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PERSONALITY APPROACH TO PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT: APPLYING HOLLAND'S THEORY OF VOCATIONAL CHOICE AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

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Researchers frequently recommend that organizations consider person-organization fit when making hiring decisions. The purpose of this paper is three fold. First, the paper provides a review of existing research on person-organization fit. This review concludes that several limitations hinder the usefulness of current approaches to person-organization fit. Second, this paper seeks to address these limitations through a conceptual analysis that integrates research on vocational choice with person-organization fit research. The result is an approach to person-organization fit that may be more readily applied by organizations. Finally, the paper suggests a process for empirically testing the proposed approach to person-organization fit.

INTRODUCTION

"...for each individual there are environments which more or less match the characteristics of his personality. A "match" or best-fit" of individual to environment is viewed as expressing itself in high performance, satisfaction, and little stress in the system whereas a "lack of fit" is viewed as resulting in decreased performance, dissatisfaction, and stress in the system" (Pervin, 1968: 56).

The individual difference-situation debate represents one of the oldest controversies in social psychology (for a review of this debate, see Kendrick & Funder, 1988). On the one hand, the individual difference approach contends that behavior is a function of the individual and is stable across time and situations (Alston, 1975). In contrast, situationists argue that individual behavior is determined largely by characteristics of the situation or environment (Mischel, 1968). The interactionist approach to human behavior serves as the middle ground in this debate. In essence, the interactionist theory asserts that neither personal nor situation constraints are solely responsible for human behaviors and attitudes. Rather, it is the interaction of personal and situational factors that determines behaviors and attitudes (Terborg, 1981).

Increasing acceptance of the interactionist view of human behavior has naturally led to widespread interest in person-environment fit--the degree of congruence or match between personal and environmental variables. Person-environment fit has been examined along a number of dimensions including congruence between job and individual needs (Caplan, 1983), abilities (Edwards, 1991; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Dunette, 1976) and personality traits (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). In general, the research indicates that fit is associated with a variety of outcomes, however; the majority of research has

focused on the relationship between fit and satisfaction (Dawis, 1992).

Although the personnel selection literature traditionally focused on person-job fit, subsequent interest shifted to broader theories that focus on matching employees to organizational characteristics (Kristof, 1996; Pervin, 1989; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan describe person-organization fit as a new model of selection that is geared toward hiring "whole" people who fit the organization rather than just KSAs that fit the job (1991: 35). This paper contributes to the field of person-organization fit by identifying a dimension of fit worthy of increased attention on the part of organizational researchers. Below, I first review the existing person-organization fit literature and draw several conclusions regarding the "state of the art". In particular, although research in this domain provides significant insight, it is also limited by several factors.

The subsequent section extends research on vocational choice to the realm of person-organization fit and provides a conceptual integration of the two literatures. The result of this integration is an approach that more fully incorporates personality assessment into conceptualizations of person-organization fit and that may be more readily implemented by practitioners. Based on this analysis, several propositions are drawn concerning the relationship between individual personality-organization fit and behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. The paper concludes with implications for both research and practice.

Person-Organization Fit

Person-organization fit extends both the predictor and criterion domains to define fit as the congruence of

personality traits, beliefs and values of the employee with the culture, strategic needs, norms and values of the organization (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994). Person-organization fit requires that fit be achieved between an individual's KSAs and the job and between the overall personality of the individual and the climate and culture of the organization (Bowen et al., 1991, p. 38). Kristof (1996: 4-5) defined person-organization fit as "the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both." In essence, person-organization fit addresses the suitability of certain types of individuals in certain types of organizational environments, with the assumption that this match has long-term implications for organizational effectiveness (Bretz & Judge, 1994).

Consistent with this assumption, academics and consultants increasingly recommend that job applicants be assessed in terms of their fit with the employing organization's strategies, cultures, norms and values. Bowen et al. (1991: 48) argue that, "hiring for the organization, not the job will become the only effective selection model for the typical business environment. The defining attributes of this business environment... make for very transitory requirements in specific employee jobs. Organizational success in this environment requires hiring employees who fit the overall organization, not those who fit a fixed set of task demands."

Much of the research on person-organization fit focuses on the impact of fit on applicant job choices. Rynes, Bretz, and Gerhart (1991), for example, found that job applicants assess fit on the basis of a variety of factors including job characteristics, organizational practices, and recruiter attributes. Results of Tom's (1971) investigation indicated that MBA students prefer organizations that they rate as similar to themselves versus organizations they perceive to be less similar to them. Judge and Bretz (1992) similarly found that organizational values were an important determinant of job choice and that individuals preferred jobs in organizations which displayed value preferences similar to their own. Bretz, Ash, and Dreher (1989) demonstrated that individuals high in need for achievement prefer organizations with individually oriented reward systems.

Bretz and Judge (1994) assessed fit using a variety of personal characteristics to assess the individual side of person-organization fit and an assortment of human resource system characteristics to evaluate the organizational side. Results of their investigation

indicated that particular people prefer specific human resource systems and these preferences affect job choices. Specifically, Bretz and Judge (1994) obtained four main findings. First, individuals who prefer individual work also prefer organizations with individually oriented reward systems. Second, individuals with high internal locus of control preferred organizations with contest mobility systems. Third, individuals who were fairness value dominant preferred organizations which express concern for justice. Finally, individuals who experienced high levels of work/family conflict preferred organization who have expressed policies for accommodating work/family issues.

In contrast to most investigations, which look at the impact of fit on organizational choice, Rynes and Gerhart (1990) looked at the impact of fit from the interviewers' perspective. Specifically, they examined interviewers' assessments of job applicants in terms of both general employability and fit. Results of their investigation revealed that interviewer assessments of fit differ from evaluations of general employability and that applicants' interpersonal skills, goal orientation, and physical attractiveness contribute to assessments of fit while objective qualifications do not. Adkins, Russell, and Werbel (1994) similarly examined work values as an antecedent of recruiters' judgments of applicant fit with the organization. Interestingly, work value congruence between the recruiter and the applicant was associated with judgments of general employability and organization-specific fit whereas value congruence between the organization and the applicant was not.

Thus, considerable research indicates that assessments of person-organization fit may impact pre-hire decisions. In contrast, less research examines the effect of person-organization fit on hired individuals' job attitudes and performance. The majority of such research has focused on either goal or value congruency. Vancouver and associates (Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991; Vancouver, Millsap, & Peters, 1994), emphasize goal congruence, the degree to which organization members agree on the goals for the organization. Results of their investigations indicate that both within-constituency (the degree of agreement among subordinates) and between-constituency (the degree to which subordinates agree with supervisors) goal congruence are related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to quit.

Posner (1991) investigated the impact of person-organization values congruence in a large multinational manufacturing firm. He found that values congruency was related to positive work attitudes and demographic

variables did not moderate this relationship. Meglino, Ravlin, and Adkins (1989) surveyed 191 production workers, their supervisors and managers and found that value congruence between supervisors and subordinates predicted job satisfaction and commitment. Adkins, Ravlin & Meglino (1992) investigated fit on the dimension of work value congruence among co-workers and found that the extent to which the job required individuals to work closely with others moderated the relationship between value congruence and satisfaction. They further found that organizational tenure moderated the relationship between values congruence and attendance.

Chatman and colleagues (1989, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991) similarly define person-organization fit as the congruence between the norms and values of the organization and the values of persons. Chatman (1989) measured person organization fit using the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP) which contains 54 values statements and, with application of Q-sort methodology, may be used to generate applicant and organization value profiles. Fit is measured by calculating the correlation between the two profiles. Chatman (1991) found that individuals whose values most closely matched the firm's values feel most satisfied and intend to and actually remain with it longest. O'Reilly, Chatman, and Caldwell (1991) similarly demonstrated that person-organization fit, as assessed by the OCP, predicted job satisfaction and organizational commitment after one year and actual turnover after two years.

Several conclusions may be drawn from this review of the person-organization fit literature. First, person-organization fit has been conceptually and empirically associated with several important outcomes including job choice (Judge & Bretz, 1992; Tom, 1971), job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover (Kristof, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Meglino et al., 1991). However, existing person-organization fit is limited by several factors. For example, few approaches to person-organization fit may be readily implemented by practicing managers. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that research typically employs non-commensurate dimensions to assess fit. Finally, this research is excessively narrow in that, with few exceptions, it focuses on value congruency to the exclusion of other dimensions of fit. Value congruence has become widely accepted as the defining operationalization of person-organization fit (Kristof, 1996; Verquer et al. 2003). Although values are critical in assessments of fit, there is reason to believe that value congruence is only one of several key components of fit

(Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Fit is multidimensional and these additional aspects of fit merit exploration (Bretz, Rynes, & Gerhart, 1993).

One dimension of person-organization fit that merits additional attention is the congruence between individuals' personality traits and the organizational climate and culture. Ryan and Kristof-Brown suggested that personality traits are more stable, proximal to behavior, and visible in others' behavior than are values. They conclude, therefore, that "personality-based PO fit should have at least as strong as, if not a stronger, influence on individuals' attitudes and behaviors than would values-based fit" (2003: 266). Despite this contention and the fact that personality is frequently referred to in discussions of person-organization fit (e.g., Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991), little research explicitly includes formal assessments of personality. Instead, personality has been a catch-all term that subsumes all other dimensions of fit. It seems as though a more parsimonious approach to the study of person-organization fit would be to use personality profiles as the dimension of interest rather than a number of manifestations of personality. The following section explores the possibility of using assessments of specific personality profiles as an indicator of person-organization fit by conceptually extending research on vocational choice to the domain of person-organization fit.

Personality and Person-Organization Fit

Holland's (1973, 1985) theory of vocational choice offers a framework for incorporating personality into assessments of person-organization fit. Consistent with other approaches to person-environment fit, Holland argues that behavior is a function of the match or congruence between an individual's personality and psychological environment. More specifically, the theory rests on three essential assumptions. First, individuals' tend to resemble one or more of six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Second, vocational environments tend to resemble one or more of the same named model environments. That is, for each personality type there is a parallel model environment (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional). Holland maintains that individuals tend to enter and remain in occupational environments that are congruent with their personality type. Two instruments, the VPI and the SDS, have been developed to classify individuals and vocations according based on this typology. Third, person-environment congruence is associated with satisfaction,

productivity, creativity, personal stability, and vocational stability. For example, a Realistic type in a Realistic environment would tend to be more productive, more satisfied, and more likely to remain in the environment (Walsh & Holland, 1992).

Research results generally suggest some evidence for the validity of Holland's trait characterizations of personality types, however, evidence to date is not especially consistent or robust (Tokar & Swanson, 1995). Several researchers have provided comprehensive reviews of the person-vocational environment literature that are helpful in analyzing the utility of Holland's theory. Based on a review of 63 studies, Spokane (1985) concludes that congruence is associated with performance, satisfaction, and stability. Spokane further recognizes, however, that correlations between congruence and various outcomes rarely exceed .25-.35 and that congruence accounts for only 5-10% of variance in outcomes. Results of Assoulini and Meir's (1987) meta-analysis suggest that neither achievement can be predicted by personality-occupational environment congruence. However, when Assoulini and Meir corrected for the effects of environmental reference and congruence measuring method are controlled for, congruence-satisfaction correlations exceeded .35.

Based on their review of a number of studies, Walsh and Holland (1992) drew several important conclusions regarding Holland's (1985) theory. First, studies predicting the kind of training or work a person will select or remain in when based on personality type tend to be statistically significant and moderately efficient. Second, work on the theory is typically positive suggesting the VPI and SDS scales differentiate among occupational groups. Third, the evidence suggests that satisfaction is related to person-occupational environment congruence. Finally, the limited research that has been conducted in the area of congruence and achievement suggests a weak relationship at best.

In sum, research generally provides mild support for Holland's theory. However, this support is moderate at best and it appears as though several factors limit the theory's predictive and explanatory power. For example, despite their positive conclusions, Walsh and Holland (1992) recognize that problems and inconsistencies occur within and between occupational groups. They attribute these ambiguities to a variety of factors including statistical inefficiency, the possible mis-classification of occupational groups, and selection and training procedure within a given occupation.

I argue that an additional, more important factor, limits the usefulness of Holland's (1985) theory.

Specifically, Holland's typology may oversimplify the concept of vocation. A considerable amount of research indicates that there is substantial intra-occupational variability due, in part, to the fact that similar jobs are structured differently depending on the firms in which they are located. In response to this evidence, Davis-Blake & Pfeffer (1989, p. 394) argued that, in order to use meaningful measurements of job characteristics, researchers must move beyond crude occupational surrogates to measures that actually reflect the characteristics of a particular job as it is structured in a particular organizational setting. Thus, attempting to accurately, characterize entire vocations according to six profiles may be unrealistic. This indicates a need to redefine the environment that is assessed by the typology. Specifically, Holland's theory of vocational choice may be more appropriate as a theory of person-organization fit with a focus on the organization rather than the vocation as the unit of analysis.

In contrast to the extensive variability found within vocations, there is evidence which indicates that, even across jobs, organizations tend toward homogeneity with regard to the kinds of people in them (Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). Schneider and Schneider (1994) demonstrate that single-occupation organizations (such as accounting or law firms) are often comprised of individuals with similar personality profiles and that these profiles may differ markedly from other single-occupation organizations within the same industry. They argue that vocational interests may bring people together in an occupation but that personality differences further bring people together in an organization. To the extent that this logic reflects reality, characterizations of organizational environments will necessarily be more consistent and accurate than characterizations of vocational environments. It follows that assessments of individual personality-organizational environment fit would be more consistent and accurate, hence, yield stronger results than assessments of individual personality-vocational environment fit.

Considerable empirical support exists for the idea that homogeneity may be stronger in organizational groups than in occupational groups. O'Reilly et al. (1991) found that big eight accounting firms have different cultural profiles and retain different kinds of people as a function of their values. In a test of Schneider's (1987) ASA framework, Jordan et al. (1991) surveyed a sample of 344 managers from four organizations and found a main effect for organization on personality and an interaction between occupation and organization on personality indicating that different personalities characterized the

same occupation as a function of the organization in which the occupation existed.

Schneider (1987) argues that organizations over time become relatively homogenous with regards to the kinds of people in them through a process of attraction-selection-attrition (ASA). In essence, Schneider's framework proposes that individuals are differentially attracted to organizations based on implicit estimates of the congruence between their own personal characteristics and the organization's attributes that organizations select individuals that are similar to the people already in them, and that individuals who do not fit an organization will leave it.

Schneider's (1987) ASA framework parallels Holland's (1985) theory of vocational choice. Both Schneider and Holland contend that individuals differentially enter and remain in environments based on assessments of fit between individual attributes and characteristics of the environment. Consequently, both theories suggest that environments tend toward homogeneity. Nevertheless, there are also three key differences between the two frameworks. First, Schneider does not specify what personal or organizational characteristics are important in assessments of fit nor does he indicate how fit should be measured. In contrast, Holland specifically identifies personality as the important characteristic and identifies six distinct personality types that may be used to classify both individuals and environments. Second, Holland defines the environment in terms of vocational or occupational groups while organizational units constitute Schneider's environment of interest. Finally, organizational behavior is the unit of analysis in Schneider's ASA framework while individual behavior is the focus of Holland's theory of vocational choice.

Thus, a viable synthesis of the two theories would classify individuals and organizations according to Holland's model typologies and subsequently assess fit based on the degree of similarity between these profiles. Such an approach offers several advantages over both Holland's model of person-vocational fit and prior conceptualizations of person-organization fit. First, the conceptualization and empirical research presented in this section indicates that more homogeneity exists within organizations than within occupational groups. Hence, characterizations of organizations may be expected to have higher validity and, as a result, produce more accurate measures of fit than characterizations of vocations.

Second, this approach offers a conceptualization of person-organization fit that more closely parallels popular

definitions of the construct which generally include fit between an individual's personality and some aspect of the organization (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991). Although empirical investigations of fit have generally ignored personality, there is some evidence that personality may be critical to judgments of fit. Tom (1971), for example, asked students to describe themselves, their most preferred organization, and their least preferred organization using the Adjective Check List. Tom found that the degree of similarity between the self-description profiles and the most preferred organization profiles was significantly greater than the degree of similarity between self-description profiles and the least preferred organization profiles. Bretz and Judge (1994) demonstrated that individuals with high internal locus of control were more likely to prefer jobs in organizations with contest mobility systems. Results of Ivancevich and Matteson's (1984) investigation revealed that when Type A or Type B individuals joined organizations that were similar to them (e.g. type A individuals joined type A organizations and visa versa), they experienced significantly less stress. Turban and Keon (1993) found that individuals high in need for achievement prefer to work in smaller organizations. Lawler (1971) demonstrated that individuals who are high in neuroticism and low in self esteem are more attracted to jobs with high pay.

Although these studies indicate that personality may be an important determinant of person-organization fit, there are problems. For example, many of these studies look at only one aspect of personality such as locus of control, need for achievement, or neuroticism. As a result, they fail to provide comprehensive analyses of the role of personality in person organization fit. Additionally, most of these investigations have assessed fit between individual personality and the organization using non-commensurate dimensions such as mobility system, pay, and organization size. Researchers and theorists have long recognized that meaningful comparisons between individuals and situations require the use of commensurate dimensions (Lewin, 1951). As a result, much of the person-organization fit research loses its practical utility as it becomes difficult for organizations to incorporate it in their hiring systems. In contrast to existing approaches to individual personality-organization fit, the application of Holland's theory at the organizational level utilizes personality profiles, as opposed to solitary aspects of personality, and employs commensurate dimensions to assess person-organization fit. The practicality of hiring for person-organization fit using Holland's categories is enhanced by the existence

of validated instruments that may be used to classify both applicants and organizations based on Holland's typology.

In summary, Holland's (1985) theory of vocational choice may be extended to the organizational setting to offer a compelling and potentially more, practically useful dimension for assessments of person-organization fit. As such, the theory may be combined with existing research in person-organization fit to yield several propositions regarding the relationship between individual personality organization congruence and a variety of behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. For example, Holland (1985) argues that individuals choose, enter, and persist in environments that are congruent with their personality types. Similarly, conceptual research indicates that high person-organization fit may result in low rates of absenteeism, turnover, and grievance (Bowen et al. 1991). Schneider's (1987) ASA framework indicates that organizations tend toward homogeneity, in part, because those who do not fit will leave the organization. Chatman and associates (1991; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991) provide empirical evidence which indicates that individual-organization value congruency is related to intent to remain and subsequent turnover. Thus, consistent with these arguments, I offer the following proposition:

- **Proposition 1a:** Individual personality-organization congruence at time of hire, as assessed with the VPI and SDS, will be positively associated individuals' longevity with the organization.

Research further indicates that individuals' fit with their supervisors (Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989) and with their co-workers (Adkins, Ravlin & Meglino, 1992; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991) may also be important determinants of employee behaviors and attitudes. Thus, I offer the following supplemental propositions:

- **Proposition 1b:** Individual personality-work group congruence at time of hire, as assessed with the VPI and SDS, will be positively associated with individuals' longevity with the organization.
- **Proposition 1c:** Individual personality-supervisor congruence at time of hire, as assessed with the VPI and SDS, will be positively associated with individuals' longevity with the organization.

Similarly, researchers have long proposed that a fit between the individual and the environment would result in greater job satisfaction (Pervin, 1968). Holland (1985) contends that person-vocational environment congruence

is associated with satisfaction and stability. Considerable research indicates that person-job fit is related to satisfaction (Dawis, 1992). Finally, research also indicates that congruence between individual and organizational values results in greater satisfaction (Adkins, Ravlin & Meglino, 1992; Chatman, 1991; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989). Thus, I offer the following propositions:

- **Proposition 2a:** Individual personality-organization congruence at time of hire, as assessed with the VPI and SDS, will be positively associated with individuals' job satisfaction.
- **Proposition 2b:** Individual personality-work group congruence at time of hire, as assessed with the VPI and SDS, will be positively associated with individuals' subsequent job satisfaction.
- **Proposition 2c:** Individual personality-supervisor congruence at time of hire, as assessed with the VPI and SDS, will be positively associated with individuals' subsequent job satisfaction.

Finally, Holland's (1985) theory indicates that person-environment congruence is associated with productivity and creativity. Conceptual arguments similarly indicate that person-environment fit may be associated with increased performance. Pervin (1968, p. 56), for example, indicates that a "match" or "best-fit" of individual to environment is viewed as expressing itself in high performance whereas a "lack of fit" is viewed as resulting in decreased performance. Theorists have made similar arguments regarding the relationship between person-organization fit and performance. Bowen et al. (1991) argue that person-organization fit may result in more desirable individual behaviors. Such behaviors may include performance, thus I offer the following propositions:

- **Proposition 3a:** Individual personality-organization congruence at time of hire, as assessed with the VPI and SDS, will be positively associated with job performance.
- **Proposition 3b:** Individual personality-work group congruence at time of hire as assessed with the VPI and SDS will be positively associated with job performance.
- **Proposition 3c:** Individual personality-supervisor personality congruence at time of hire as assessed with the VPI and SDS will be positively associated with job performance.

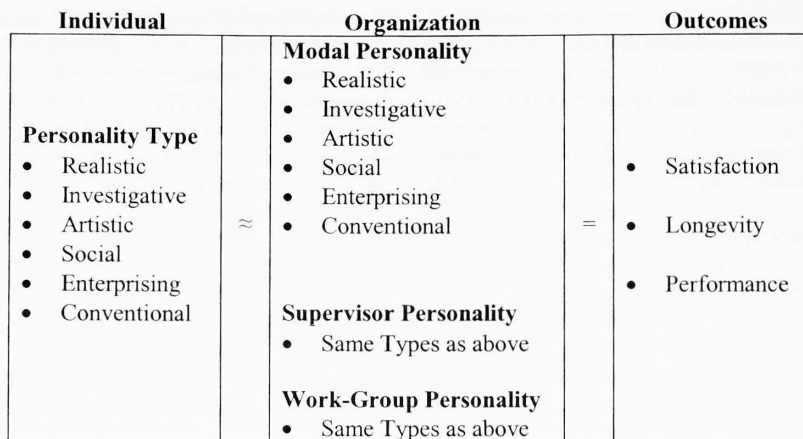


Figure 1: Relationship between individual personality-organization fit and job outcomes

Figure 1 depicts the proposed relationships and resulting propositions advanced in this paper. As shown in the figure, both the individual and three aspects of the organizational environment (the organization's modal personality, peers, and supervisors) are assessed along Holland's dimensions. Also as shown, person-organization fit is increased to the extent the individual's personality is congruent with each component of the organization's environment. Person-organization fit, in turn, is related to longevity, satisfaction, and performance. Congruency with any one or more of the organizational aspects indicated in figure 1 (peers, supervisor, and/or modal personality) indicates an enhancement in person-organization fit and is expected to result in improved attitudes and performance. However, fit and related positive attitudes and performance will be highest when the individual's personality is congruent with all three aspects of the organization's environment.

IMPLICATIONS

Implications for Research

Although research on person-organization fit is promising, there are limitations that must be overcome before this stream of research realizes its potential. For example, although discussions of person-organization fit often implicitly refer to personality as the key construct for basis of fit, much of the research utilizes surrogates for personality such as values. Other research examines single dimensions of personality and thus provides a narrower picture of person-organization fit. More problematic is the tendency for research to assess person-organization fit using non-commensurate dimensions

such as organization size. This paper attempts to bridge these gaps and suggests one possible way researchers may incorporate personality profiles into assessments of fit and its impact on individuals and organizations.

Clearly, the most pressing research implication of this paper concerns the need to empirically test its propositions. An adequate test of this paper will necessitate a longitudinal field study. An ideal setting for this study would be a large company following a significant hiring effort. Potential data sites that may prove particularly well-suited to conducting a study that tests this approach to person-organization fit are those in industries with high turnover rates in which businesses compete based on differentiation centered on a unique image. Examples might include quick-service restaurants as turnover in that industry is typically quite high. Additionally, many quick-service restaurants seek differentiation based on a distinctive image (e.g., sports, sex appeal etc.). Achieving this type of differentiate likely requires a similarly distinct type of employee. Another ideal setting for examining person-organization fit in general, and this approach specifically, may be those industries that are engaged in the selling of "experiences" such as theme parks, casinos, or other forms of recreation. Alternatively, data collection may occur in new companies or those that are hiring in mass due to a grand opening.

As part of employee orientation, all new employees could be administered the Self Directed Search (SDS) (Holland, 1985). The SDS summarizes a person's aspirations, occupational preferences, preferred activities, and self-estimates of ability and is a commonly used method to classify individuals and occupations according to Holland's typology.

Organizational members with greater than two years tenure in the organization would also be administered the SDS at the same time as the new hires. Schneider (1987) argues that the people in the organization make the place. Thus, an organization's personality may be directly assessed by administering the SDS to its current employees. The organization and work groups within the organization may be classified according to Holland's typology based on the results of the SDS administered to organization incumbents. Specifically, the highest frequency of personality type within the organization will be defined as the organization's environmental type (Meier, Keinen, & Segal, 1986). It may be most appropriate to use organization members with greater than two years experience with the organization as opposed to all organization members because the impact of fit on attrition results in increased homogeneity over time (Schneider, 1987). Thus, examination of individuals with experience in the organization should provide a more accurate picture of the organizational environment. Similarly, work groups may be classified based on their modal personality.

Following these procedures, participants will be assigned congruency scores based on the degree of match or similarity between the individuals' high-point code from the SDS and the high point code of the organization. Holland (1985) notes that relations among types, among environments, and between types and environments are hexagonal in nature. He further provides a hexagonal model that arranges both types and environments according to their psychological similarities. Types and environments that are closer together on the hexagon are more psychologically related while those that are farther apart are more different. This hexagonal model may be used to define different levels of person-organization fit based on the gap between an individual's personality type and the organization's type.

After the new hires have an adequate opportunity to learn the job and become familiar with the organizational culture, a second survey may be administered. This survey should tap individuals' job satisfaction, intentions to remain with the organization. This data could also be supplemented with data concerning the new hire's job performance. The relationship between employees' fit scores at time of hire and their subsequent satisfaction, turnover intentions, and performance would provide the test of the propositions advanced in this paper.

To the extent that research supports the arguments advanced here, this paper bridges several of the limitations in current person-organization fit research. However, this only a first step and additional research on

individual personality-organization fit is needed in several regards. In particular, future research should examine other possible approaches to incorporating personality assessments into evaluations of person-organization fit. One possible approach may be to assess personality in terms of the five factor model (Goldberg, 1990). Researchers may also define the organization based on members' perceptions of an "ideal" candidate rather than on the members' actual personality profiles. Comparative studies which compare the predictive validities of the various alternative approaches to individual personality-organization fit with the approach advanced here may prove particularly fruitful. In addition, personality is only one dimension of person-organization fit. Thus, future research should also begin incorporating the various potential dimensions of fit (e.g. values, goals, personality) into one coherent framework.

In sum, an impressive amount of research is accumulating in the area of person-organization fit. Two challenges that remain are to consider more holistic dimensions of fit and to increase the practical utility of approaches to person-organization fit. This paper suggests one avenue whereby organizations may begin hiring for person-organization fit. Continued research in this domain promises valuable practical and theoretical opportunities.

Implications for Practice

This paper also has implications for both teaching and practice. Business schools typically focus on preparing their students for jobs in a particular industry or vocation. Although this is certainly an important function of the business school curriculum, students will also benefit to the extent that they are taught that the nature of a particular vocation may vary considerably from one organization to another. It would also behoove business faculty and student counselors to educate students as to the importance of person-organization fit and to the reality that their career success and satisfaction will be enhanced to the extent they choose organizations they fit well with. To help students make assessments and choices along these lines, business schools may also consider administering the SDS to its students (and potentially organizations recruiting on campus) as they begin their job search process.

Changing business conditions require that organizations become increasingly flexible. This necessitates that they hire for the organization, based on person-organization fit, rather than for the job, based on person-job fit (Bowen et al., 1991). The approach

presented here offers an additional dimension that organizations may incorporate into selection systems designed to hire individuals for person-organization fit rather than person-job fit. The first step would be for management to determine its predominant personality type. Once the organization's personality type has been assessed, the VPI and SDS may then be incorporated into the organization's hiring system. SDS and/or VPI results may be used to classify applicants as realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional according to Holland's (1985) personality typology. Hiring organizations may then determine the level of person-organization fit based on the gap between an applicant's personality type and the organization's type.

It should be noted that assessments of individual personality-organization fit should not constitute the sole basis for hiring decisions. Rather, it would behoove management to include this assessment as one part of a complete portfolio of selection tools. There are several reasons why organizations may want to incorporate this approach into their selection systems. First, research indicates that organizations already base hiring decisions, in part, on assessments of fit (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). However, these assessments are predominantly made in employment interviews which are highly subjective. Thus, it is not surprising that some evidence indicates that factors such as physical attractiveness and applicant-recruiter fit weighs more heavily in hiring decisions than applicant-organization fit (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994). In contrast, the approach proposed here offers an avenue for obtaining objective measures of person-organization fit. Clearly, these objective measures should prove more valuable to organizations than subjective recruiter assessments.

Second, personality-organization congruence is related to a number of valued outcomes. Thus, the approach suggested here offers organizations an avenue for reducing turnover, improving performance, and increasing worker satisfaction. This is clearly consistent with the presumed purpose of realistic job previews (Wanous, 1980). In contrast to the realistic job preview, however, assessments of person-organization fit as delineated here, offers the organization a realistic preview of the applicant. Finally, the approach to person-organization fit offered here is more manageable and may be easier to incorporate into selection systems than other methods for assessing fit such as the organizational culture profile (Chatman, 1989).

Organizations considering this approach to selection may naturally be concerned by the discussions that have centered on personality assessments. However, the

approach proposed in this paper overcomes many of the arguments critics raise against personality tests. For example, critics contend that personality tests have low validity ceilings. However, the repote of personality tests is on the rebound as research indicates that the appropriate contingencies may considerably increase their validity (Bowen et al., 1991). One such contingency may be the degree of congruence between an individual's personality and the employing organization. Another concern with traditional personality tests is that they are invasive and contain offensive questions. In contrast, the SDS contains no such questions. Thus, the approach advanced here may overcome most, if not all, concerns critics raise against personality tests. As a result, person-organization fit scores based on the SDS may provide organizations an additional source of valuable information as they continue their quest to make optimal hiring decisions in today's increasingly competitive business landscape.

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