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Person-Organization Fit Effects on Organizational Attraction:

A Test of An Expectations-based Model

Abstract

This study investigates the mechanisms that explain why person-organization (PO) fit impacts organizational attraction. Adopting Edwards and Cable's (2009) approach, an integrative model is developed around the idea that experiencing value congruence during the recruitment process perpetuates certain expectations about future work environments and employer relationships. These expectations in turn have a positive impact on organizational attraction. Evidence from a longitudinal study on a sample of job seekers suggests that expected opportunities for value expression and need fulfillment offered the most viable explanations of value congruence effects. The implications of important observed differences in the experience of PO fit between job seekers and full-time employees are discussed.

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Hiring the right talent is a key concern for all organizations, where attracting top applicants constitutes an important way to build competitive advantage (Barney, 1986; Yu & Cable, 2012). Although several predictors of organizational attraction have been identified from years of research, few have garnered as much recent attention as person-organization (PO) fit (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2006). The importance of PO fit to organizational attraction is highlighted by Chapman and colleagues' (2005) meta-analysis, which indicates that PO fit accounts for as much as 31% of the variance in organizational attraction. More recently, fit perceptions have also been identified as the strongest predictor of applicant attraction relative to other factors like job and organization characteristics, and the recruitment process (Uggerslev, Fassina & Kraichy, 2012). Establishing PO fit has thus been identified as a powerful tactic to attract high quality talent for organizations (Collins & Han, 2004). Yet, despite a good amount of evidence supporting the use of PO fit as a tool for attracting talent, several issues continue to cloud our current understanding of PO fit experience in a job search context.

First, there is a general lack of understanding about *why* PO fit affects organizational attraction. Most research has relied on the common notion that "fit" is a good thing and hence must lead to positive outcomes like attraction (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert & Shipp, 2006; Yu, 2009). Though several different explanations have been used to account for the relationship between PO fit and organizational attraction, they have largely gone untested. For instance, Tom (1971) argues that individuals choose to join organizations with similar personality traits because it facilitates self-enhancement by allowing them to express or "implement" their self concept (p. 575). In contrast, Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection-

Attrition model suggests that people are attracted to employers with similar qualities so as to ensure that their psychological needs will be satisfied on the job (Bowen, Ledford & Nathan, 1991; Cable & Judge, 1996). Though these arguments may both constitute plausible explanations of PO fit effects, such explanations have seldom been explicitly tested, compared, or integrated into a single parsimonious model.

Second, existing recruitment research also largely fails to take into account the multidimensional nature of the PO fit construct. In her influential review, Kristof (1996) highlighted two distinct forms of fit where the supplementary version is based on similarity between person and organizational entities, whereas the complementary version depends on whether either the person or the organization provides what the other party needs (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Unfortunately, early PO fit research among job seekers has seldom distinguished between these distinct types of fit (Adkins, Russell & Werbel, 1994; Bretz, Ash & Dreher, 1989; Cable & Judge, 1994; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Turban & Keon, 1993). Although some recent research draws a distinction between the two (Carless, 2005; Kristof-Brown, 2000), it has not gone beyond examining the independent effects of complementary and supplementary fit on recruitment outcomes. As such, our knowledge about how these distinct types of fit may be interrelated during the recruitment process is limited. Given that both types of PO fit draw from the same general PO fit framework and are often linked to the same recruitment outcomes, this issue also signifies a problematic lack of parsimony (Cable & Edwards, 2004).

Edwards and Cable (2009) recently addressed similar issues when they developed and tested an integrated model that brought together key explanations of value-based supplementary fit (i.e. value congruence) effects on attitudinal outcomes. Their findings provided insight into the exact processes through which fit influenced outcomes like job satisfaction and

organizational identification. This study adopts a similar approach to address the paucity of research that explains why supplementary and complementary types of PO fit matter to job seekers. Specifically, the current theoretical model is developed based on the foundational work provided by two studies that have provided crucial insight into PO fit effects. The first study is Cable and Edwards' (2004) integration of supplementary and complementary versions of fit, which showed that both types of fit could work together to impact outcomes. The second study is Edwards and Cable's (2009) investigation of the mediating processes that are involved in transmitting value congruence effects onto positive outcomes. The current model adopts Edwards and Cable's (2009) approach to integrate key explanations drawn from the job search literature, positioning them as mediators of the effects of value congruence on organizational attraction. Rather than just being a straightforward replication of Edwards and Cable's (2009) study on full-time employees in a different job search context, the current model incorporates and develops theoretical explanations that are unique to the context of job search. For instance, the current model contains specific relationships between the two distinct types of supplementary and complementary fit that were not investigated in Edwards and Cable's (2009) study.

This model is tested using longitudinal data gathered from a sample of job seekers progressing through their job search. Like in Edwards and Cable's (2009) study, results indicate that certain explanations hold significantly more weight compared to others. However, the explanations that receive support differ considerably from those that Edwards and Cable (2009) observed in their study. Current findings thus point toward different psychological processes governing the experience of PO fit between job seekers and full-time employees.

Theory and Hypothesis Development

PO fit, Expectations, and Organizational Attraction

Expectations about the rewards of organizational membership are hugely influential during job search (Wanous, 1977). Job seekers invariably form expectations about organizational and job characteristics when evaluating future employers (Irving & Meyer, 1994). Recruiters thus try to create positive expectations about future workplaces through their recruitment activities and communications (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey & Edwards, 2000).

Expectations are salient during job search because job seekers face a good amount of uncertainty about future employers and their work environments. Signaling theory argues that such uncertainty encourages job seekers to try to make sense of their job search through socio-cognitive processes that involve reflection, interpretation, and giving meaning to their experiences with potential employers (Connelly, Certo, Ireland & Reutzel, 2011; Spence, 1973). Such sense-making takes place when individuals infer unobservable characteristics of employer organizations based on their experiences prior to organizational entry. For example, Rynes and colleagues' (1991) found that job seekers interpreted a variety of experiences during recruitment as symbolic of other unobserved organizational attributes such as organizational efficiency and workplace culture. Thus, individual experiences during job search serve as an inferential base for the formation of expectations about what working at a particular organization is going to be like.

The current model of PO fit is based on the idea that perceived PO fit with employers during job search is important because it encourages the development of certain expectations about organizations and future employment relationships. Individuals associate value congruence with certain important organizational attributes that in turn influence how attracted they are to certain employers. Therefore, understanding the type of expectations that value congruence engenders contributes to the literature by improving our understanding of why PO fit affects organizational attraction.

Research has typically conceptualized job seeker expectations using a wide range of job and organizational attributes ranging from functional aspects like pay, work hours, and security to more symbolic aspects like prestige and personal growth (Greenhaus, Sugalski & Crispin, 1978; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Sheard, 1970). The present investigation builds on such work to investigate and compare different types of expectations that explain how PO fit impacts organizational attraction. Research on recruitment and job search has used several distinct expectations-based explanations to account for the relationship between PO fit and organizational attraction. These expectations are seen to mediate the relationship between PO fit and organizational attraction in the proposed model.

The majority of recent research on PO fit has conceptualized the construct in the form of value congruence, which exists when job seekers and potential employers attach similar importance to certain work-based values such as relationships, autonomy, and prestige (Chatman, 1989). Such research typically suggests that job seekers are more attracted to employer organizations whose perceived values match their own (Adkins et al., 1994; Cable & Judge, 1996; 1997; Judge & Bretz, 1992). The specific types of values investigated in this study are: *relationships*, *security*, *prestige*, and *autonomy*. These values are drawn from Schwartz's (1992) circumplex model of human values, which reflects a comprehensive range of values across all individuals and societies. Subsequent research by Cable and Edwards (2004) identified these values as core work-related values that represent markers along the ends of the two axes along which basic human motivations are differentiated. Relationships (i.e. social connections with coworkers) and prestige (i.e. enjoying status and respect) represent values at either end of the *self-transcendence versus self-enhancement* axis respectively. In contrast, security (i.e. job stability) and autonomy (i.e. control over how work is performed) represent corresponding ends

of the *conservation versus openness to change* axis (Schwartz, 1992; 1994). Selecting these dimensions does not deny the existence of other ones that could potentially also apply to PO fit. Rather, focusing on these four dimensions allows the current investigation to focus on a manageable set of dimensions that are relevant and comprehensive enough to investigate relationships involving PO fit (cf. Cable & Edwards, 2004; Edwards & Rothbard, 1999).

Expectations of Opportunities for Value Expression

Value expression has significant implications for individuals and their self-esteem. The ability to express one's values is important to maintaining a positive sense of self, where opportunities for value expression can bring about self-affirmation and protect against threats to self-esteem (Steele & Liu, 1983). The opportunity to express one's values also plays an important role during job search. Individuals make public statements about what they value through their job choices because organizational membership is an important component of one's social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cable & Turban, 2001). Job choice thus plays an important role in developing one's social identity through the expression of values (Tom, 1971).

Value congruence is commonly associated with a relationship where an outcome is maximized when both person and organization attach the same level of importance to a certain value. Figure 1 displays this ideal value congruence effect, where the downward curving surface along from the left to the right of the figure illustrates the outcome reaching its highest point when person and organizational values are equal. Situations that encourage the expression of desired values exist when an organization is perceived to have a culture characterized by the same set of values as the individual (Chatman, 1989). When an employer is perceived to have a culture characterized by the same level of importance ascribed to relationships, prestige, security, and autonomy it provides validation for individuals who would then feel that they have the

freedom to express their similar set of values within such an organization (Davis, 1981). For instance, individuals would feel that they are free to express their values for relationships through collaboration and cooperation within an organization that also values work relationships among its employees. The first hypothesis is therefore:

H1: Expected opportunities for value expression are maximized when value congruence exists.

Expectations of Communication Quality

Value congruence also has significant implications for the quality of expected communications with future coworkers. In the job search context, communication quality refers to the nature of interactions involving other individuals (e.g. coworkers and supervisors) who are likely to be future colleagues. Positive communications are characterized by interactions that are accurate, open, involving, and responsive (Goldhaber, Yates, Porter, & Lesniak, 1978). The reinforcement-affect paradigm argues that individuals seek out future interaction opportunities with other people who are perceived to hold similar values (Clore & Byrne, 1974; Sunnafrank & Ramires, 2004). Partners who are more similar enjoy more responsive and involving interactions because they have a good understanding of each other's cognitive style (Davis, 1981), which can be especially beneficial at work. For instance, value similarity allows individuals to enjoy the benefits of a common system for cognitive processing and communication at the workplace (Meglino, Ravlin & Adkins, 1989). Therefore, job seekers should expect to communicate well with future coworkers when potential employers are perceived to hold similar values because they expect such similarity to facilitate information exchange and coordination with future coworkers.

H2a: Expected communication quality is maximized when value congruence exists

Expected communication quality should also be related to opportunities for value expression. Social interactions with future coworkers constitute a main avenue for value expression, where opportunities to express values are expected to manifest in open and honest communications with coworkers (Davis, 1981). It is through such social interactions and positive communications that one's values are demonstrated and reinforced, playing a key role in the shaping of one's self concept (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

H2b: Expected opportunities for value expression are positively related to expected communication quality

Expectations of Predictability

Value congruence also facilitates expectations about the predictability of future work environments, where predictability refers to the certainty of beliefs about how others behave and how events unfold in the future (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). Uncertainty reduction theory argues that value similarity affords predictability in interpersonal relationships (Berger, 2005). Individuals are able to make valid inferences about other similarly perceived partners using their own values and personality (Neyer, Banse, & Asendorpf, 1999). Likewise, the reinforcement-affect model also argues that interpersonal similarity allows one to predict and interpret what is going on around him or her with more confidence (Byrne & Griffitt, 1973). Value congruence thus breeds expectations of predictability in future employer relationships because individuals can effectively refer to their own motives and goals to understand and foresee the future actions of a company and its employees (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Schein, 1990). Job seekers can thus expect more predictable future work settings when they and future employers ascribe the same level of importance to fundamental values like relationships, prestige, security, and autonomy because they are familiar with the type of organizational culture that characterizes the company.

H3a: Expected predictability is maximized when value congruence exists

Expectations for accurate, open, and involving communication should be associated with more predictability regarding the future work environment, job role requirements, and work habits of coworkers (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Reilly & DiAngelo, 1990). Moreover, clear and open communications are critical for resolving the ambiguities and uncertainty typically confronted in new work environments (Reichers, 1987). These ideas are also consistent with uncertainty reduction theory which emphasizes that communication makes organizational life more predictable by reducing uncertainty in social interactions (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Berger, 2005).

*H3b: Expected communication quality is positively related to expected predictability***Expectations of Trust**

Trust refers to the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will act in ways that are desirable to the individual (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Value congruence is conducive to the development of future employment relationships that are characterized by trust. A person's value system guides the type of behaviors, events, and situations that he or she finds desirable (Jones & George, 1998). Therefore, value alignment with a potential employer creates security in beliefs that an organization would not behave in a way that is against the interests of its employees (Devos, Spini & Schwartz, 2002). Research on interpersonal relationships also argues that perceived similarity leads to expectations of being treated with benevolence by the other party, where benevolence is an important antecedent to trust (Mayer et al., 1995). Thus, job seekers would expect to be respected and well-treated when potential employers are perceived to treat relationships, prestige, security, and autonomy with the same level of importance.

H4a: Expected trust is maximized when value congruence exists

Expected trust is also related to opportunities for value expression. Trusting employment relationships should be expected when one feels that he or she has opportunities to express important self-values with an employer. The free and open expression of values also reinforces social relationships which accentuate feelings of trust (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Moreover, the positive feelings that accompany value expression also facilitate the development of affect-based trust that underlies interpersonal relationships at work (McAllister, 1995).

H4b: Expected opportunities for value expression is positively related to expected trust

Effective high quality communication takes place within the context of trusting relationships (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Williams, 2007). Firms that practice human resource policies that encourage knowledge exchange through positive communications successfully create organizational climates of trust and cooperation (Collins & Smith, 2006). Furthermore, since trust involves expectations of how other parties will act, it should also be enhanced when high predictability is expected (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Mayer et al., 1995). Therefore, expectations of work environments offering both positive communication and predictability should be associated with trusting employer relationships.

H4c: Expected communication quality is positively related to expected trust

H4d: Expected predictability is positively related to expected trust

Expectations of Need Fulfillment

In contrast to the supplementary type of PO fit that value congruence represents, complementary type of fit can also exist during job search (Kristof, 1996). Complementary fit has often been conceptualized as *need fulfillment* where employers are evaluated according to their ability to supply rewards that meet the psychological needs of potential hires. Expectations

of need fulfillment thus deal with job seeker perceptions of whether their needs will be met through membership in an organization (Cable & Judge, 1994; Turban & Keon, 1993). Recent research indicates that both value congruence and need fulfillment represent two distinct types of fit that can work together to influence important outcomes (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Resick, Baltes & Shantz, 2007). Therefore, the current model not only positions value congruence and need fulfillment as distinct constructs, but also proposes how they each work together to influence organizational attraction.

Perceptions of value congruence are especially salient during job search where individuals often compare how employers' culture and values fit with their own (Schneider, 1987; Tom, 1971). Past research has argued that job applicants actively consider value congruence with potential employers so as to ensure future need fulfillment and satisfaction with their jobs (Bowen et al., 1991; Cable & Judge, 1996; Schneider, 1987). After all, most employers strive to invest in fulfilling the needs of employees who espouse values that are congruent with the organization's culture (Schein, 1992). To truly understand how value congruence is related to need fulfillment it is important to investigate how the components of need fulfillment, i.e. psychological needs and organizational supplies, are related to individual and organizational values (Cable & Edwards, 2004). For instance, although individual values and psychological needs are distinct and stable constructs to the extent that values are based upon learned preferences whereas needs are considered basic requirements for healthy functioning, they are nonetheless closely related to each other because both represent fundamental attributes that influence affect and motivate behavior (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Locke, 1976).

Correspondingly, expected organizational supplies should be influenced by organizational values because employers would naturally offer rewards and inducements that are

in line with the overall strategy and culture of the firm (Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Schein, 1992). Employers who value work relationships are thus more likely to offer work environments that are conducive to teamwork and collaboration. Similarly, those valuing security are likely to offer job stability and work to maintain long-term employment relationships (Kuhn, 2009). Therefore, in addition to individual values and psychological needs being related to each other, value congruence and need fulfillment are also related such that perceptions of organizational values influence what job seekers can expect employers to offer employees in terms of provisions and rewards.

H5a: Values congruence is related to expected need fulfillment where individual values are positively related to psychological needs, whereas organizational values are positively related to expected organizational supplies

Job seekers make symbolic inferences about employer organizations so that they can evaluate the degree to which membership with that organization can satisfy their needs for self-expression (Highhouse, Thornbury & Little, 2007). Expressing values satisfies individual needs to manage and define one's social identity and obtain social approval (Highhouse et al., 2007; Shavitt, 1989). Furthermore, value-expressing behaviors also have a general self-affirming effect on self-esteem that leads individuals to feel that their psychological needs are being fulfilled (Steele & Liu, 1983). Therefore, perceived opportunities to express values should engender expectations that a job with a particular employer will provide inducements that will satisfy one's psychological needs.

H5b: Expected opportunities for value expression are related to expected organizational supplies so that need fulfillment is achieved

Positive communications are widely recognized as a requirement for healthy work relationships and organizational success (Muchinsky, 1977; Wayne, Shore & Liden, 1997). Moreover, effective communications with superiors and coworkers are also expected to support career self-management which in turn drives career success (Kidd, Jackson & Hirsch, 2003). Therefore, positive communications should characterize a thriving working environment where individuals can expect organizational supplies to meet their psychological needs.

H5c: Expected communication quality is positively related to expected organizational supplies so that need fulfillment is achieved

Individuals vary in their need to reduce uncertainty in their lives, where predictability is viewed as a characteristic of desirable social interactions (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994). The need for predictability should be particularly salient for job seekers who are faced with considerable uncertainty during job search due to the limited amount of accurate and reliable information about future employers (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2011; Connelly et al., 2011). Individuals are thus likely to have higher expectations that organizational supplies will meet their needs when the employer is perceived to offer a predictable work environment.

H5d: Expected predictability is related to expected organizational supplies so that need fulfillment is achieved

Finally, individuals also derive need fulfillment when they enjoy trusting relationships with their employers. Most individuals are motivated to form and maintain positive stable relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Positive trusting work relationships satisfy innate psychological needs which in turn have positive implications for individual well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Hence, expectations of trust for future employers should be positively linked to the perceived ability of such employers to offer organizational supplies that fulfill one's needs.

H5e: Expected trust is related to expected organizational supplies so that need fulfillment is achieved

Organizational Attraction

According to Wanous (1977; p. 601): “the typical individual is concerned with satisfying personal needs through membership in an organization”. Being attracted to certain employers is useful for job seekers because it allows job seekers to execute plans and realize goals related to their pursuit of jobs with these organizations (Snyder & DeBono, 1989). These ideas are consistent with those of interactional psychologists who argue that individuals are attracted to organizations that are perceived to offer work environments wherein they can fulfill their needs (Diener, Larson, & Emmons, 1984; Murray, 1938).

Past research has shown that the nature of need fulfillment can vary across different facets of psychological needs (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Edwards & Cable, 2009)¹. Hence, the idealized fit relationship form illustrated in Figure 1 where attraction is maximized when the expected organizational supplies match psychological needs may not apply to all types of needs and supplies. Edwards and colleagues (1998) argue that different relationship forms linking needs and supplies exist depending on how an outcome like attraction varies when supplies exceed individual needs. For instance, job seekers should be more attracted to organizations where working relationships approach their desired amount. In addition, attraction should continue to increase as expected working relationships exceed their own current needs because the value of relationships as important social resources for the future is widely recognized (Scott & Judge, 2009). Similarly, attraction should also increase as expected autonomy exceeds one’s needs because excess autonomy signifies control over work situations

¹ Note that need fulfillment is investigated along the same dimensions as value congruence so that the relationship between these two constructs can be analyzed in a commensurate way (Chapman, 1989; Kristof, 1996).

that can be used to make positive adjustments to other areas of one's work environment like social network building and job crafting (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Yu, 2013). In contrast, more conventional fit relationships should be observed for prestige where excess prestige may cause undue work stress from the burden of increased visibility and expectations that accompany too much status. Likewise, excess security should also prove distressing and unattractive because job stability can be associated with a lack of risk taking and meaningful learning experiences (Edmondson, 1999). Furthermore, newer hires also tend to expect having to change jobs several times during the early period of their careers, which implies that too much job security may actually hinder their search for new challenging work environments (Cappelli, 1999). Therefore we should expect the following relationship forms linking attraction to the different needs-supplies dimensions.

H6a: Attraction increases as supplies increase toward needs and continues to increase as supplies exceed needs for relationships and autonomy

H6b: Attraction increases as supplies increase toward needs and decreases as supplies exceed needs for prestige and security

Job seekers are also attracted to organizations that allow them to define their social identity through value expression (Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994). Highhouse and colleague's (2007) theory of symbolic attraction argues that job seekers are attracted to potential employers to the extent that the organization holds certain images that allows the individual to express certain characteristics about themselves to others (Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, & Slaughter, 1999; Tom, 1971). Attraction to symbolic characteristics associated with certain employers like prestige, sincerity, and respect allows job seekers to express to society how they want to be perceived (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). A job seeker thus expresses his or

her concern for the environment by being attracted to employers with a good track record for environmental activism (Jones, Willness & Madey, 2013). Therefore, opportunities for value expression lead to organizational attraction because they facilitate the establishment of social identity and attainment of social approval (Highhouse et al., 2007).

H6c: Expected opportunities for value expression are positively related to organizational attraction

Expectations for good communications also facilitate organizational attraction because positive social interactions mean that individuals can communicate with greater confidence and less effort on the job (Berger, 2005; Selfhout, Denissen, Branje, & Meeus, 2009). Similarly, expectations of workplace predictability also make organizations more attractive where reduced uncertainty at organizational entry is attractive to job applicants (Walker, Bauer, Cole, Bernerth, Field & Short, 2013). Individuals with such expectations would expect a less stressful transition from outsider to employee, which consequently implies an easier adjustment process to a new work environment (Ashford & Black, 1996). Finally, trust has previously been linked to the experience of positive affect (McAllister, 1995), where being around trusted parties can engender feelings of excitement and enthusiasm (Jones & George, 1998). Job seekers should thus be attracted to organizations which they expect will offer trusting work relationships.

H6d: Expected communication quality is positively related to organizational attraction

H6e: Expected predictability is positively related to organizational attraction

H6f: Expected trust is positively related to organizational attraction

In summary, the hypotheses relating value congruence to the above mentioned five concepts and subsequently to organizational attraction imply different mediating mechanisms that translate the effect of value congruence on to attraction. These mediating relationships thus

constitute different explanations of why PO fit in the form of value congruence influences attraction. The following study is designed to evaluate the plausibility of these explanations (see Figure 2).

Method

Sample and Study Design

Survey data was gathered over two years for this study at a large business school in a developed Asian economy. The sample consisted of 287 (127 year 1; 160 year 2) final year undergraduate students who were looking for jobs and going through the recruitment process. Researchers collaborated with the school's career services to identify organizations that were seen by job seekers as viable future employers. School recruitment records were used to identify organizations that were viable future employers of the current sample. Employers who were expected to recruit heavily from the current sample were defined as those who had historically hired students from the school and were slated to participate in on-campus recruitment events. 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. It is thus likely that participants would have encountered information about the characteristics of these employers from their peers as well as through the school's career services, giving them sufficient basis to respond meaningfully to psychometric measures of employer perceptions².

² Previous data from an unrelated project based on a similar sample of job seekers also indicates that the current participants were relatively familiar with the employers featured in this study. Specifically, this data was gathered from a previous unrelated project on employer brand equity done in collaboration with the same school's career services office. Data on employer familiarity was gathered a year before the current study. 877 undergraduate job seekers that provided this data for employer reputation responded to online questions assessing their employer brand perceptions of prospective employers. Employer familiarity was assessed using Collins' (2007) 4-item measure (e.g. "I can recognize this company among other employers"; $\alpha = .79$) on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Similar to the design of this study, job seekers from this previous project were assigned to rate the brand equity of employer organizations from their area of study that were randomly chosen from

The above process identified 31 employers from a variety of industries (e.g. banking and finance, technology, consulting, tourism, conglomerates), where each industry was represented by at least three employers. Each job seeker rated their value congruence, hypothesized mediating expectations, and attraction toward one potential employer from their area of study. Employers were randomly assigned to job seekers based on the relevance between employer industry and the job seeker's area of specialization (e.g. actuarial science, banking and finance, information technology, human resource consulting, marketing, and tourism and hospitality management). Hence, a banking major would be assigned to rate an employer from the finance industry, whereas a tourism major would rate an employer from the hospitality industry.

A longitudinal survey design was used, where respondents were surveyed three times during the recruitment process. To be consistent with the proposed model in Figure 2, the independent variable value congruence was assessed during time 1, whereas the mediators and dependent variable organizational attraction were assessed at times 2 and 3 respectively. 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. This meant that job seekers were first surveyed approximately four weeks after the start of the first academic semester of their graduating year because that was the time when employers started their

a larger pool of employers identified by the career services personnel as organizations who had an established track record of hiring from the school. Overall familiarity ratings for each employer were calculated by taking the average rating across each of the job seekers assigned to rate it, where each employer was rated by an average of 24 job seekers. Familiarity ratings were available for 25 companies that were included in the present study. The mean familiarity rating across these companies was $M = 4.84$ (Range was 3.45-6.00). Results from a one-sample T-test show that this mean value was significantly higher than a critical value of "4" which represents "neither agree nor disagree" on the scale ($t = 16.38; p < .01$). This result suggests that individuals agreed to a slight extent that they were familiar with these employers. Therefore, these findings indicate that the participants in the current study would likely have been familiar enough with their assigned employers to form perceptions about their organization and workplace. Note that this previously obtained data also comes from the same data set from which reputation ratings that were used as control variable in the current study.

recruiting activities. The second survey was administered 12 to 16 weeks following the first survey (about 3 weeks into the second semester) during the time where most employers were still actively recruiting and encouraging applications. In addition, the school's career services also ensure that students are exposed to a variety of job search and recruitment-related activities throughout their 3 to 4 years of undergraduate studies. Such activities include career coaching and counseling, recruitment job talks, alumni networking events, online job posting portals, and email job alerts. Therefore, job seekers would have had ample opportunities to be exposed to information about the featured employers through both their own job search behaviors (e.g. talking with friends and school alumni; searching company websites) and their participation in employer recruitment activities by this point of time. These individuals were thus well-positioned to form perceptions of prospective employers and future work environments. The third and final survey assessing organizational attraction was administered about 8 weeks later towards the end of the second semester when most of those in the current sample were expected to begin evaluating organizations as potential employers with both application and job choices being just around the corner.

Job seekers were surveyed using the online Survey Monkey program. A mass email containing the survey link was sent to final-year graduating students majoring in the above-mentioned fields advertising a \$10 reward for participation. The combined response rate for this first survey was 47.8% ($N = 430$). The second survey assessing the hypothesized expectation mediators was sent to only those who responded to the first survey 12 to 16 weeks later. Of the individuals who were sent the survey, 74.4% ($N = 320$) responded. Similarly, the final survey assessing organizational attraction was only sent to those who responded to the first two surveys,

resulting in a final response rate of 89.7% and a total of 287 matched surveys across the three time periods.³

Measures

The Work Values Survey (WVS; Cable & Edwards, 2004) was used to measure the components of value congruence and expected need fulfillment. The WVS is based on Schwartz's (1992) circumplex model of human values, which is supposed to reflect a comprehensive range of values across all individuals and societies. It was chosen not only because it meaningfully captures the four values identified in the hypotheses, but also because it allows the person (e.g. individual values and psychological needs) and environment (e.g. organizational values and supplies) to be measured on commensurate dimensions. Such a measurement approach facilitates the direct comparison of person and environment constructs, which is recommended for PO fit research (Chatman, 1989; Edwards et al., 1998). The WVS has also demonstrated good psychometric properties and construct validity in previous research on value congruence and need fulfillment (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Edwards & Cable, 2009). Each of the four value dimensions was measured by three items (e.g. Sample item for value for Relationships: "Forming relationships with coworkers"; sample item for Security: "Being certain of keeping my job").

Time 1. 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). Using the same response scale, corresponding organizational values were assessed with respect to the

³ Since the data was gathered over two cohorts of job seekers, the breakdown of response rates are as follows. Year 1 cohort: Total sample size = 477, time 1 $n = 178$, time 2 $n = 134$, time 3 $n = 127$; Year 2 cohort: Total sample size = 422, time 1 $n = 252$, time 2 $n = 186$, time 3 $n = 160$.

assigned potential employer, where respondents were asked “How important do you think the following things are at *company XYZ?*” This measurement approach is consistent with previous approaches to measuring value congruence which assess the level of importance of values to both the person and organization (Kristof, 1996).

Time 2. To measure expected need fulfillment, question stems had to be framed to elicit ratings of perceived psychological needs and organizational supplies with respect to future employers. Psychological needs were assessed by asking respondents to indicate with respect to the WVS items “How much of the following things would be the right amount for you to have on your future job?” Similarly, expected organizational supplies were measured with the question, “How much of the following things would be present in your work if you were to have a job at *XYZ?*” A 7-point scale ranging from 1 (none) to 7 (a very great amount) was used.

Expectations of communication quality were assessed by adapting the 6-item scale developed by Edwards and Cable (2009) (e.g. “People in this organization would understand what you say” and “You would communicate openly with others in this organization”) so that expectations about the nature of interactions involving other individuals (e.g. coworkers and supervisors) who are likely to be future colleagues are assessed. Expectations of predictability were also assessed by reframing Edwards and Cable’s (2009) 4-item measure of workplace predictability within a job search context (e.g. “You would be able to predict what is going to happen in this organization” and “You would be able to guess how events are going to develop in this organization”). These expectations of communication quality and predictability in a projected work environment were assessed by asking respondents how often they expected instances listed in the measures to occur if they were employees at the company. A 7-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 7 (Always) was used for these measures.

Expected trust was assessed using Robinson's (1996) 6-item scale (e.g. "This employer would be open and up front with me"), whereas expectations of value expression were assessed using an adapted version of Highhouse and colleagues' (2007) 5-item measure of value expression concern (e.g. "I would like this company to be part of who I am"). Respondents were asked to indicate their expectations about the nature of their relationship with a prospective employer if they were an employee of the company. Responses were elicited using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

Time 3. Finally, 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"). The measure has demonstrated good psychometric properties and construct validity across several studies (Lievens, Van Hoye & Schreurs, 2005).

Control variable. In order to isolate the impact of perceived values congruence on expectations and organizational attraction, the present analyses had to take into account other possible factors impacting these variables. Since previous research has established that employer reputation has a significant effect on attraction and job choice (Cable & Turban, 2001; Collins, 2007; Collins & Han, 2004), the effect of reputation was controlled for in all the current analyses. Specifically, Collins' (2007) 4-item measure was used to assess employer reputation (e.g. "I believe that other students in the school think highly of this company", $\alpha = .96$). Reputation ratings of employers included in this current study were obtained from data gathered from a previous unrelated project on employer brand equity done in collaboration with the same school's career services office. This reputation data was gathered a year before the current data and so it was deemed recent enough to be applied to the current analyses. The 877 undergraduate job seekers that provided this data for employer reputation responded to online questions

assessing their employer brand perceptions of prospective employers. These job seekers were assigned to rate the brand equity of employer organizations from their area of study. These companies were randomly chosen from a larger pool of employers identified by the career services personnel as organizations that had an established track record of hiring from the school. The overall reputation rating for each employer was calculated by taking the average rating across each of the job seekers assigned to rate it. This calculation method is in line with the concept of reputation being made up of the aggregate of the public's affective evaluation of the firm (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Turban & Cable, 2003). Each employer was rated by an average of 24 job seekers. Therefore, all the regression analyses conducted in this study control for the effect of employer reputation on both mediators and organizational attraction.

Although this assignment process facilitated the matching of most reputation ratings for employers used in this current study, such ratings were not available for 6 out of the 31 companies featured in the current study. As such, 63 out of 430 individuals who took the first survey were excluded from the current analyses due to the absence of such data, leaving the number of matched surveys across all three time periods at 239. T-Tests were conducted to check if there were meaningful differences between job seekers who rated the group of employers with reputation ratings and those who rated employers without such ratings. Results from these tests indicate that there were no significant differences between these two groups of job seekers across all dimensions of individual values and psychological needs. Thus, the current analyses were relatively unaffected by this decrease in sample size.

Analyses

The hypotheses were tested by multiple regression models based on the predictors of each of the five mediating constructs and organizational attraction. According to the proposed

model in Figure 2 the only predictor of expected value expression opportunities is value congruence which consists of the relationship between organizational and individual values. This relationship is represented by the following regression equation:

$$V = b_{V0} + b_{V1}O + b_{V2}I + b_{V3}O^2 + b_{V4}OI + b_{V5}I^2 + e_V \quad (1)$$

where V represents value expression, and O and I are organizational and individual values for one of the four measured value dimensions. Quadratic and product terms O^2 , OI , and I^2 were included to facilitate the analysis of PO fit or congruence effects through response surface methodology (Edwards, 1994).

Expected communication quality is predicted by value congruence and value expression. Therefore a regression equation including organizational and individual values as well as value expression was used:

$$C = b_{C0} + b_{C1}O + b_{C2}I + b_{C3}O^2 + b_{C4}OI + b_{C5}I^2 + b_{C6}V + e_C \quad (2)$$

where C refers to communication. The regression equation for expected predictability contains individual and organizational values together with expected communication:

$$P = b_{P0} + b_{P1}O + b_{P2}I + b_{P3}O^2 + b_{P4}OI + b_{P5}I^2 + b_{P6}C + e_P \quad (3)$$

where P refers to predictability. Likewise the equation for expected trust consists of organizational and individual values with the added predictors of expected value expression, communication, and predictability:

$$T = b_{T0} + b_{T1}O + b_{T2}I + b_{T3}O^2 + b_{T4}OI + b_{T5}I^2 + b_{T6}V + b_{T7}C + b_{T8}P + e_T \quad (4)$$

where T denotes the trust variable.

The components of expected need fulfillment were predicted by individual and organizational values and the four other mediator variables. The following equation was used to estimate coefficients involving predictors of the overall combination of psychological needs and

organizational supplies. These coefficients are required for the path analysis of the direct, indirect, and total effects contained in the overall model:

$$\begin{aligned} NS = & b_{NS0} + b_{NS1}O + b_{NS2}I + b_{NS3}O^2 + b_{NS4}OI + b_{NS5}I^2 \\ & + b_{NS6}V + b_{NS7}C + b_{NS8}P + b_{NS9}T + e_{NS} \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

where NS is the block variable representing a combination of needs and expected supplies⁴. As the block variable being predicted in the above equation only represents the total amount of variance that is being predicted for a composite of psychological needs and organizational supplies, additional analyses is needed to unpack exactly how each component of need fulfillment (i.e. needs and supplies) is influenced by the predictor variables. To test the specific relationships predicting psychological needs and organizational supplies respectively, two different regression equations were run. The first part of Hypothesis 5a predicting that individual values are related to psychological needs was assessed via the equation:

$$N = b_{N0} + b_{N1}I + e_N \quad (6)$$

where N refers to psychological needs. Correspondingly, H5a to H5e also predict that expectations for organizational supplies are influenced by organizational values and the four other mediator variables, resulting in the following equation:

$$S = b_{S0} + b_{S1}O + b_{S2}V + b_{S3}C + b_{S4}P + b_{S5}T + e_S \quad (7)$$

where S represents expected organizational supplies. Furthermore, H5a to 5e contain an additional stipulation that organizational supplies are influenced in such a way that they would be brought in line with psychological needs so that need fulfillment can be achieved. Analyzing such a relationship requires applying procedures suited to analyzing need fulfillment as a dependent variable. To this end, Edwards' (1995) regression procedure was employed. This procedure involves employing a regression procedure that makes use of a dummy variable to

⁴ The calculation of block variables is discussed at a later part of this section.

distinguish between two subgroups of job seekers, viz. one subgroup whose expected supplies are less than their psychological needs, and another whose expected supplies exceed their needs (Edwards, 1995). The dummy variable serves as a moderator to determine if slopes representing the effects for the two groups of job seekers differed in a way that is in line with the different ways that need fulfillment can be achieved. For instance, need fulfillment is increased when the expectations of supplies for individuals perceiving insufficient supplies is increased. Similarly, need fulfillment is also increased when expectations for supplies are decreased for individuals originally perceiving excess supplies. A non-significant moderator effect would indicate that the slopes for these subgroups do not differ, at which point both subgroups would be combined to estimate a single relationship between the predictors and organizational supplies. The degree of need fulfillment for this combined group would be represented by the distance between individual job seeker psychological needs and the regression line representing the effects of organizational values, expected value expression opportunities, communications, predictability, and trust on expected supplies. Increasing need fulfillment would be evidenced if this distance decreased significantly as perceptions of the five predictors increased (Cable et al., 2000; Cable & Yu, 2006).

Finally, organizational attraction was predicted by all five mediating mechanisms. Since need fulfillment was now a predictor variable, it was modeled as consisting of its individual components of expected organizational supplies (S) and individual psychological need (N) together with their respective quadratic and product terms. This approach mirrors that of value congruence because it also involves the analysis of fit-based relationships that involve response surface analysis. Therefore the regression model predicting attraction is:

$$OA = b_{OA0} + b_{OA1}S + b_{OA2}N + b_{OA3}S^2 + b_{OA4}SN + b_{OA5}S^2$$

$$+ b_{OA6}V + b_{OA7}C + b_{OA8}P + b_{OA7}T + e_{OA} \quad (8)$$

where OA denotes organizational attraction.

Path analysis of the hypothesized model in Figure 2 was thus based on the multiple regressions of equations 1 to 8, which were used to obtain path coefficients in the form of standardized regression coefficients (Pedhazur, 1982)⁵. Value expression, communication, predictability, and trust were modeled as single variables in the current analysis. Thus, relationships involving these predictor variables were represented by their respective regression coefficients. In contrast, PO fit-based variables like value congruence and need fulfillment were modeled using a series of terms (e.g. O, I, O², OI, and I² for value congruence and S, N, S², SN, and N² for need fulfillment). Therefore, steps had to be taken to facilitate the representation of all relationships involving value congruence and need fulfillment as single path coefficients that facilitate the testing of direct, indirect, and total effects illustrated in Figure 2. Cable and Edwards' (2004) approach of creating block variables for value congruence and need fulfillment was used to deal with this issue.

A block variable is a weighted linear composite of several conceptually related variables, where estimated regression coefficients serve as weights for the individual variables in the block. It is used in path analysis to summarize the effects of a set of independent variables that are related conceptually (Heise, 1972; Igra, 1979). Such variables are also used to represent nonlinear and interactive effects in terms of single path coefficients, which make their use applicable to the current PO fit study (Edwards & Cable, 2009). Two types of such variables

⁵ This study's design meant that the current data from job seekers was nested within the employer organizations that they were assigned to rate. Intraclass correlation coefficients suggest that the degree of this nesting effect on the dependent variables from equations 1 to 8 was minimal, with an average of 3.1% of the variance all dependent variables was due to between employer differences. Comparisons between the current OLS estimates and HLM estimates of the same regression models reveal minimal differences in estimate size (average difference in unstandardized coefficients was only .011) and no differences in the significance of these estimates.

were created to represent value congruence and expected need fulfillment. The value congruence and need fulfillment block variables consist of the five variables made up of organizational and individual values: O, I, O², OI, and I², and the five variables related to organizational supplies and psychological needs: S, N, S², SN, and N² respectively. The block variable associated with equation 1 thus equals $b_{V1}O + b_{V2}I + b_{V3}O^2 + b_{V4}OI + b_{V5}I^2$. The five terms in equation 1 are then replaced with the block variable and then the regression equation is re-estimated to obtain the standardized regression coefficient on the block variable which serves as the single path coefficient (H1) linking value congruence and expected value expression opportunities for the model in Figure 2. The use of block variables leaves the coefficients on other predictors in the regression equation (e.g. equations 2, 3, 4, 5 & 8) unchanged.

The path coefficients calculated from these methods are in turn used to analyze the direct, indirect, and total effects contained in the overall path model. The analysis of such effects facilitates interpretations of the extent to which the mediators in the model translate the effects of value congruence onto organizational attraction. As the indirect and total effects consisted of nonlinear products of multiple path coefficients, bootstrap analysis using bias corrected confidence intervals was employed in the analysis of such effects. The current analyses were performed using the SPSS macro developed by Hayes (2012), which provides an efficient integrated platform to test direct, indirect, and total effects described in the overall model via bootstrapping.

Since the use of block variables only allows one to determine if a group of five terms representing fit is related to another variable, the present approach needs to be supplemented with the analyses of response surfaces to investigate exactly how the individual variables representing person (e.g. individual values, psychological needs) and organization (e.g. values

and supplies) are predicting the hypothesized mediators and the outcome. Designed specifically to determine how the relationship between an outcome varies with absolute levels of individual and organizational variables, this method utilizes the individual component coefficients of each block variable (e.g. O, I, O², OI, and I²) estimated during the construction of these variables. A three-dimensional surface like the one in Figure 1 is used to depict how an outcome like organizational attraction varies with the individual and organizational variables. 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 needs) and organizational (e.g. values and supplies) variables are equal, and (b) the *incongruence line* where individual and organizational variables differ.

Evidence for a fit effect exists when three features of response surfaces are observed (Edwards & Cable, 2009). First, the surface is downward curving along the line of incongruence, which implies that the outcome variable is maximized along the line of congruence (e.g. H1a, 2a, 3a, 4a, 6b). Second, the ridge of the surface is placed along the line of congruence so that the dependent variable is maximized at all levels of the individual and organizational variables. Third, the surface is flat along the line of congruence, which implies that the outcome does not vary when the absolute values of individual and organizational variables are either high or low. These three features were tested using response surface methodology, which stipulates a set of conditions involving the regression coefficients of each component variable for value congruence (e.g. O, I, O², OI, and I²) and need fulfillment (e.g. S, N, S², SN, and N²) (Edwards, 2002). First, a downward curvature would be observed if the linear combination of coefficients for the terms $b_3 - b_4 + b_5$ is negative. Next, the ridge of the surface is placed along the congruence line if the first principal axis of the surface has a slope of 1 and an intercept of 0. Lastly, the linear combinations of $b_1 + b_2$ and $b_3 + b_4 + b_5$ should both be equal to 0 to signify

that the surface is flat along the line of congruence. Satisfying all these three conditions would result in an idealized response surface in the form of that displayed in Figure 1. Regression-based linear contrasts were used to test linear combinations of regression coefficients, while bootstrapping was used to test non-linear combinations (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993). All response surface analyses were conducted using scale-centered individual and organization-related independent variables to aid in the interpretation of results (Edwards, 1994).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics, correlations and reliability estimates are reported in Table 1. Means and standard deviations indicated good dispersion with little evidence of floor or ceiling effects. There were positive relationships between all the mediator variables, suggesting that expectations about employers were all related in some way. Reliability estimates were all generally high with the exception of expected trust ($\alpha = .68$).

Relationships between Value Congruence and Mediators

Table 2 displays results for tests of hypotheses involving value congruence and the mediators, whereas Table 3 summarizes results from the analyses of response surfaces by reporting whether relationships satisfy the conditions required for the inference of fit effects. Since the results from response surfaces were very similar for both individual paths and total effects, the following inferences largely apply to both types of effects unless stated otherwise.

H1 predicted that expected value expression opportunities would be maximized when there is value congruence. As shown in the upper section of Table 2, the path between individual and organizational values and value expression was significant across all four value dimensions. However, when these significant relationships were probed through the analysis of response

surfaces, results summarized in Table 3 indicated that value expression was not maximized when organizational values matched individual values as no downward curvature was obtained across all values. The total effects reported in the lower section of Table 2 are the same for this relationship as there was only a single hypothesized direct effect between values and value expression (Figure 2).

H2a stipulated that value congruence would maximize expected communication quality. The path coefficients reported in the upper section of Table 2 suggest that individual and organizational values were jointly related to communication quality across all value dimensions. Response surface analyses in Table 3 however suggest that there was no downward curving surface that would signify a value congruence effect across all values. Instead, the surface for the relationships dimension was positively sloped along the line of incongruence ($b_1 - b_2 > 0$; $p < .05$), indicating that expectations for positive communications were higher when employers were perceived to value relationships even more than job seekers themselves. Figure 3a displays the response surface plot for this relationship. The response surface for autonomy was positively sloped along the line of congruence ($b_1 + b_2 > 0$; $p < .05$), indicating that expected communication quality was also higher when both employer and job seeker were perceived to place high importance on autonomy (Figure 3b). H2b predicted a positive relationship between expectations for value expression and communication quality. Results in Table 2 support this hypothesis across all value dimensions. Together the paths from values to communication and from value expression to communication make up an indirect effect of values on communication. This indirect effect was added to the direct effect to derive the total effect of values on communication which is reported in the lower section of Table 2. This total effect was significant across all value dimensions.

H3a posited a value congruence effect on expected predictability. Though organizational and individual values were related to predictability for all dimensions except for relationships (Table 2), the nature of this relationship did not conform to that of one where fit maximized predictability as there was again an absence of downward curvature along the line of incongruence (Table 3). In support of H3b, expected communication was also positively related to predictability across all value dimensions. Putting together the direct relationship between values and predictability, and the indirect relationship linking paths for values to communication and communication to predictability, the total effect of values on predictability reported in the lower section of Table 2 was significant for all value dimensions except for relationships.

H4a predicted that value congruence would have a positive effect on expected trust. Results in the upper section of Table 2 reveal that organizational and individual values were only related to expected trust for values on relationships and autonomy. Analyses of response surfaces suggest that there was no value congruence effect with the absence of downward curvature along the line of incongruence. There was however support for H4b and H4c across all value dimensions, which argued for positive relationships between expected trust and value expression and communication quality respectively. In contrast, there was no support for H4d with no relationship observed between trust and expected predictability. Lastly, the total effect linking values and trust was also not significant across all values (lower section of Table 2).

Tables 4a and 4b display the results of analyses designed to probe relationships involving need fulfillment hypothesized in H5a to H5e. The first part of H5a stated that psychological needs would be positively related to individual values. Results reported at the top of Table 4a and 4b indicate support for this relationship across all four value dimensions. The second part of H5a and H5b to H5e predicted that expected organizational supplies would be influenced by

organizational values and the other expectations in such a way that these expectations are brought in line with psychological needs so that need fulfillment is achieved. The moderated regression procedure used to determine how fulfillment was achieved only detected significant differences in slopes representing the effect of expected communication for relationships and prestige dimensions. Therefore, the relationship between expected communication and organizational supplies varied according to whether job seekers perceived companies to offer insufficient or excessive supplies for relationships and prestige relative to their own needs. As reported in Table 4a, estimating these effects for each subgroup reveals that the positive effect of communication on need fulfillment was largely due to individuals who perceived insufficient supplies (group B) increasing their perceptions of supplies. Conversely, job seekers perceiving excess supplies (group A) did not change their perceptions in response to increased communication. These effects were evidenced by the significant positive coefficients for group B and the non-significant coefficients for group A under the expected communication subheading. Therefore, the improvement of fit between needs and expected supplies was achieved mainly by individuals who perceived insufficient supplies increasing their expectations for relationships and prestige. These findings suggest strong support for H5c which predicted a positive relationship between expected communication quality and need fulfillment. Figures 4a and 4b provide graphical representations of these findings for both relationships and prestige.

Moderators for the rest of the predictors were not significant, indicating that changes to expectations of supplies were the same for both job seekers who perceived excessive and those who perceived insufficient amounts of supplies relative to their own needs. Therefore, the regression model was estimated again for both groups combined without the interaction terms (Cable & Yu, 2006). Results reported in Table 4b suggest that organizational values had a

significant positive effect on expected supplies across all value dimensions, whereas value expression had positive effects for all dimensions except for security. Expected predictability was also positively related to supplies for security and autonomy. Overall, these results indicate that although they were not influenced in a way that improved need fulfillment, expectations for organizational supplies were still positively influenced by organizational values and other expectations for value expression opportunities and predictability.

Relationships between Mediators and Organizational Attraction

Table 5 contains the results of tests on relationships between the various expectation mediators and organizational attraction. Results in the upper portion of Table 5 indicate that individual paths linking expected value expression (H6c) and needs- supplies to attraction were significant and positive across all value dimensions. No support was observed for H6d to H6f for relationships involving expected communication quality, predictability, and trust. The total effect linking each mediator to attraction takes into account the inter-relationships between the mediators by considering both the direct effects leading to attraction and the indirect effects that are transmitted onto attraction through the other mediators. Results from the bottom section of Table 5 indicate that these total effects were significant across all value dimensions for all the mediators except for expected predictability.

Since the path relating the block variable representing psychological needs and organizational supplies to organizational attraction was significant, response surfaces were analyzed for the presence of PO fit relationships. Results in Table 3 suggest that the downward curvature characteristic of a fit effect was observed for prestige and security dimensions. Note also that this downward curvature was only observed for the individual path linking needs- supplies to attraction, which controlled for the effects of the other mediators on attraction. In

addition, tests also indicate that the response surfaces involving prestige and security also satisfied the second and third conditions required to infer a fit effect (Table 3). These results indicate strong support for H6b which predicted that attraction would be maximized when expected supplies for prestige and security were in line with psychological needs (Figures 5a and 5b). Results also detected a significant positive slope along the line of incongruence for autonomy, suggesting support for H6a that attraction would continue to increase as expected supplies exceeded needs for autonomy (Figure 5c).

Relationships between Value Congruence and Organizational Attraction

Table 6 reports on the results of analyses of the indirect effects of value congruence on organizational attraction through the five expectation mediators. The total indirect effect incorporating all five mediators as a set was significant across all values. Tests of specific indirect effects also indicate that most of the indirect effects were carried through expectations for value expression and needs-supplies. Tests of the residual effects reported near the bottom of Table 6 indicate that after taking relationships with mediators into account, values did not have a remaining direct effect on attraction for relationships and prestige. This finding implies that the expectations theorized in the current model explained most of the effects of these values on attraction.

Lastly, probing the relationships between values and attraction using response surfaces revealed an absence of downward curvature and fit effects (Table 3). The only relationship of note was on the autonomy dimension where there was a positive slope along the line of incongruence, signifying that attraction was higher when organizations were perceived to value autonomy more than job seekers themselves (Figure 6). In all, these results suggest that although

values impacted attraction indirectly through expected opportunities for value expression and needs-supplies, standard PO fit relationships were not detected for these effects.

Discussion

Decades of research has established person-organization (PO) fit as a powerful predictor of organizational attraction (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012). Such research has however focused on the direct relationships between PO fit and organizational attraction and largely ignored investigating the specific mechanisms that underlie this relationship. Motivated by recent efforts to investigate the theoretical underpinnings of person-environment fit effects among employees (Edwards, 2008; Edwards & Cable, 2009), the current study reviews and expands on past research to identify various possible explanations for PO fit effects among job seekers. The resulting model builds on ideas from social identity and signaling theories by emphasizing the different types of expectations emanating from the experience of PO fit. Tests of this model on a sample of job seekers yielded significant effects for values on most of the proposed expectations-based mediators and attraction, where the effect of values on attraction was largely transmitted through expectations regarding opportunities for value expression and needs-supplies. However, the nature of these relationships did not conform to conventional relationship forms that are associated with value congruence and PO fit.

Research Implications

The current findings have several implications for researchers. First, this study shows that expectations play a key role in aiding our understanding of why individual and organizational values matter to job seekers. Moreover, different types of expectations like expectations for value expression opportunities, communication quality, and predictability were all closely related to each other. Although previous research has highlighted the importance of job seeker

expectations for job choice (Wanous, 1977), much less has been said about the source of these expectations and how different types of expectations may work together to influence employer attraction. This study shows that expectations for value expression and needs-supplies occupy an important part of the underlying psychology behind how job seekers make sense of their values and those of potential employers.

The finding that needs-supplies mediated the effect of values on attraction suggests that both these constructs can occupy meaningful and distinct roles in the prediction of organizational attraction. Although recent research has begun to improve understanding of how different types of fit are interrelated with individual outcomes for individuals already working in organizations (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Resick et al., 2007), an understanding of such relationships is still lacking among job seekers. This study thus provides us with a better understanding of how the constituents of two different types of fit, i.e. value congruence and need fulfillment can be inter-related beyond their independent direct effects on job seeker outcomes. It is worth comparing the current set of findings to those of Cable and Edwards' (2004) study of similar relationships for full-time employees. Similar patterns of results regarding indirect and direct effects were obtained for value dimensions like prestige, security, and autonomy. For instance, both studies found that the indirect effect of values through needs-supplies was significantly larger than the direct relationship between values and attraction for prestige, whereas both indirect and direct effects were significant and similar in magnitude for security. However, different results were observed for relationships, where the direct effect of values on outcomes for full-time employees was significantly larger than indirect effects. In contrast, the opposite relationship was observed for job seekers where the indirect effect was larger than the direct effect. This difference highlights the marked differences in contexts that job

seekers and full-time employees experience when it comes to work relationships. The experience of value congruence with coworkers is salient for current employees and their social relationships, where value similarity readily engenders positive feelings toward the other party (Byrne & Griffitt, 1973). Conversely, job seekers can only anticipate the benefits of value congruence with respect to these relationships occurring in the future. As such they are inclined to think about values in terms of what personal needs such future relationships can fulfill, leading to an indirect relationship between values and attraction through psychological needs and expected organizational supplies (Diener et al., 1984; Schneider, 1987).

Investigating the mediating role of needs-supplies also gives us more insight into factors that influence expectations of need fulfillment among job seekers. Positive relationships were obtained between individual values and psychological needs, and between organizational values and expectations for organizational supplies. More interestingly, expected communication quality had a significant impact on expectations for supplies on relationships, prestige, and autonomy. Moreover, this relationship served to promote need fulfillment where the expectations of job seekers who perceived insufficient supplies relative to their needs increased in a direction that was consistent with improving need fulfillment. This finding underlies the importance of expectations about the quality of future work communications for giving job seekers the impression that their needs will be fulfilled in such work environments. Future research should continue to investigate other predictors of PO fit during job search. Developing a better understanding of the factors predicting fit is needed to further explicate the psychology behind PO fit experiences and how experiences of fit can change during the job search process (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Yu, 2009; 2013). The current findings also highlight the importance of

employing methods of measurement and analyses that are capable of unpacking relationships between fit constructs comprising multiple variables (Edwards, 1995).

Second, support for value expression as a significant mediator in the model implies that research on PO fit and job search can also benefit from placing more attention on self-presentation concerns and the impact that symbolic organizational images can have for attraction toward future employers (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005; Highhouse et al., 1999; Highhouse et al., 2007). Although some research has invoked social identity theory as the rationale for fit effects (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), seldom has research explicitly investigated the relationships between value-based fit and concepts related to social identity. Work in social psychology has demonstrated that individuals strive to present themselves in a way that they believe is a true reflection of their personal attributes (Swann, Stein-Seroussi & Giesler, 1992). Such motivation to self-verify has even recently been linked to the ability to find satisfying work (Cable & Kay, 2012; Yu & Cable, 2011). More research is needed to investigate the specific employer characteristics that facilitate job seeker value expression and self-verification motives.

Third, response surface analyses revealed that although individual and organizational values jointly influenced most of the modeled expectations and organizational attraction, the nature of these relationships did not conform to prevalent notions of PO fit (i.e. an outcome being maximized when individual values match organizational values). These findings conflict with past research which has argued that attraction and job seeker outcomes are maximized when individual values match or are congruent with organizational values (Cable & Judge, 1996; Careless, 2005; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Saks & Ashforth; 1997). Although the lack of congruence effects has been detected before in research on full-time employees (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Edwards et al., 2006), this study is among the first to document a similar absence of such effects

in the context of job seekers. In fact, the absence of congruence effects is actually more pronounced in the current study compared to previous studies on full-time employees, with no significant downward curvatures observed linking values to mediators and attraction (c.f. Edwards & Cable, 2009). A possible explanation for the current lack of observed fit relationships could be the uncertainty that is inherent in job seeker perceptions of organizational values. As organizational outsiders, job seekers realize that they cannot be fully accurate in their perceptions of organizational characteristics (Connelly et al., 2011; Earnest, Allen & Landis, 2011). As such they are less certain compared to full-time employees about how much confidence they should ascribe to such judgments when choosing among employers. Such uncertainty could also make it difficult for job seekers to calibrate perceptions of organizational values with respect to their own values, making it difficult to derive a significant fit or congruence effect.

The reason that fit effects have consistently been documented in previous studies such as those cited above could be due to the way PO fit was measured. A majority of previous studies utilized molar measures of fit which involve respondents directly reporting their degree of fit with organizations (Edwards et al., 2006). The use of such measures makes it impossible to determine how attraction varied with the relative levels of individual and organizational values, let alone whether it was maximized at a point of fit between the two (Edwards, 1994). More importantly, the high correlations that are usually obtained between fit and affective outcomes (e.g. attraction and satisfaction) when such measures are used could suggest that they actually elicit affective responses instead of the assumed comparative judgment of fit. Thus, when individuals say that they fit the organization they could be effectively saying that they are attracted to it (Edwards et al., 2006; Yu, 2009). Taking stock, the differences between findings from the current study and previous research highlight the need for person-environment (PE) fit

researchers to ask the important question of whether direct molar measures and separate atomistic measures of fit are alternative measures assessing the same fit construct, or whether they represent fundamental differences in how fit should be conceptualized (Billsberry, Ambrosini, Moss-Jones & Marsh, 2005; Schneider, Kristof, Goldstein & Smith, 1995). Nonetheless, the significant relationships obtained involving values suggest that they are still meaningful predictors of employer expectations and attraction. Thus, a more general and less strict interactionist notion of fit may apply to job seekers where individual and organizational values simply work together or interact to predict outcomes (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). Overall, future research needs to investigate the specific meanings that job seekers ascribe to the concept of fit and whether the assumed comparison of individual values to organizational values actually occurs when they think about fit.

Fourth, current findings about the psychological mechanisms underlying the effects of values also differ substantially from similar research conducted in the context of full-time employees. Edwards and Cable (2009) found that trust followed by communication offered the best explanations for value congruence effects on employee attitudinal outcomes like job satisfaction and intent to stay. Results from the present study suggest that expectations of these two constructs were not important for explaining the effects of values on attraction. Instead alternative explanations carried by value expression and needs-supplies accounted for the indirect effects of values on attraction⁶. Perhaps individuals only appreciate the importance of trust and communication once they have entered actual work settings because these are key conditions required for job performance and getting work done (Motowidlo, 2003). Conversely,

⁶ Edwards and Cable (2009) also investigated interpersonal attraction as a mediator of the effects of value congruence on employee attitudes. This variable was not examined in the current study because it was deemed to be conceptually similar to the organizational attraction dependent variable. It is uncertain if job seekers are able to differentiate attraction toward people and attraction toward the organization as a whole, since individuals tend to think of organizations in terms of their people employees (Cable & Turban, 2001; Schneider, 1987).

need fulfillment and value expression could be especially relevant to job seekers because they are in the process of selecting into future employer relationships. Hence, such cognitions are similar to those that play out in similar situations where individuals select into relationships where they feel that their needs will be fulfilled (Diener et al., 1984). Likewise, job seekers could have the same identity concerns as those who are in the process of forming long-term social relationships, where the need to define one's social identity through value expression is particularly salient through organizational choice (Highhouse et al., 2007).

Finally, path analyses indicate that value congruence still had a significant residual direct effect on organizational attraction for security and autonomy even after the five different mediators were taken into account. Hence, there are still additional mediators and explanations of the relationship between values and attraction that have yet to be uncovered. Therefore, there is still room for further theory development to improve our understanding of this relationship.

Practical Implications

This study also offers several insights to practitioners. The importance of individual and organizational values to attracting future talent underlines the need for employers to carefully manage and communicate values as part of their recruitment strategy (Cable & Turban, 2001; Yu & Cable, 2013). Such image management not only serves to attract job seekers through perceptions of organizational values, but it also influences expectations about certain aspects of the organization's work environment. Knowing the type of expectations that new hires have when they enter an organization is an important concern for employers because meeting these expectations is beneficial for job performance as well as employee tenure with the organization (Wanous, Poland, Premack & Davis, 1992; Earnest et al., 2011). Current findings suggest that job seekers expect opportunities to express their values because they see their organizational

membership as an important way to define their social identity. Employers should thus be aware of the benefits to an employees' self concept of being associated with highly regarded acts of corporate social responsibility (Jones et al., 2013).

Although image management should remain a key strategy of talent recruitment, other strategies that target need fulfillment and value expression should also be used as part of a coordinated overall recruitment effort because they were observed to be key mechanisms impacting attraction. For instance, recruitment communications should advertise need fulfillment and value expression opportunities for new employees (Allen, Mahto & Otondo, 2007). Posting employee testimonials on company websites that provide evidence of opportunities to express oneself at work and other need fulfilling rewards of the job may be one such effective way of influencing applicant attraction (Walker, Feild, Giles, Armenakis & Bernerth, 2009).

Limitations

There are several limitations of this study. First, value congruence and expected need fulfillment were operationalized using individual perceptions. This measurement approach was adopted because of the study's focus on the psychological experience of PO fit. Common method variance and inflated interitem correlations may thus have resulted from the use of self reports (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). However, the longitudinal study design separating independent, mediating, and dependent variables should lessen the likelihood of such artificially-inflated relationships (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Future research should consider employing a panel study design where all variables are measured at different phases of the study so that even stronger inferences about the causal flow of relationships between variables can be made. Such a design would also allow the investigation of reverse causal flows such as mediators influencing perceptions of value congruence (Yu, 2009).

It is also important to note that this study did not take into account how far each individual had progressed in their own job search. Participants who have progressed to the later stages of their job search may have already excluded certain companies from their set of job choices (Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987). Hence, they may attempt to justify their exclusion choice by reporting lower attraction toward these employers (Tenbrunsel & Diekmann, 2002). This concern should be alleviated by archival data on student job acceptance rates showing that up to 81.9% of students in the current cohort had not secured employment and were still searching for jobs when organizational attraction was measured. Therefore, the companies used in this study were likely considered to be potential employers by the majority of study participants. Past research has also highlighted the effects that job attributes like pay and benefits could have on job seeker attraction (Cable & Judge, 1994). The fact that these variables were not taken into account is thus another limitation of the current study. Future research should explore how different compensation systems influence job seeker perceptions of value congruence and their expectations of potential employers. The current sample of undergraduate job seekers may also raise concerns about the generalizability of findings. Unfortunately, such samples dominate recruitment research due to the accessibility that most researchers have to this group of individuals (Rynes & Cable, 2003). Future research is needed to see if the same relationships are observed in different samples of job seekers like experienced professionals or those looking for bridge employment (Rau & Adams, 2005). Experienced job seekers may be better able to make sense of organizational cultures and environments because they can call upon their familiarity with general work settings and job roles (Carr, Pearson, Vest & Boyar, 2006; Kirschenbaum, 1992). Hence, they are able to assess and compare organizational values with respect to their

own values with more certainty and accuracy compared to new job seekers, which may also lead them to experience stronger relationships between value congruence and attraction.

There may also be concerns about whether current results can be generalized across cultures given that the study was conducted within an Asian context. For instance, national-level cultural values like collectivism and individualism can impact how individuals interpret and understand certain motivational work values such as those examined in this study, where individualistic cultures encourage self-enhancement based values like prestige whereas collectivistic cultures provide societal endorsement for values related to social relationships (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). Future cross-cultural research is thus needed to investigate whether national culture moderates the strength of the relationships observed in this study.

Conclusion

Decades of research exhorts employers to recruit talent based on PO fit (Bowen, et al., 1991). However, understanding *why* PO fit matters to job seekers has often been overlooked despite the widespread acknowledgement of the power of this concept. This study tackled a fragmented literature to develop a model that integrated several plausible mechanisms linking PO fit to organizational attraction. Empirical results highlight need fulfillment and value expression explanations for their ability to provide viable explanations of effects involving individual and organizational values. It is hoped that future research will continue to advance the understanding of job seekers' perceptions of PO fit by focusing on the mechanisms that link such experience to meaningful attitudes and behaviors leading to job choice.

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