nature of these relationships were not consistent with value congruence effects that usually assume that an outcome is maximized when individual values match the environment. The only relationships of note involved autonomy, where a positive sloping surface ($p < .01$) and significant curvature ($p < .05$) along the line of incongruence for autonomy indicates that attraction was maximized when autonomy was perceived to be more important to the employer compared to the individual. The positive curvature observed further suggests that attraction is actually lower when value congruence exists for autonomy. This relationship is illustrated in the surface plot in Figure 4. No other key features were obtained along the response surfaces for the other three values tested – relationships, security and prestige. Therefore, in this study, hypothesis 1 was not supported.

In partial support of H2, results from moderation analyses detected significant effects for learning approach goal orientation (LAGO) moderating the impact of value congruence on attraction for relationships and security dimensions (both $p < .05$). Further examination of surface plots at low, moderate, and high levels of LAGO indicate that attraction was maximized at areas to the left of the line of congruence where organizational values match individual values (e.g. $O=I$) as LAGO increased. Though tests of response surfaces at these different levels of LAGO

failed to reveal significant effects³, the pattern of change in the linear combination of coefficients representing the two lines of interest (congruence vs incongruence) along these surfaces still provides insight to the nature of this significant moderating effect. Figures 5a to 5c illustrate these changes in response surfaces from low to high levels of LAGO for the “relationships” value dimension. Since the area left of the line of congruence represents associations where individual values were more important than organizational values, this finding implies that the impact of individual values on attraction increases relative to that of organizational values as LAGO increases. Hence, the attraction of high LAGO job seekers was driven more by their own values for relationships compared to employer organization values. In contrast, low LAGO job seekers’ attraction was derived more from organizational values compared to personally held values for relationships. This finding implies that job seekers high in LAGO attached more importance to their own values for relationships when assessing attraction to potential employers, whereas those low in LAGO paid more attention to the perceived values of the employer organization.

A different set of relationships was found for the security dimension. Figures 6a to 6c illustrate these changes in response surfaces from low to high levels of LAGO. As LAGO levels increased from low to high, attraction was increasingly maximized in the area to the right of the line of congruence. Specific tests of response surfaces along the two lines of interest (congruence vs incongruence) suggest that the surface was positively sloped along the line of congruence for high LAGOs ($p < .05$). No such slopes were detected for moderate and low levels of LAGO, which suggests that organizational attraction was more dependent on organizational values as compared to individual values for people who are higher in LAGO. Hence, high LAGO job

³ Significant slopes were obtained along the line of incongruence at the $p < .10$ level, where the slope of the surface changed from negative to positive as LAGO increased from low to high. This pattern is illustrated in Figures 5a to 5c as the peak of the surface shifts from right to left for low to high levels of LAGO respectively.

seekers were more influenced by their perceptions of the organization's values for security, whereas low LAGOs tended to rely more on their own values for security. This finding is opposite to what was observed for relationships-based values, illustrating the differential effects of LAGO across different dimensions of work values. No significant moderating effects were detected for PAGO (H3).

Discussion

The findings from this second study further the understanding of the influence of goal orientation on the experience of value congruence during job search in two ways. First, results suggest that even though separately assessed work values from organization and individual entities accounted for significant amounts of variance in organizational attraction, the specific nature of these relationships did not conform to that of one that is commonly associated with value congruence and person-organization fit. Value congruence effects are typically thought to exist when an outcome is maximized when levels of individual values match that of the organization (Edwards, 2008). Moreover, outcomes are expected to be maximized when person and environment values match at higher levels than at lower levels. No such relationship was observed in study 2. Instead, the finding that attraction was maximized when organizational values exceeded individual values for autonomy implies that job seekers are attracted to employers who they think place more emphasis on autonomy than even themselves. This finding is consistent with other research linking value congruence to outcomes like attraction, quality of communication, and trust (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Yu, 2014). Such relationship forms where an outcome is maximized when the environment (E) offers more than what people (P) value or need has so far received more support in research examining the effects of needs-supplies (NS) fit (Edwards, Caplan & Harrison, 1998; Slocombe & Bluedorn, 1999). For instance, Edwards and

Rothbard (1999) found that employee well-being tended to increase as individuals received autonomy that exceeded the amount that they felt was acceptable.

These similar PE fit relationship patterns for both value congruence and NS fit could point toward the underlying principle of *carryover* where excess supplies provided by the environment can be used to attain desired fit for other dimensions of work, as in the case where excess autonomy can be used to attain other desired changes at work like variety or learning experiences (Edwards, 1996). It is also worth noting that like the majority of previous research documented above, such relationships only apply to certain dimensions of values⁴. In summary, current findings suggest more evidence for the form of relationship obtained for autonomy across both value congruence and NS types of PE fit, and that such a relationship may be particularly prevalent for the dimension of autonomy.

There was also no evidence for the hypothesized value congruence effect for the other values dimensions, where response surfaces for these values were complicated and no meaningful relationships were found along the lines of congruence or incongruence. Notably however, values in relationships and security still predicted significant variance in attraction. This implies that these values still matter for organizational attraction—just not in a way that conforms to usual understandings of congruence or fit relationships. The absence of main effects linking both individual and organization values to attraction in combination with significant multiple correlations (R^2) also suggests that both individual and organization values come together to jointly influence attraction. But the response surfaces for these values were complicated and nothing could be interpreted along the lines of congruence or incongruence. We elaborate on this issue in our general discussion.

⁴ Although tests of surfaces were not significant results in Table 6a suggest that attraction was higher when the environment (E) exceeded person (P) values for security and prestige, whereas attraction was lower under such circumstances for the relationship value dimension.

No significant results were obtained for the other value – prestige. We believe that one possible reason for such findings could be related to our sample of participants – final year college students. Possibly, such students have a more idealistic view of the world and thus, they value autonomy, security and relationships far more than prestige. These findings are more in line with the self-determination theory that puts emphasis on motivation by satisfying the needs of autonomy, relatedness and security (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Second, learning approach goal orientation (LAGO) moderated the effects on organizational attraction for the values of relationships and security. The attraction of job seekers with low LAGO was more influenced by employers who placed a relatively high level of importance on relationships. This observation is akin to situations where having insufficient importance placed on relationships by prospective employers (i.e. under fit) is worse than placing more importance that exceeds individual values (over fit). This finding implies that individuals with low LAGO sought to minimize possible difficulties in job adjustment by pursuing employers who emphasize work relationships as core values. In contrast, the attraction of people with high LAGO was more influenced by the high importance that these individuals themselves ascribed to relationships. Thus, this is a situation where having insufficient importance placed on relationships by prospective employers (i.e. under fit) is actually better for attraction than placing more importance that exceeds individual values (over fit). To these job seekers, it did not matter if the prospective employer did not value relationships as much as they did. Instead, their attraction was largely determined by how important relationships were to them. This finding could be due to such individuals' tendency to self-focus, which in turn also accounts for a high ability to self-regulate (Creed et al., 2009; VandeWalle, Brown, Cron & Slocum, 1999).

Different moderating effects were obtained for security-based values. Organizational attraction of job seekers with low LAGO was jointly influenced by both how much the individual job seekers themselves valued security, and how much the organization valued security. Low LAGO's tended to focus on both their own values for security and organizational values of security when determining how attracted they were to certain employers. This suggests that low LAGOs looked for congruence between the personal values and the organizational values when it comes to concerns related to potential job security. On the other hand, high LAGOs paid more attention to how much employer organizations valued security compared to their own values, suggesting that situations where having insufficient importance placed on security by prospective employers (i.e. under fit) is worse than placing more importance that exceeds individual values for such values (over fit). Perhaps having a high LAGO implies also having the ability to look past one's own conservative concerns for security to focus more on the potential opportunities that work environments can offer. In all, these analyses based on separate atomistic measures of value congruence reveal that LAGO can influence value congruence relationships in intricate ways that deal with the relative effects of both individual and organizational values.

General Discussion

We set out to investigate the role that goals play in the experience of value congruence during job search. Employment goals exert important influences on job seeker motivation, attitudes and behaviors (Kanfer et al., 2001). Similarly, value congruence is a key driver of attraction towards organizations and the jobs they offer (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012). In his review of the theoretical progress in person-environment (PE) fit research, Edwards (2008) highlighted the lack of theory dealing with the boundary conditions within which PE fit

effects operate. Significant strides have been made in this respect recently, exploring moderators across different levels of the environmental context. For instance, Oh and colleagues' (2014) meta-analysis on the relationships between PE fit and work attitudes highlighted the role of national culture in influencing how fit perceptions impacted commitment, job satisfaction and intent to quit. Specifically, the effects of person-organization (PO) and person-job (PJ) fit were relatively stronger in North America, whereas the effects of other more relational forms of fit involving the group and supervisor tended to be stronger in East Asian contexts. Other research has also highlighted the role of relational aspects of the employer relationship like leader-member exchange (LMX) in moderating relationships between fit and turnover (Boon & Biron, 2016). By exploring the moderating role of goal orientations on the established relationship between value congruence and organizational attraction, our research follows other studies that have highlighted the role of individual traits and dispositions as boundary conditions governing the experience of PE fit (Resick, Baltes & Shantz, 2007; Wei, 2012).

Integrating goal theory and value congruence is therefore a crucial step towards a more complete understanding of the job seeker experience. Results across these two studies suggest that learning approach goal orientation (LAGO) moderates the effect of value congruence on organizational attraction. Value congruence was less important to job seekers with high LAGO. When value congruence was conceptualized using separate atomistic judgments of person and environment instead of direct comparisons (i.e. molar) (Edwards et al., 2006), LAGO moderated the effect of value congruence with respect to relationships and security-based values. These findings suggest several important implications for value congruence and goal theory within the context of job search.

Implications

The significant moderation effects involving LAGO suggest that individual differences in approach toward learning and mastery either enhance or inhibit the impact of value congruence perceptions on organizational attraction. In study 1, perceived value congruence had a weaker positive effect on attraction for individuals with high LAGO, because they appear to be more tolerant of challenges presented by a lack of fit, compared to people with low LAGO. These findings support past arguments that individuals with high LAGO are more accepting of diversity, willing to adapt, and approach challenging situations characterized by a lack of fit as opportunities for self-development (Caldwell et al., 2004; Creed et al., 2009; Wan et al., 2013).

In study 2, value congruence was conceptualized using the atomistic approach, in which analyses of joint relationships between values and attraction were based on separate assessments of individual and organizational values. Moderation analyses showed that the effects differed across *relationships* and *security* type of values. The attraction of individuals with high LAGO was determined more by their own values for relationships than the organization's values. This implies that having a high LAGO is associated with more reliance on personal values for work relationships when assessing attraction towards prospective employers. This finding is also consistent with such individuals' ability to self-regulate, which requires them to be especially in-tuned to their own personal values and preferences (VandeWalle et al., 1999).

A different pattern of findings emerged for *security* values, where high LAGO attraction was influenced more by organizational values for security relative to individual values. We propose that such differences in effects across distinct values for relationships and security reflect the fundamental nature of each type of value. To this extent, we refer to Schwartz's (1992) circumplex model of human values which served as the basis for the work values survey that we used to measure our values variables (Cable & Edwards, 2004). This model characterizes

different values according to distinct basic human motivations that they represent. Values for relationships characterize self-transcendent based motivations that extend beyond the self to promote developing meaningful relationships with others. In contrast, values for security represent motivations associated with conservativeness that are driven by the need for certainty and preserving the status quo. Thus, the difference in pattern of findings between these two values could suggest that high LAGOs are more attuned into their own personal values for work relationships, while at the same time paying more attention to whether the organization values and provides a secure environment for such individuals to develop meaningful work relationships. These findings are line with research that argues for a stable and secure organizational environment under which learning and development of social ties can flourish (Edmondson, 1999; Klein, Noe & Wang, 2006; Maurer, Weiss & Barbeite, 2003).

Our findings for the main effect of value congruence (VC) also differed somewhat across the two studies. Namely, the significant effect of congruence on attraction in study 1 could not be replicated in study 2. Results from the latter study suggest that person and organization values do matter for attraction because they jointly accounted significant variance in attraction. However, the finding that the form of these joint relationships did not conform to prevailing notions of fit between person and environment is also consistent with past value congruence research adopting an atomistic approach. In particular, the downward curvature that would indicate the maximization of attraction when value congruence occurs has also largely proved elusive in past research on both regular employees (Edwards & Cable, 2009) and job seekers (Yu, 2014). Finding that traditional notions of person-organization (PO) fit do not apply when separate judgments of individual and organizational values are analytically compared calls for an urgent reassessment of how different measurement approaches map onto their intended construct of VC.

These findings could be symptomatic of the different ways that value congruence has been operationalized across both studies. The direct molar approach (study 1) may capture a more affective understanding of congruence, which is emphasized by its strong links to attraction. In contrast, the atomistic approach could represent rational calculative assessment of values stemming from separate entities of person and organization. Indeed this is further evidence that these approaches should not be used as interchangeable measures of the same concept (Edwards et al., 2006; Gabriel et al., 2014). The levels of specificity at which value congruence was conceptualized may have also played a role. Job seekers may find it easier to think of values in terms of generalized notion of fit toward an organization because they lack the actual experience of being on the job and experiencing organizational values in concrete dimensions of autonomy and so forth. Hence, relationships between gestalt-based molar fit approaches and attraction could have been easier to manifest compared to congruence based on specific value dimensions.

Furthermore, perhaps the individual and organizational components involved in VC operate as a distal influence through more proximal experiences like need-satisfaction on affective outcomes like attraction. For instance, research comparing the relative impact of two different types of PE fit in VC and need-supplies (NS) fit has found NS fit to be a more proximal predictor that mediates the effect of VC on affective outcomes like attraction, job satisfaction, and commitment (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Yu, 2014; 2016). Hence, need-satisfaction or NS fit may be a closer representation of the meaning of “fit” compared to value congruence. Clearly perceptions of individual and organization values take on a new meaning once individuals are forced to engage in a cognitive comparison of how well they fit as captured in the molar approach. Our findings thus present evidence in a value congruence

setting that relationships between person-environment (PE) fit and outcomes can vary significantly depending on the approach through which fit is conceptualized (Edwards et al, 2006). Future research would thus benefit from treating value congruence operationalized using molar and atomistic approaches as distinct constructs representing affective and rational-calculated forms of congruence. Such careful consideration of their distinct underlying qualities can facilitate the development of a more precise yet comprehensive understanding of value congruence as a type of fit between person and environment (Edwards, 2008).

Our studies especially demonstrate that there is utility in considering both molar (direct) and atomistic (separate) perceptions of value congruence as unique experiences of values during jobs search (Gabriel et al., 2014). Direct perceptions of congruence may capture the overall cognitive meaning of congruence as it is experienced by job seekers (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), and as such may give a better indication of how the holistic experience of value congruence changes with respect to goal orientation. Such perceptions may be more relevant when quick assessments of fit or congruence are elicited in response to discrete events such as meeting an organizational recruiter or visiting an employer's website (Allen, Van Scotter & Otondo, 2004; Williams, Labig & Stone, 1993).

Interesting insights are also apparent when goal orientation is incorporated into separate atomistic assessments of values. Such teasing apart of individual and organization values experiences can be especially relevant for recruiting organizations who need to isolate job seeker perceptions of organization values in their attempts to influence job seeker beliefs through the communication of organizational images during various stages of the recruitment process (Cable & Yu, 2006; Slaughter, Cable & Turban, 2014). In this respect, our findings from study 2 suggest that high LAGOs are attracted to organizations whom they perceive to provide a secure

employment relationship. In contrast, emphasizing images to do with work relationships would be less effective among these job seekers as they tend to be driven more by their own values. Together, these unique findings for both direct (molar) and separate (atomistic) assessments of fit suggest that there is still more empirical and theoretical work that is required to uncover the cognitive and comparative processes operating in what Edwards and colleagues (2006) refer to as a “theoretical black box” linking both conceptual approaches to value congruence.

Altogether, these findings incorporating both congruence and goal orientation imply that understanding of organizational attraction and value congruence is enhanced by taking into account the motivational implications of individual job seeker approaches toward learning and mastery goals. More research is needed to further understand how the motivational striving toward employment goals influences self-regulatory behavior that may affect job seeker fit and subsequent search behavior. For instance, job seekers with high LAGO and better ability to self-regulate may respond to setbacks during job search by adjusting their perceptions of value congruence with certain jobs or employers that may appear too difficult to attain (Direnzo & Greenhaus, 2011; Yu, 2009). Similarly, extending these ideas to investigate the moderating effects of goal orientations beyond value congruence to other types of fit like demands-abilities (DA) fit which is based on developing and demonstrating competencies would also yield a more comprehensive understanding of such trait-based goal related mindsets as boundaries affecting the PE fit experience.

It should also be noted that across the two studies, we found no support for performance-avoidance goal orientation (PAGO) moderating the relationship between value congruence and organizational attraction (H3). One reason for this finding could be that past research indicates that PAGO is mostly associated with negative outcomes (Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, & Elliot,

2002). For example, in their meta-analysis on goal orientation, Payne et al., (2007) found that PAGO was negatively related with need for achievement. Also, high levels of PAGO were associated with lower levels of task and job performance. Individuals who are high on PAGO tend to focus more on the possibility of failure and thus, are more likely to be aware of negative stimuli. Hence, PAGO's focus on the negative implications of job search may have been irrelevant and non-applicable to the formation of positive-valence attitudes such as organizational attraction.

Our research highlights the importance of goal orientation and LAGO specifically for recruiters and organizations who seek to attract talent based on value congruence. In particular for study 1, value congruence is only impactful for job seekers with a low LAGO, who lack the motivation to develop skills and competencies and seem to be less tolerant of differences between themselves and potential employers. In contrast, a high LAGO seems to nullify the effect of value congruence on organizational attraction. On specific types of values examined in study 2, employers who value relationships appear more attractive to low LAGOs. In contrast, high LAGOs are attracted to organizations who value security. Together, these findings suggest that organizations who concern themselves with overall perceptions of fit from potential applicants may benefit from deemphasizing value congruence their recruitment and selection processes because it has limited impact on high LAGOs who may prove to be a valuable group of employees who are self-motivated and persevering in uncertain work environments (Payne et al., 2007). If the focus is on specific types of values, attracting high LAGOs can thus involve emphasizing organizational values for job security and stability during recruitment communications.

Present findings for goal orientation can also be extended to add more insight to the experience of value congruence and person-environment (PE) fit in general beyond job search. For instance, LAGO may also act as a buffer against the negative experience associated with the lack of value congruence in post hire outcomes like job satisfaction and performance. Specifically, LAGO's ability to cope with lack of person-organization fit may suggest that the negative consequences that value incongruence has on such outcomes may be minimized for these individuals as they would be both more tolerant of value differences as well as more open to adjusting their own value systems to fit into the environment (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Vogel et al., 2015). Furthermore, LAGO may also prove to be a valuable individual trait when it comes to proactively managing the experience of other types of misfit related to need-supplies (NS) and demands-abilities (DA). Specifically, the adaptability of such individuals suggests that they are more attuned to detecting a lack of fit in such areas and activating various proactive strategies like feedback seeking and networking to overcome the challenges posed by a lack of fit to achieve desired affective and behavioral outcomes (Wang, Zhan, McCune & Truxillo, 2011; Yu & Davis, 2016). Finally, current findings also have implications for the management of new hires. The adaptiveness of LAGO's also suggests that they are better suited to organizational socialization processes that are less institutionalized and more individualized to take advantage of their openness and proactivity when it comes to learning organizational goals and values (Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller, Livingston & Liao, 2011; Saks, Gruman & Cooper-Thomas, 2011). Such insight allows employers to customize their onboarding tactics to suit the individual proclivities of new hires (Gruman & Saks, 2011).

Limitations

Following on from the limitations already identified in the discussions following both studies 1 and 2, the current findings might also be subject to common method and source biases because data was gathered only from individual job seeker self-reports. However, such a measurement approach was deemed appropriate because the focus of the current investigation was on individual experiences of value congruence, which is suitably assessed through psychometrics. Furthermore, the findings of both studies were largely based on analyses of interactive and nonlinear relationships, for which common method variance is unlikely to be a significant factor (Evans, 1985). The time-lagged study design separating independent and dependent variables should also lessen the likelihood of inflated effects (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003).

Concerns may also be raised about the generalizability of the current sample of business school undergraduate job seekers. Different subpopulations of job seekers may have different underlying motivations for job search, which could in turn influence how value congruence and goals orientations are experienced. For instance, experienced or employed job seekers could be looking for negotiating leverage with their current employers or simply to develop their professional networks, which could diminish the importance placed on value congruence when evaluating potential employers (Boswell et al., 2012). Future research is needed to investigate the role of goal orientation in the experience of value congruence among employed job seekers and even job losers. Another limitation of our study could be that the sample of students were from Singapore with a predominantly Asian culture. It is possible that the significant effects for relatedness and security are due to the collectivistic Asian sample, and in an American setup, prestige and autonomy may gain significance. Future studies should explore these effects by taking samples across Eastern and Western countries.

The current investigations are also limited by their exclusive focus on organizational attraction as an outcome. Behaviors such as job source use and coping strategies are also important phenomena that are under-researched within the context of PE fit and goal orientations. While attraction can be a key antecedent to these behaviors and even job choice (Chapman et al., 2005), future research should still work to expand current ideas to incorporate a range of job seeker attitudes, behaviors, and choices. Similarly, practical concerns about managing the scope of this investigation caused us to focus on LAGO and PAGO at the expense of the less extensively researched learning-avoid and performance-approach orientations. In the interest of developing a more complete picture of the moderating effects of goal orientations on value congruence, future research should investigate all four possible types of orientations.

Conclusion

The experience of value congruence serves as an important precursor to organizational attraction and the development of future employment relationships. However, job seekers experience value congruence within the context of striving to achieve employment goals. Our research presents evidence that certain types of goal orientation act as a boundary condition in the relationship between value congruence and organizational attraction. Across two studies utilizing distinct measurement approaches to value congruence, results suggested that learning-approach goal orientation moderates the effect of value congruence on attraction whereas performance-avoidance orientation was not found to be a significant moderator. In study 1, value congruence was less important to job seekers with high LAGO. Study 2 provided some unexpected but interesting results as the moderation effects were different across the *relationships* and *security* types of values. In addition, our hypothesized direct relationship between value congruence and organizational attraction was supported only in study 1. This

investigation therefore highlights how the motivational implications of learning goal orientation influence the strength of positive relationships between value congruence and attraction, demonstrating that there is much theoretical understanding to be gained by situating the study of job seeker value congruence within a goal-striving context.

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Table 1

Summary of Fit statistics, showing the results of CFA analysis for Study 1

	Model	χ^2	df	RMSEA	TLI	CFI	IFI	SRMR
1	5-factors (LAGO, PAGO, Familiarity, Value Congruence, Organizational Attraction)	310.55	179	0.07	0.94	0.95	0.95	0.06
2	4-factors(GO, Familiarity, Value Congruence, Organizational Attraction)	491.43	183	0.13	0.87	0.89	0.89	0.11
3	4-factors(LAGO, PAGO, Familiarity, Value Congruence and Organizational Attraction combined)	578.59	183	0.14	0.83	0.86	0.86	0.083

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability estimates, and Correlations among Measures for Study 1

Measure	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1 Learning-approach goal orientation	5.77	.67	(.86)				
2 Performance-avoid goal orientation	4.10	1.15	-.33	(.88)			
3 Value congruence	4.44	1.00	.20	.06	(.96)		
4 Familiarity	5.03	1.07	.20	-.06	.62	(.74)	
5 Organizational attraction	4.88	1.09	.19	.08	.58	.64	(.90)

Note. $N = 113$. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) are reported along the diagonal. Correlations larger than .18 are significant at the $p < .05$ level; Correlations larger than .24 are significant at the $p < .01$ level.

Table 3

Results from Multiple Regression Analysis of Direct and Moderation Effects for Study 1

	H1 (without controlling for Goal Orientation)	H1 (after controlling for Goal Orientation)	H2	H3
Intercept	2.567**	2.567**	2.757**	2.572**
Familiarity	0.469**	0.469**	0.433**	0.464**
<i>Person-environment fit main effects</i>				
Value congruence (VC)	0.285**	0.279**	0.307**	0.285**
<i>Goal orientation main effects</i>				
LAGO	-	0.129	0.113	0.113
PAGO	-	0.068	0.067	0.069
<i>Interaction terms</i>				
LAGO*VC	-	-	-0.333*	-
PAGO*VC	-	-	-	-0.029
R^2	0.391**	0.465**	0.487**	0.466**

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4

Summary of Fit statistics, showing the results of CFA analysis for Study 2

	Model	χ^2	df	RMSEA	TLI	CFI	IFI	SRMR
1	12-factors (LAGO, PAGO, Familiarity, Org. Attraction and the eight factors on values)	1064.23	753	0.04	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.05
2	11-factors (GO, Familiarity, Org. Attraction, four Individual values, four Organizational values)	1430.41	764	0.07	0.93	0.94	0.94	0.07
3	6-factors (LAGO, PAGO, Familiarity, Org. Attraction, Individual values, Organizational values)	2518.66	806	0.12	0.81	0.82	0.83	0.11
4	8-factors (LAGO, PAGO, Familiarity, four Individual values, Combined Organizational factor)	2788.03	791	0.12	0.81	0.83	0.83	0.09
5	8-factors (LAGO, PAGO, Familiarity, Org. Attraction, Relationships, Security, Prestige, Autonomy)	2468.36	791	0.13	0.81	0.83	0.83	0.15

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics, Reliability estimates, and Correlations among Measures for Study 2

	Measure	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8	9.	10.	11.	12.
Individual Values															
	1. Relationships	5.86	0.79	(.86)											
	2. Prestige	5.59	0.77	.53	(.76)										
	3. Security	5.49	0.95	.27	.35	(.90)									
	4. Autonomy	5.31	0.86	.35	.53	.24	(.86)								
Organizational Values															
	5. Relationships	5.10	1.09	.34	.21	.20	.14	(.92)							
	6. Prestige	5.19	0.97	.28	.32	.18	.11	.44	(.90)						
	7. Security	4.84	1.10	.06	.15	.29	.16	.53	.33	(.93)					
	8. Autonomy	4.69	1.15	.28	.18	.19	.24	.69	.47	.51	(.93)				
Familiarity															
	9. Familiarity	4.69	1.30	.12	.32	.26	.45	.45	.36	.32	.40	(.78)			
Moderators															
	10. LAGO	5.82	0.70	.26	.53	.20	.18	.18	.18	.14	.12	.34	(.89)		
	11. PAGO	3.74	1.29	-.10	-.13	-.01	-.16	-.16	.03	-.02	.01	.01	-.38	(.89)	
Outcome															
	12. Org. Att.	4.90	1.25	.09	.14	.20	.28	.28	.14	.18	.26	.24	.13	-.05	(.92)

Note. $N = 160$. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) are reported along the diagonal. Correlations larger than .15 are significant at the $p < .05$ level; Correlations larger than .20 are significant at the $p < .01$ level.

Table 6a

Results from Multiple Regression Analysis of Direct and Moderation Effects for Study 2

Dimension	Constant	X	Y	X ²	X*Y	Y ²	Line of Congruence		Line of Incongruence		R ²	Moderation Effect	
							R ² Change						
	b ₀	b ₁	b ₂	b ₃	b ₄	b ₅	b ₁ +b ₂	b ₃ +b ₄ +b ₅	b ₁ -b ₂	b ₃ -b ₄ +b ₅		LAGO	PAGO
Value Congruence													
Relationships	3.086**	0.111	0.365	-0.078	0.122	-0.129	0.475	-0.085	-0.254	-0.330	0.113*	0.080*	0.052
Security	3.674**	0.080	-0.131	-0.130*	0.100	0.117	-0.051	0.087	0.211	-0.113	0.135**	0.068*	0.060
Prestige	3.831**	0.344	0.026	0.047	-0.100	0.055	0.370	-0.092	0.319	0.108	0.073	0.047	0.025
Autonomy	3.489**	0.344**	0.026	-0.047*	-0.100**	0.055*	0.370	-0.092	0.319**	0.108*	0.197**	0.027	0.028

Table 6b

Control variables:

	Familiarity	LAGO	PAGO
Relationships	0.106	0.154	0.013
Security	0.160	0.065	-0.012
Prestige	0.192*	0.009	-0.050
Autonomy	0.202*	0.114	-0.044

Note. Change in R^2 was analyzed using linear contrasts to test the significance of the coefficients representing the block of higher order interaction terms involving the moderation term (M) in equation 2. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Figure 1. Plot of moderation effects for learning approach goal orientation for study 1

Figure 2. Organizational Image Circumplex.

Figure 3. Idealized response surface illustrating a PE fit effect based on equation 1.

Figure 4. Response surface linking organizational and individual values on autonomy to organizational attraction.

Figure 5a. *Response surface at low level of LAGO*

Figure 5b. *Response surface at moderate level of LAGO*

Figure 5c. *Response surface at high level of LAGO*

Figure 5. Response surfaces linking organizational and individual values on relationships to organizational attraction at low, moderate, and high levels of learning approach goal orientation (LAGO).

Figure 6a. Response Surface at low level of LAGO

Figure 6b. Response Surface at moderate level of LAGO

Figure 6c. Response Surface at high level of LAGO

Figure 6. Response surfaces linking organizational and individual values on security to organizational attraction at low, moderate, and high levels of learning approach goal orientation (LAGO).

Appendix

Employers used for Study 1

DBS Bank
OCBC Bank
Exxon Mobil
SingTel
Singapore Tourism Board

Employers used for Study 2

Great Eastern
AXA
CPF Board
UOB Bank
Credit Suisse
Singapore Exchange Ltd
Citigroup
CIMB Group
HSBC
Monetary Authority of Singapore
Hay Group
Singapore Airlines
IBM
Shell
Ogilvy
SingTel
Economic Development Board
Accenture
Singapore Tourism Board
Four Seasons Hotel